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The United Arab Emirates Political Stability and Economic Growth

William Chandler

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The United Arab Emirates

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William Chandler

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Introduction

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) lies in the Southern Persian Gulf, bordered by Saudi Arabia and Oman. For most, mentioning its name will conjure images of grandeur: massive skyscrapers looming above the dunes of the Arabian Desert; islands rising from the sea by the force of will and wealth. The riches and luxury of a land that possesses massive oil wealth is brought to mind, with the most expensive cars driving between opulent malls and hotels. For those who have spent some time in the country, or given it at least a cursory study, these visions will be combined with an idea of a Westernized nation, a beacon of Middle Eastern modernity. For people who have looked harder at what these wonders are built on, though, the picture looks more complicated and less rosy.

The UAE is a new country, not yet four decades old and composed of disparate states. Its political stability and economic progress has been impressive so far, but what are its prospects for maintaining them? Before unification, the country's rulers, all of whom were tribal Sheikhs, were frequently in open conflict; how do they now co-operate? How do they deal with their population's rapid modernization? In addition the economy is based on one of the most valuable and volatile resources in history; how do they weather its storms?

Answering these questions is essential for understanding this country. Sheikh Rashid al-Maktum, the former ruler of Dubai, said "My grandfather rode a camel, my father rode a camel, I drive a Mercedes, my son drives a Land Rover, his son will drive a Land Rover, but his son will ride a camel". Will the Sheikhs vision come true, or will his and the other rulers' attempts to avert it succeed? Will the country's incredible prosperity continue, at least for the next few years, or will its beautiful cities and equally wondrous peace be subsumed by sand and chaos?

Attempting to answer this question is the primary purpose of this paper. Granted while predicting the future is a task best left to psychics and politicians; however the research here will allow an educated conjecture that takes into account all the myriad aspects of this complex place.

Historical Background

Grasping the past is essential to anticipating the future. Without knowing how the UAE has gotten to where it is and what challenges it has faced on the way, it would be impossible to understand what features make up the country's political and economic environment today, and what issues it may encounter in the future. The history of the UAE can, for the purpose of this paper, be divided into three sections. The first was the period prior to the coming of the imperial powers in the nineteenth century. The second lasted from the early nineteenth to independence in 1971. The third is the modern period, which started with independence and unification and has continued to this day.

Prior to the coming of the imperial powers, the area now known as the UAE was little different from the rest of the Gulf. Familial organization formed its society and politics and a man identified himself by descent through his father's¹ line back to a famous, or even legendary, founder of the family. This man's name, or the location of the family's ancestral home, is preceded by the definite article *al*, denoting the family in lieu of the often occupationally based surnames of Europe. The phrase "me against my brother; my brother and I against my cousins; my cousins and I against the world," has been used to illustrate tribal society around the world and seems applicable to the Gulf. The degree of loyalty two people or groups will feel toward each other is based on their kinship, be they brothers or distant cousins allied in a tribal

¹ Arabian society is patrilineal: children belong to the father's family, not the mother's

confederacy. The more recently two individual's family lines diverged the more loyal to each other they are, at least in theory, and the practice of endogamy can serve to further solidify these bonds. Political power is exercised along similar lines, with ruling Sheikhs serving as the lead men of their tribes, and tied to the other main family lines of the area through marriage² (Fox, Mourtada-Sabbah and al-Mutawa 2006a, 18; Heard-Bey 1982, 164-197; Khalifa 1979, 95-99).

Because of the ties to family and locality that characterized the area, rule was necessarily local. Each individual ruler controlled directly only his immediate surroundings, primarily the city populated by his relatives both close and distant. Beyond that, his primary concern was in protecting his merchants as they traveled. Sovereignty was exercised, not over a place delineated by set boundaries, but on people defined by their familial lines. Even within the town, the Sheikh was more a combination of general, police captain, and judge, as opposed to a modern day ruler. He protected his people, arbitrated their disputes and defended his own power, but had no apparatus to provide for the public welfare (Herb 1999, 24; Peterson 1991, 1437).

While the scope of these rulers' concern was limited, where they did have power they were loathe to share it. There were no cabinets or large bureaucracies, and central power was concentrated in the ruler's hands. His most powerful family members were given their own little fiefdoms in other areas, a system that created strife. Poor communications meant that the *wali*, as these subordinate rulers were called, were fairly independent of the Sheikh who had appointed them. This separated liege system encouraged rebellion and strife by allowing important family members to build up their own parallel support systems, giving them a greater ability to overthrow the ruler. An important example of this occurred immediately prior to independence in

² For an overview of the complicated lines of succession of the ruling families of the Emirates, see Appendix A

Abu Dhabi, bringing Sheikh Zayed to power. Following the inflow of oil revenues, the growing central bureaucracy replaced the independent power of the liege system (Heard-Bey 1982, 81-82; Herb 1999, 22-23).

Immediately prior to the coming of the European powers, the tribal alliances that would come to form the future UAE began to emerge. Prior to this time, governments came and went with extreme regularity as they were built on shaky foundations, a state of affairs would change in the eighteenth century. During this period, the old powers of the Ottoman and Persian Empires were weakening and losing their ability to control areas at their fringes, but the Europeans that would come to dominate the area had not yet made their influence felt. During this time, the disparate and small tribal Sheikhs began to combine and form larger alliances, most importantly the Bani Yas and Qawasim tribes. When the British in particular began to expand the scope of their operations, it would be these groups with whom they would deal, and whom they would strengthen (Crystal 1990, 16; Peterson 1991, 1435).

The initial years of European colonialism saw little change in the area that would later become the UAE. The Portuguese and Dutch, followed by the British, had little interest in directly administering the area because of the lack of observable valuable resources. Its legitimate economic pursuits consisted of nomadic herding, farming in the oases, fishing, pearl diving, and trade. This last was a primary impetus for establishing the British establishing control over the area and, so long as these were properly overseen, what the ruling Sheikhs did in the other arenas was of little concern. This state of affairs would come to an end at the close of the eighteenth and into the nineteenth centuries, when the interests of the British, the primary colonial power at the time, began to be threatened by pirates sailing from the area and the encroachment of other European. The legal backing for imperial rule would come in the form of

a series of treaties signed with individual Sheikhs that successively placed what became known as the Trucial States, after the truce imposed on them by the agreements with the British, more and more under imperial control (Crystal 2007, 154; Peck 1986, 26-28).

The first of these treaties was signed with Oman in 1798, and was a direct result of the threat of another European Empire, namely the French, and corresponded with Napoleon's invasion of Egypt. The treaty was designed therefore to solidify Britain's hold against the French threat. The reason the British were concerned with protecting the Gulf from the French was the danger posed to British communication lines to India were their imperial competitors to establish a base there. Acquiring land for the empire was a secondary concern; as a British Political agent in Bahrain put it: "We took no territory for ourselves, but were jealous lest others would" (Crystal 1990, 17). These lines were threatened not only by other Europeans, however, but also by raiders sailing from the so called "Pirate Coast", comprising the Qawasim Sheikhdoms of Sharjah and Ras al-Khaimah. These attacks resulted in the British conducting expeditions against the area, culminating in another treaty prohibiting aggression against their ships in 1820, to which all the Sheikhs of the area agreed (Crystal 2007, 154; Peck 1986, 28-31).

This was insufficient for the British, though, because it still allowed raiding and warfare between the Sheikhdoms that could threaten their allies and create chaos that would disrupt trade. A series of temporary truces was therefore signed, beginning in 1835, preventing violence and naming the British as the arbitrator of disputes. These were made permanent in 1853, when the Sheikhs signed a treaty calling for a complete cessation of all conflict at sea. The Sheikhdoms would come more and more under the influence of the British as the prohibition against conflict was extended to land and enforced by the latter's agents. The Exclusive Agreement of 1892, would solidify imperial control by relinquishing the foreign affairs of the

Sheikhdoms to the British and prohibiting them from disposing of any territory to competing states. The British took on the rôle of the imperial protectors of the region from outside influence, which worked well for them as one of the primary reasons for their undertaking these treaties in the first place was to prevent other European powers from gaining influence in the area (Cordesman 1997, 291; Zahlan 1978, xii;).

Colonial rule after the treaties of the nineteenth century would have a profound impact on the future of the UAE. The cessation of hostilities between Sheikhdoms, the creation of a linkage between sovereignty and territory, the strengthening of some families over others and the elevation of tribal Sheikhs to a new form of monarchy all occurred under the British. This took place, not because they were the direct desires of the imperial power, but as a byproduct of the relative indifference of the British toward most matters. Until the discovery of oil, there were no resources in the area that interested the British, and so there was no need to directly administer it through a viceroy as they did India. They maintained relations with the rulers but, at least in the beginning, did not interfere in the selection of those leaders. Their enforced peace, however, served to solidify and strengthen the political units they found and ensure that they would remain to independence. Their focus on preserving trade, however, shifted the balance of power from the interior to the coasts, as it did in most colonial entities, helping create the divide between the Northern and Southern Sheikhdoms that would persist to today (Crystal 1990, 17; Gotlieb 1982, 42; Heard-Bey 1982, 290-291; Herb 1999, 30; Kamrava 1998, 77; Magnus 1980, 388; Zahlan 1978, 6-7)

Prior to the colonial period, conflicts between the Sheikhdoms were not rare events, and in fact a large dispute between two tribal federations gripped the entire region in the nineteenth century. This originated in Oman, and was based around a dispute over succession there by the

ulema, the religious elite, as they were considered the legitimate claimants to the title of Imam, by which the ruler of Oman was known. The two most popular contenders were leaders of the major tribal federations of Oman. This dispute split the entire area into two major factions based on which tribal alliance they backed for control of Oman. Allegiance was split between the Hinawi, supporters of the Bani Hina, and the Ghafiri, supporters of the Bani Ghafir. In the Trucial Coast, this split fell along familial lines, with the tribes of the Bani Yas facing off against the Qawasim. The Bani Yas claimed the ruling families of Abu Dhabi and Dubai, while the Qawasim controlled Sharjah and Ras al-Khaimah. This split was further exacerbated by religious differences: the Qawasim adhered to the Hanbali legal school of Islam, while the Bani Yas and the other Hinawi tribes followed the Maliki school. It must be noted however that this jurisprudential argument this was not involved in the original dispute as the Omani tribes are of a different sect entirely. The split went beyond the limits of religion and politics and into economics. The Qawasim were known primarily for sailing, an area in which they were weakened in the nineteenth century. The rise of Dubai as an economic competitor to Sharjah, and its eventual establishment as a more central port city, weakened the peaceful side of Qawasim power. The treaty of 1820 further weakened them by outlawing the raids for which they were infamous. Possible rivals of the Bani Yas were prevented from opposing them by the peace treaties signed with the British, and so they gained, through those agreements, a stability in rule previously unknown in the area (Heard-Bey 1982, 133, 273-277; Zahlan 1978, xii-xiii).

As these conflicts were forced to a lower level by the British, which has been maintained to the present, they also created the political structures found in the modern UAE. The very concept of a European style state was introduced, with sovereignty exercised over a bounded territory replacing that exercised over a specific group of people, primarily during the early

twentieth century. The oil companies that were exploring the area at the time needed demarcated borders in order to make concession deals, and the British obliged. The precursors to the large bureaucracy of the modern UAE were established in the latter years of colonial rule as money began to flow into the rulers' coffers. The adoption of secular, Western law alongside *shari'ah*, or Islamic law, was also begun by Western-oriented rulers in the imperial period. The establishment of English as an official second language, to the point that most Emiratis became in subsequent generations at least conversant, is a further holdover from the colonial days, when a large amount of education and business was undertaken in English (Crystal 2007, 155; Gotlieb 1982, 42; Heard-Bey 1982, 290-291; Herb 1999, 30; Kamrava 1998, 77; Magnus 1980, 388; Zahlan 1978, 6-7).

The latter portion of the colonial period saw the rise of a new form of government: dynastic monarchy. This manner of rule is characterized by a strong and large central government whose primary offices are held by members of the ruling family, who serve to connect the ruler to the people, and who have a large voice in selecting that leader. Prior to the advent of this form of government, the ruling Sheikh was threatened both internally and externally. What central government existed was small, having little room for the ambitious to establish themselves within the system. The ruler's most powerful family members, instead of serving within the organization he headed, ran their own fiefdoms that could serve as a base for support if they chose to go against the Sheikh. Those small bureaucracies delivered little in the way of services, such as health care or education, and employed few. This lack of social programs meant that the populace and, perhaps more importantly, the ruling family had little economic incentive to support a particular ruler. This situation would come to an end when oil began flowing from Abu Dhabi and, to a lesser extent, Dubai and Sharjah, allowing their rulers

to expand their bureaucracies, employ their family members, and provide social welfare programs to their populace (Herb 1999, 21-22, 51).

The end of the colonial period and the discovery of oil also saw the start of one of the most important aspects of the present day UAE: the importation of large amounts of foreign labor. This was necessarily and primarily due to the lack, and narrow focus, of education in the country prior to the oil boom. Technical skills in most areas were virtually non-existent, and so foreign expertise had to be brought in to drive the UAE's rapid economic modernization, as well as fill out the lower ranks of the armed forces (Bahgat 1999, 130; Cordesman 1997, 307, 333, 336-337; Kazan 1993, 88; Lootah 2006, 240; al-Saeed, Shaw and Wakelam 2000, 64, 69; Magnus 1980, 391).

The colonial period officially came to end when the UAE gained its independence from the British in 1971. This occurred, not because of a bloody rebellion as took place in other areas or because the British suddenly decided that imperialism was wrong, instead, self interest convinced them to let go their colonial holdings, just as it had pushed them toward taking control of much of the Arabian peninsula. The beginning of the end came when India and Pakistan gained their independence in 1947. This eliminated the most important reason the British had established their hold over the Trucial Coast in the first place: the need to keep the lines of communication with India open. As the time delay indicates, the British did not pull out immediately because a new resource had risen in importance to replace the cotton that had drawn the British to India: oil. Massive deposits were found around the Persian Gulf, making the Trucial Coast important both because of its own possible reserves and its proximity to proven reserves. To protect their interests in the area's oil reserves, the British kept troops stationed in Sharjah, but this would prove to be politically untenable. The economic cost of holding on to

their empire, and the ill will toward colonialism in Britain because of the dangers of wars of independence, convinced the British to withdraw from their protectorates (Crystal 2007, 155; Fox, Mourtada-Sabbah and al-Mutawa 2006a, 21; Heard-Bey 1982, 336-337).

The British announced their intention to withdraw in 1968, giving their holdings three years to decide on how to face independence. The British encouraged the seven Sheikhdoms that would become the UAE, along with Bahrain and Qatar, to unite into a federation so that they would be better able to survive. It was felt that a federation would be a more stable entity than nine independent, small, and extremely oil rich city-states that would have likely lacked the military capability necessary to preserve their autonomy from the regions powers, most notably Iran. A larger union that combined the resources and costs of each Sheikhdom would prove better able to achieve the progress towards economic modernization and independence that, since the discovery of oil, became paramount. Traditions in the culture of rivals allying against external threats strengthened this argument of solidarity. The British had, since the 1950's, encouraged the seven states to work together in the Trucial States Council that would closely resemble the future Supreme Council (Cordesman 1997, 292-294; Fox, Mourtada-Sabbah and al-Mutawa 2006a, 21; Heard-Bey 1982, 342; Koury 1980, 37-39).

Locally, the push for federation was spearheaded by the ruler of Abu Dhabi, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan al Nahyan. The oil wealth of his territory, along with his personal leadership abilities, would prove instrumental in the formation of the UAE. Bahrain and Qatar, however, were bitter rivals against each other and chose to go it alone, as did Ras al-Khaimah at first. That Sheikhdom's leader, Saqr bin Muhammad al-Qasimi, the "Napoleon of the Gulf", had a rivalry with the Sheikh of Sharjah as well as a wariness of the control Dubai and Abu Dhabi would be given due to their wealth. Because of difficulties in negotiations, the Bani Yas rulers of Abu

Dhabi and Dubai decided to declare a federation in 1971, and invite the others to join. Sharjah, Ajman, Fujairah and Umm al-Quwain did so almost immediately. It was not until the Shah of Iran seized the Tunbs, islands to which Ras al-Khaimah laid claim, that that Sheikh realized he could not survive on his own surrounded by larger, wealthier, and more powerful neighbors. Coupled with the realization that he needed economic assistance for development after hopes of oil strikes proved unlikely, this pushed the Sheikh of Ras al-Khaimah to thereafter join the UAE in 1972, bringing the number of Emirates to seven (Anthony 1975, 106; Cordesman 1997, 292-294; Fox, Mourtada-Sabbah and al-Mutawa 2006a, 21; Heard-Bey 1982, 368-370; Koury 1980, 37-38).

Governmental Organization

Political Structures

The government that emerged in 1971 was a federation of the seven states, with each holding considerable power over its internal policies. However, national authority is exercised by the Supreme Council and the National Assembly, which can be seen as something of a bicameral ruling body. The upper chamber is the Supreme Council, on which sit the Sheikhs of the seven Emirates, and which has the responsibility of confirming the president. The lower chamber, the National Assembly, has forty members apportionately based on the size of the respective Emirates. This organization closely resembles the family councils that have been the ruling

bodies in the area for generations. As traditionally Abu Dhabi holds the presidency, Dubai holds the post of Prime Minister, and these two Emirates have the most seats in the National Assembly and veto power in the Supreme Council, they are the deciding voices in the national government. Despite this, the smaller Emirates are not without a voice, as decisions of the supreme council are made by consensus (Cordesman 1997, 295; Fox, Mourtada-Sabbah and al-Mutawa 2006a, 22).

While theoretically a union of equals, Abu Dhabi and Dubai hold the majority of power through certain procedural guarantees, economic preeminence, and tradition. Abu Dhabi has the largest oil reserves in the UAE and, by virtue of both that wealth and its sheer size, has become the most powerful of the Emirates. Abu Dhabi provides a large portion of the UAE's federal government, and so commands the loyalty of the smaller Emirates by virtue of their reliance on the larger state's benevolence. Shaikh Zayed also contributed to this preeminence through his skills as a ruler and his rôle, with the power of Abu Dhabi at his back, as the most prominent proponent of federalism in the country. He went so far as to endanger Abu Dhabi's stability by creating conflict with some of his more powerful family members, the Bani Khalifa, when he disbanded the cabinet in an effort to strengthen the national government. He had to spend more of Abu Dhabi's money in stipends, as well as allocate important positions for members of that branch of the family in order to placate them, but was willing to do so in the cause of federalism. This combination of wealth and leadership led Abu Dhabi to become the leading Emirate and made Sheikh Zayed's position both unassailable and hereditary (Anthony 1975, 104-106; Cordesman 1997, 291, 294; Crystal 2007, 181; Herb 1999, 137,140).

Each Emirate is supposed to put half of its oil income into the federal budget, but in reality they exercise a great deal of independence in economic terms. Politically, any power that

is not specifically granted to the federal government is reserved for the individual Emirates. Each Emirate also has a great deal of autonomy in terms of law and enforcement. Though the federal government claims supremacy in these matters, the dispersion of the different apparatuses among the states weakens that assertion. Each Emirate has an independent police force, and it was not until over a decade after independence that a unified judiciary was established. Even after that, each Emirate retained a degree of independence, particularly in the area of *shari'a* law where they are in complete control. Dubai and Ras al-Khaima have chosen to remain outside of the federal judicial system entirely. The fact that they are able to opt out of this says much about the amount of power that actually rests in the federal government. Even the intelligence and military services are not fully under federal jurisdiction. All the Emirates, save Ajman, have an independent military force, and those of Abu Dhabi and Dubai are substantial. The intelligence services, though officially united, are in fact divided up among the Emirates (Cordesman 1997, 294-295; Crystal 2007, 182; Peterson 1988, 92).

While monarchical, each Emirate does not fall under a European definition of the term, especially as concerns primogenitor, because authority does not pass automatically from father to son, but goes to the family member thought most able in the tradition of tribal leadership. This has prevented the sort of problems that have arisen in other monarchies, in which imbeciles, psychopaths or children may well gain the throne by virtue of birth order. This can create chaos as the elites rebel against an incapable ruler, or a conflict arises as a young monarch comes of age and must wrest power from his regent. All the major figures and power holders in the area must accede to the new ruler by giving their *bay'a*, or allegiance, something that is usually gained by an aged ruler for his chosen successor through deals made with notables. The qualification for being someone of whom the new ruler will require *bay'a* is that they have the

ability to prevent the future Sheikh from taking power. By giving everybody who might prove a reasonable contender to the throne a voice in picking the new ruler, future threats are mitigated. Further, there is a wide range of people, all male, from which a future ruler may be selected. The current Sheikh's brothers, sons, grandsons, even nephews and cousins are all fair game. This wide range of potential candidates virtually ensures that somebody will be found to whom all the relevant parties can agree (Herb 1999, 26-27, 237-238; Khalifa 1979, 104-105).

Dubai's high place in the UAE's hierarchy also precedes independence. Through long standing ties with Iran and India, and the construction of modern port facilities, it became the most important trading center in the UAE, a position it wrested from Sharjah. Oil was also discovered in Dubai around the time of independence, greatly increasing their wealth, though not to the point of Abu Dhabi. Built on that foundation, Dubai has become the representative of the UAE's rapid economic modernization with massive construction projects, such as the world's tallest building and largest mall, and has also established itself as a major tourist area (Abdullah 1978, 134-136; Cordesman 1997, 291, 294).

Sharjah holds an intermediary position between the wealth and power of Abu Dhabi and Dubai, and the relative poverty of the smaller Emirates. It has oil reserves, though they are smaller than its neighbors and are running out. Also, a fair portion of its reserves lie on the island of Abu Musa, which has been under the control of Iran since the Shah occupied it following the withdrawal of the British. It is also a historic military center for the country, as the British had major bases there (Cordesman 1997, 291, 294).

Military

The armed forces of the UAE is split into two sections. The larger portion is the federal army tasked with the protection of all seven Emirates. This is composed of troops from all the Emirates, and is based in the capital of Abu Dhabi. The military of the UAE lacks cohesion, however, and its command structure is divided up among the Emirates. While the major military forces of the country were officially integrated in 1976, the reality is less unified. Each Emirate controls at least some independent military force, with Dubai having independent command of two full brigades. Some of the forces that have been officially placed under federal authority remain under the command of one or another of the Sheikhs. Officers tend to be loyal, not to the federal government, but to the ruling Sheikh of the Emirate from which they were recruited and in which they command. The individual Emirates also maintain control over arms imports, despite the fact that they were supposed to be brought under federal control at the same time that the forces were unified. The command structure for the entire force, as well as its degree of participation in regional military exercises, shifts according to the vagaries of both internal and external politics. These conflicts have had a detrimental effect on the quality of the UAE's armed forces. Their equipment is not standardized due to the uncoordinated system of arms procurement system, and they have difficulty operating as a unified force. While they have effective smaller units, poor policies for promotion and logistics, along with an inability to cooperate on joint training exercises, heavily impairs their effectiveness (Cordesman 1997, 297, 341, 345, 360).

Military arms purchases are hampered by more than the lack of cohesion among the Emirates, however, as they are based in many cases on criteria that have little to do with the equipment's actual effectiveness in potential combat situations. The UAE has purchased weapons from a number of different Western countries, choosing who to do business with and

how much to buy based on whether the leadership wishes to draw closer to one nation or another, instead of which one offers the best equipment at the best price. They have also placed a great emphasis on acquiring the flashiest combination of military technology possible, with little concern for whether it can actually be incorporated into their existing forces. The net result of placing these considerations over military effectiveness is that there is a lack of uniformity in military equipment. The extraordinary range of technology prevents anything resembling efficient or effective training and maintenance programs (Aburish 1997, 87-88, 105-106; Cordesman 1997, 345, 347, 358, 365).

Perhaps the greatest danger facing the UAE's military is the demographic reality that most other employers in the country also face. It is composed largely of non-nationals, though citizens hold most key sensitive positions, which has created problems in the past and may continue to do so in the future. When the ruling Sheikh of Ras al-Khaimah attempted to use his military forces against Oman, he was faced with the stark reality that the majority of his troops were Omani and refused his orders. Since this incident, the UAE's leaders have substantially increased military pay in an attempt to ensure loyalty. They have also expelled between six and seven thousand Omanis from the armed forces, and have attempted to increase the numbers of native Emiratis. While those numbers are on the rise, the simple fact is that the country lacks a native population large enough to fill its military through voluntary means and does not have sufficient authority to impose a draft. Because of this, they continue to recruit heavily among foreigners. Citizens of other Arab countries make up a large portion, as do Pakistanis, and there are even a small number of Western officers (Cordesman 1997, 297-298, 351, 353).

The military is highly connected to that of more powerful nations, most particularly Britain and the United States. The UAE gets extensive training assistance from both these

countries, and has drawn particularly close to the US since Iran threatened them in various ways in the 1980's. The UAE undertakes joint training exercises with US forces, and its navy has trained with that country's, as well as the British and Indian. The UAE also signed a military pact with France following the first Gulf War that emphasized training. Despite this assistance, though, the UAE's military is far from able to deal with its potential enemies³, and so has made deals for more direct protection from its more powerful allies. The UAE contributed nearly 6.5 billion dollars in aid and equipment during the first Gulf War, provides facilities for the US Navy, and is attempting to reach similar deals with other Western nations (Cordesman 1997, 298-299, 373, 377-378; Kechichian 1993).

Within the military, the UAE lacks unity in multiple areas. Its units are split and combined based on the whims of internal political conflicts among the Emirates, and the armed forces have limited experience working as a cohesive unit. Its procurement policies for weapons have given the country a vast array of equipment that in many cases do not function optimally together and on which its personnel have limited training. This is not a situation unique to the country. In 1983, Sultan Qaboos bin Sa'id al Sa'id of Oman spoke dishearteningly of the military preparedness of the Gulf States as a whole:

Let us be frank. We do not possess the military capability needed to confront the other side . . . we do not have the army that can defend the security of the Gulf. There are those who think that having sophisticate weaponry is important to this end. This is not sufficient without proper knowledge of how to use them. Those who know are the ones who manufactured [these weapons]. It is good that we have sophisticated arms, but we have to learn to use them (Quoted in Khalaf 1987, 22).

³ See the section on Foreign Relations, p26

Despite occasional rhetoric to the contrary, the UAE's forces lack the ability to function as an effective defensive unit, a fact that is well known, making the armed forces an ineffective deterrent as well. The Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC), an alliance and economic union made up of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman and the UAE, was formed partly as a response to this, in an attempt to combine the military forces of the small Gulf countries into a single, formidable alliance. Its unity has been hampered, however, by political disagreements. Despite efforts to fix all these military problems, from training programs to regional alliances, it seems likely that the UAE, along with the rest of the Gulf, will be dependent for the foreseeable future on more powerful, Western nations for its security (Cordesman 1997, 361; Kechichian 1985, 853, 881).

Conflicts

Elite Politics

The UAE has experienced a number of conflicts among the upper levels of government that threatened its unity, prosperity, and even its existence. Internally, disputes between the Sheikdoms devolved into full scale war prior to independence, and lower levels of tension have existed at various times since. Crises of succession have occurred, and palace coups are not unheard of. Although the expansion of the federal bureaucracy and the inclusion of the royal family among its upper echelons provided the area some stability, its history is still not a peaceful one (Herb 1999, 51).

One incident that occurred soon after independence seems to have been a holdover of old tribal conflicts based on, perhaps, the most important resource in this arid land: water. A dispute occurred between Dubai and Sharjah over a water well that erupted into violence. When

residents of Sharjah attempted to make use of the well over the objections of Dubai, the future Ruler, Muhammed bin Rashid al Maktoum, shot at them from a helicopter. The residents of Sharjah responded by shooting down the helicopter. A similar incident occurred in 1972 involving the forces of Sharjah and Fujairah. (Burrell and McLachlan 1980, 125) Even when times and economies change, when desalination plants and agreements reduce the need to fight over water rights, culture takes longer to change (Zahlan 1978, xviii).

A long term conflict has existed between the related, though rival, leaders of Abu Dhabi and Dubai. In the most obvious display of this rivalry prior to independence, a border dispute escalated into a war in 1945 that lasted three years, and the British exercised their colonial authority to push a temporary ceasefire. A permanent settlement, however, would not be reached until after independence. Other, less violent power games continue. Abu Dhabi has used its wealth to exert greater influence on its fellows than its simple constitutional power would grant. It recently dictated policy to Dubai in return for bailing out that Emirate in the recent financial crisis. This division has brought in the other Emirates, with Ajman generally siding with Abu Dhabi while Sharjah and Umm al-Quwain line up with Dubai (Cordesman 1997, 298; Heard-Bey 1982, 67, 302, 311).

Problems also exist between various Emirates in relation to their individual foreign policies which, in many cases, have been pursued independently of the official position of the UAE as a whole. Fujairah is closely tied to Oman, due in part to the fact that it is bordered on two sides by that country, and during the colonial period, Fujairah repeatedly declared its loyalty to the Sultan of Oman and spent much of its energy severing ties with its Qasimi neighbors and former lieges. In general, the bloc of Dubai, Sharjah and Umm al-Quwain have closer relations with Iran than their neighbors. This became particularly tense during the Iran-Iraq war, when the

two factions within the UAE favored opposing sides. Abu Dhabi backed Iraq and sought to strengthen ties with the GCC, a move that Dubai opposed for fear that it would strengthen its rival. This division publicly ended after Iran attacked oil facilities owned by Abu Dhabi, mined waters near UAE facilities and bombed one of Sharjah's offshore facilities, the UAE took an official stance against Iran, headed by Abu Dhabi. Despite the need to publicly stand with its neighbors, however, Dubai continued to maintain strong economic ties with Iran. (Cordesman 1997, 298, Heard-Bey 1982, 72-74).

Ras al-Khaimah seems to have its own agenda when it comes to the internal conflicts within the UAE. Its ruling Sheikh attempted to seize land and an oil field from Oman, but failed due to the disloyalty of his troops, the majority of whom were Omani. This encounter posed a danger and warning to the rest of the Emirates, as they too had a large number of Omanis in their armed forces. The Sheikh of Ras al Khaimah continues to pursue a far less friendly policy towards Oman than his fellows, and he is also thought to be interested in breaking up the country by forming a separate nation with his relatives, the rulers of Sharjah (Cordesman 1997, 298-299).

In order for the UAE to function, the individual Emirates that make up its federation must be stable. To do so, each of these has adopted a manner of ruling found in the other countries of the Persian Gulf and which, though some aspects of the current government resemble traditional forms of rule, did not come about until the discovery of oil. This form of rule can be called dynastic monarchy, because it incorporates the entire royal family into the process of government. Before the discovery of oil and the wealth it brought, Sheikhs did little in the way of public works or social welfare and so they had limited bureaucracies. What they did do, however, was kept entirely in their hands. Important family members that had to be appeased were given fiefdoms which they ruled largely independently and which could serve as a basis of

support for overthrowing the ruler. This is what occurred in Abu Dhabi prior to independence, as Sheikh Zayed ruled the Buraimi Oasis before he overthrew his brother. When the government began to grow with the newfound oil wealth, one of its major uses was in appeasing members of the royal family that had previously been threats. Instead of giving prominent figures their own mini-states in which to build up independent support, they were given high level posts in the government, making their livelihood dependent on the state (Herb 1999, 21-22, 45; Zahlan 1978, 57).

There is disagreement as to how novel a form of government this is. Michael Herb relies on Jill Crystal's work in arguing the development of bureaucracies following the discovery of oil. She claims that family member played a minimal rôle in government prior to this expansion of central government. The modern dynastic monarchies, though, seem more connected with their traditional antecedents than they might at first appear. Before oil, the ruler consulted regularly with the notables of the ruling family, being forced to heed their advice on issues of importance because of their ability to overthrow him and ascend the throne. He included them in his *majlis* and paid them salaries. The main difference, then, seems to be the growth of a bureaucracy and its domination by the ruling family, with the awarding of high positions to prominent family members replacing the older practice of granting fiefs (Anthony 1975, 107; Crystal 1990, 11-12; Zahlan 1978, 5).

This bargaining especially occurs around successions, ensuring that all relevant parties agree to whomever takes the throne. Disagreements over the succession are solved through bargaining and consensus, as it is in the interest of all members of the royal family to maintain the dynastic integrity. As has already been seen, the wide range of potential aspirants for the crown and the necessity to appease the major members of the royal family ensure that at least a

somewhat capable ruler is chosen. At the same time, whoever is considered the second most important member of the family is commonly given the rôle of crown prince, preventing a challenge from that quarter. Rivals are appeased through generous handouts from the state's oil treasury or through the granting of cabinet and high bureaucratic posts. In this way, the greatest source of strife in each of the Emirates was eliminated. The profusion of potential rulers and the monopoly the ruling family has over the main areas of power ensure that outsiders would find it extraordinarily difficult to bring the regime down. Though the entire monarchy of a place like Iran could be overthrown by eliminating one man, dozens would have to be removed to assault a dynastic monarchy, and the size of the necessary conspiracy would likely be uncovered by the pervasiveness of the royal family in all aspects of the society (Herb 1999, 236-238).

Internal problems within individual Emirates also have the potential to pose a threat to the nation's stability. This region had a less than stable political system prior to independence, and a number of coups and assassinations have assailed the individual rulers, primarily at the hands of their own family. One coup that had perhaps the greatest impact on the country's future was the one that brought Sheikh Zayid to power in favor of his brother, Sheikh Shakhbut. Zayid was able to overthrow his brother primarily due to the latter's stinginess with the Sheikhdom's newfound oil wealth, although the immorality of his sons made the case easier. By promising cushy posts in a still-to-be-made bureaucracy and generous stipends to members of the royal family, who had been left out of the division of wealth in the more traditional system, he brought that powerful force onto his side. The British supported his move in the hope that a unitary, bureaucratic state like those of other Gulf countries would provide more stability by co-opting the royal family, the source of a large portion of the conflicts that occurred in the region (Graz 1990, 172; Herb 1999, 136-137).

The history of Dubai has also not been overly peaceful. From his ascent to the throne in 1912 until 1939, Said bin Maktum was faced with a rebellious faction of his own family that at one point took over a portion of the city. This threat was ended when his son and future Sheikh, Rashid, led Bedouin in a charge against the dissidents and drove them out of Dubai. That same son would later face a challenge from his uncle, Juma, during the waning years of Said's rule, when Rashid was taking over much of his father's duties. While Juma held a fairly strong position, and had built the sort of parallel government that traditionally posed a threat to rulers, Rashid was able to convince the British to come in on his side and drive his uncle out. Rashid then took the place of his father as ruling Sheikh upon the latter's death in 1958, and would rule until his death in 1990 (Herb 1999, 141,144).

Sharjah has had more recent problems than its neighbors and the present ruler, Sheikh Dr. Sulran bin Muhammed al Qasimi, has had a less than peaceful reign. He took power in 1972 following the assassination of his predecessor, Sheikh Khalid, by *his* predecessor, Sheikh Saqr, in a failed palace coup. In 1987, Sheikh 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn Muhammad al-Qasimi, attempted to depose his brother, and succeeded for a few days. The UAE's supreme council negotiated a compromise that put Sultan back in power and named Abd al-Aziz as the crown prince. This created further divisions within Sharjah, as the two leaders favored opposing sides in the low level conflict between Abu Dhabi and Dubai. While the coup was short lived, it endangered the unity of the country by the threat of the rulers of other Emirates taking sides. Dubai supported Sheikh Sultan, while Sheikh 'Abd al-'Aziz was the favorite of the ruler of Abu Dhabi. A threat emerged to the potential unity of the young country whereby the two leading Emirates could have sent troops to support their favorites. This division was not reconciled, and an agreement to end the coup was not reached, until Dubai pointed out that the coup posed a threat to all the

rulers of the UAE. Part of the justification for ‘Abd al Aziz’s coup was that Sultan owed his position to the British, an argument that could conceivably be made about most or all of the ruling sheikhs (Cordesman 1997, 308; Crystal 2007, 180; A. H. Khalaf 1987, 32).

While there have been no major crises of succession since the attempted coup in Sharjah, the waning years of Sheikh Zayed’s rule was a nervous time in the UAE, and some thought the questions of succession would tear the union apart. He had been the leading figure in the UAE since its founding, and fears of how the federation would survive without him abounded. Ultimately, these fears would prove unfounded, as Zayed’s son and crown prince, Khalifa, assumed power peacefully following his father’s death in 2004, despite speculation that his brother would vie for power. This may have been due in part to a series of appointments made on the eve of Zayed’s death that served to pacify various elites. Similarly peaceful successions have occurred in the other Emirates as well, most notably a series of peaceful changes of power in the other major Emirate, Dubai, brought the current ruler, Mohammed bin Rashid al Maktoum to power. This seems to have been a result of a series of negotiations within the ruling family that insured the loyalty of the more important personages, insuring a more peaceful rule than his predecessors enjoyed (Cordesman 1997, 296-297; Crystal 2007, 180; Fox, Mourtada-Sabbah and al-Mutawa 2006a, 23).

The future of the UAE’s unity may well rest on one question: have the population and rulers of the UAE have come to think of themselves as a single entity? Some argue that the disunity among the military and bureaucracy of the UAE, as well as conflicts over its ruling elites, is counterproductive to the formation of national identity (Cordesman 1997, 297). Others believe that the rulers and people of the UAE have slowly developed a level of trust and identity over the decades since independence that will prevent serious crises from occurring in the future

(Fox, Mourtada-Sabbah and al-Mutawa 2006a, 21-23). It seems somewhat naïve to think that the thirty-seven years since independence have been sufficient to create a unified national consciousness. Instead, a division of federal offices equally among the North-South alliance that dominates the UAE insured the acquiescence of the various rulers to the new President. Practical concerns of economics, security and familial bargaining, particularly among the smaller Emirates, seem more likely to preserve the federation than short term concepts of nationalism (Crystal 2007, 182).

Foreign Relations

Areas of economic importance, due to their water and oil resources or strategic location, have, and in part remain, in dispute between the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Oman and Iran. These are all major trade partners, and two of them are fellow members of the GCC, so these conflicts pose an inherent threat for the well being of the UAE. A dispute with Saudi Arabia that dates back to before independence concerns an area of extreme economic importance, the Buraimi oasis. This important agricultural area with the potential for oil was the subject of a conflict between Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Oman. This came to a head when Saudi and Omani forces both occupied the oasis, the latter at the behest of Abu Dhabi. In 1956, the British drove the Saudis from the oasis because of their responsibilities as the imperial protector of Abu Dhabi. A treaty between Saudi Arabia and the UAE was negotiated in 1974, but its validity remains in doubt as neither government has officially ratified it. These problems are largely a result of the undemarcated borders that the UAE shares with its neighbors, a holdover to the more traditional method of exercising sovereignty based on people and not territory. These sorts of issues may soon be a thing of the past, however, as the GCC has made it a priority to settle the various border disputes between its member countries and, so far, has proven fairly successful, having aided in the

demarcation of the border between the UAE and Oman (Bearce 2003, 362; Cordesman 1997, 292).

Perhaps of greater importance are a number of islands in the Persian Gulf that are under dispute with Iran. The seizure of the Tunbs in 1972 is what prompted the Sheikh of Ras al-Khaimah to join the federation. The most important of these islands, however, is Abu Musa, which is administered by Iran but claimed by Sharjah. It is extremely important strategically, as its position makes it a potential staging point for the closure of the straits of Hormuz against Gulf shipping and it possesses oil off its coast. Iranian control over the islands was not originally overly onerous, as first the Shah and then the Ayatollah agreed to share oil revenues and allow Arab citizens to remain. This changed after the Iran-Iraq war when Iranian troops seized the island entirely and expelled anybody who did not hold an Iranian passport. This move is a potential threat to the UAE, as it brings Iran's military, particularly its Scud missiles, even closer. Abu Dhabi alone would have warning in the event of an Iranian attack, and the proximity of the two country's territorial waters, their extensive and relatively unmonitored trade, and the feared fifth column of the large Iranian community in the Northern Emirates has created a somewhat volatile situation (Cordesman 1997, 300-303; Gotlieb 1982, 50).

Problems have also haunted the unity of the Arab Gulf states under the GCC, ranging from disputes over foreign policy to internal conflicts between the member countries. In terms of foreign policy, the Gulf states have in the past differed over their stance toward Iran and Iraq, with Abu Dhabi in particular wanting to support Iraq as a counterbalance to Iran in opposition to Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Following the Gulf War, the UAE sought to establish closer relations with Tehran as a counterbalance to the influence of Saudi Arabia. The UAE has also interfered in the domestic politics of its neighbors, particularly Qatar. Along with Saudi Arabia, the UAE has

shown preference to the deposed former Emir, Sheikh Khalifa, over his son and present Emir, Sheikh Hamad. As the GCC is the primary alternative to even more extensive ties to Western nations, a politically tricky proposition due to the actions of the United States since 9/11 and the view that religious conservatives take toward them, conflicts in that union pose a serious threat to the UAE's well being (Cordesman 1997, 304-305; Kechichian 1993, 96-97).

More direct threats have also menaced the UAE in the past, and its leadership has proven itself adept at *realpolitik* in dealing with them. The Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979 posed a threat to all the monarchs of the Gulf, who felt that they could be deposed by Iranian backed Islamists. This led to support in the Gulf for Iraq's invasion of Iran, despite the former lukewarm relations between the monarchies and republics of the Arab world, although that support was anything but universal. Abu Dhabi was the most hostile toward Iran while the Northern Emirates, even after direct attacks by the Ayatollah's forces prompted an official stance against that country, maintained economic ties (Cordesman 1997, 298-299).

This situation reversed itself soon after the end of the Iran-Iraq war. Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait posed an implicit threat to the other small Gulf countries that lacked the military might to defend themselves from their neighbor. In response, they not only welcomed the US's presence in Saudi Arabia and its use of force to push the Iraqi troops out of Kuwait, but aided them. UAE territory was used as a staging point for US troops, the UAE supplied troops for the GCC portion of the force that went into Kuwait, and the Emirates spent approximately \$10 billion to aid the coalition in fighting Saddam Hussein. These moves were carried out with far more agreement than previous foreign policy decisions because Iraq was seen as a serious and direct threat as Saddam Hussein had spoken of the UAE in the same terms as he had Kuwait before the invasion. The UAE could not stand against Iraq, any more than it could conceivably

stand against Iran in the near future, despite extensive arms purchases and training programs. Because of this, the government has made extensive deals with Western militaries, particularly the US as it has taken over Britain's rôle as the preeminent military power in the area. (Cordesman 1997, 299, 373, 377-378).

The UAE has close economic ties with the United States, and is in large part dependent on that country for its defense. This relationship poses problems for the UAE, as it is forced to balance the will of its people with the desires of its primary backer. This conflict was particularly noticeable in the leadup to the US invasion of Iraq, something disliked by a large portion of the Arab public. Combined with an Israeli occupation of the West Bank, this produced a large amount of anger throughout the Arab world, forcing the various regimes to walk a delicate line. The UAE's leadership risked the anger of the US by refusing to aid in the toppling of Saddam Hussein, but did not fully appease their own people by not taking an aggressive stance towards Israel or entirely severing ties with the United States (Cordesman 1997, 361; Fox, Mourtada-Sabbah and al-Mutawa 2006a, 24; Lynch 2006, 176-178).

Culture

Traditional Strengths of the Regime

The regime of the UAE has a number of ways of ensuring that its citizenry not only tolerates it, but supports it. The government's ability to tie itself securely to the mainstays of the local culture means that a large number of those who considers themselves traditional or religious feel a sense of loyalty toward the various monarchies that make up the federation. In a society that has historically revered tradition, they have been able to institutionalize themselves and therefore cast any opposition as radical.

The monarchies are able to claim traditional legitimacy by tying themselves to older forms of rule. Unlike in other Persian Gulf states, the citizens do not call their ruler sultan, emir, or king, all names associated with an absolute sovereignty not historically found in this region. Instead, they are referred to as Sheikhs. This is the term employed by the leader of a tribe, something with which traditional Emiratis would identify, and has traditionally been associated with consultative, and not absolute, rule. Though the majority of the population is settled, many claim both a tribal identification and descent from Bedouin. Rule in the UAE is not individualistic, but familial, and the Sheikh of the most prominent family in an area becomes that area's ruler. The leader of the country is not truly a President in the Western sense, but a first among equals of ruling Sheikhs, each of which maintains his position through clientalistic relations with subordinate Sheikhs. This is important because, especially during the early years of the country, loyalty to family far outweighed any feelings toward a place, country, or nationality. This has remained largely true, and to this day loyalty to the family, tribe and Sheikh far outweigh any allegiance to nationalism, a European Enlightenment construct that has not taken root in the area. A number of mechanisms exist that allow the people to communicate with the ruling Sheikh, both officially and unofficially. Their concerns may be communicated directly through a *majlis*, a type of traditional consultative council that has been maintained in the modern state. The National Assembly is also an effective area for political discussion. Though it is appointed by the rulers, discussion seems fairly independent and, because sessions are open and reported in the media, the people are at least given some voice. Though neither of these forums can exert actual power over the ruler, the open discussions and the seriousness with which they are taken by the rulers seems to indicate that it can serve as a replacement for the democratic processes that keep the leader related to the people in other countries. This is

particularly true in Abu Dhabi, which is more traditional and tribal in nature, and less so in Dubai and Sharjah due to their cosmopolitan nature and strong, non-tribal merchant class (Clark 1980, 491; Cordesman 1997, 296; Graz 1990, 174; Herb 1999, 178-179; Kamrava 1998, 77-78; Koury 1980, 7-8; Long 1978, 5; Peterson 1988, 100; Peterson 1991, 1437).

The same mechanism that ensures loyalty among the elites, dynastic monarchy, also helps to keep the rest of the population involved in the government. Ruling families are large and spread out across all areas of society, government and business. Each leading member has a wide network of people with whom he interacts on a daily basis. Because they are keenly and personally interested in the survival of the dynasty, they use their connections to bring concerns to the ruler and insure that major discrepancies between policy and the public will not go unnoticed. The ruling family serves as an unofficial intelligence network that, due to its size and ability to communicate freely with the ruler, serves well to maintain the ties that bind citizens to their government. In other monarchies, notably that of the waning years of the Shah of Iran, the ruler is insulated from the will of the people, and is able to ignore advice that he finds unappealing, sometimes to the downfall of the government. This is not possible in a dynastic monarchy, as there are always family members who are willing to tell him when he is doing something dangerous or foolhardy, and who have the power to remove him if necessary. Though the rulers are not constrained officially by the will of the people, the degree to which their concerns are allowed to be raised, and the fact that they actually seem to be heeded, affords the government a great deal of legitimacy. (Herb 1999, 45, 178-179, 238; Kamrava 1998, 78-79).

Tribal loyalty, perhaps the most traditional aspect of the UAE's governance, is still prevalent in some areas. Six prominent tribes exist in the country and include in their ranks the ruling families. Two of them, the Bani Yas and the Qasim, hold the thrones of two Emirates

each. A fair portion of the population, therefore, is able to connect itself by blood and marriage in some way to the royal families of the Emirate in which they live. This is most prevalent in Abu Dhabi, which at the time had the highest proportion of nomadic tribes, and the poorer Emirates, where tribalism is the primary source of allegiance to the ruler, and least so in Dubai, where the goal of establishing itself as a trading center led the people to establish greater external ties and in some ways abandon more traditional allegiances. Despite the prominence of tribal affiliation, very few citizens of the UAE are nomadic, though those few have proven themselves important. They have served as a traditional mainstay to counter the influence of the rising education among the middle class, but since independence the numbers of people who identify with a tribe has been dropping, putting in doubt the future of this support of the regime (Clark 1980, 497; Crystal 2007, 177-179; Herb 1999, 52-55; Peck 1986, 62-64).

Equally, or perhaps more, important than the authority granted by traditional leadership is that borrowed from religion. The Persian Gulf area is arguably one of the most religiously conservative regions of the world, having had far less contact with other non-Islamic faiths and cultures, and the UAE is surrounded by explicitly religious states. The Islamic Republic of Iran lies across a short water way, and Saudi Arabia, the home of Wahhabism, shares an undemarcated border with the UAE. This extremely orthodox Islamic sect stands in contrast to the Maliki legal school followed by most Emiratis, but is more closely related to the Hanbali school followed by the Qawasim, who have historically been allied with the Wahhabis. There is also a sizable Wahhabi following in the Buraimi oasis, which is related to Saudi Arabia's claim over the area. The UAE's population is overwhelming Muslim, even when non-citizens are taken into account, and a large amount of them would identify as conservative. Religion is a major way of identification for Emiratis, something they share that stretches across tribal and economic

distinctions. This is a potential threat to the regime, as other countries have experienced violent challenges from this quarter. Shi'a communities are believed to have helped foment opposition movements following the Iranian Revolution, though this was less of a problem in the UAE than in Bahrain or Eastern Saudi Arabia. Approximately sixteen percent of the population is Shi'a, and so questions of loyalty from that sector are important. During the Iran-Iraq war, preference for Iraq, particularly in Abu Dhabi, angered some in the UAE, namely leftist and Islamist publications in the UAE. These opposed the dictatorial, secular, and aggressive Saddam Hussein and were cautiously in favor of Iran, at least until the government shut them down. Saddam Hussein though was at least nominally Muslim, in the cases of the US and other un-Islamic states, close relations with those countries further degrades the regime's claim to religious legitimacy (Carroll 1986, 197; Central Intelligence Agency 2009; Dougherty 1980, 281; Heard-Bey 1982, 133, 278-279; A. H. Khalaf 1987, 19-20; Mainuddin 1999, 126-128; Peck 1986, 29-30).

The rulers of the UAE have found a number of ways to tap into this religious potential. Islam is the recognized official religion of the country and moves have been made toward enforcing Shari'a, or Islamic law. The UAE has had Shari'a courts alongside civil ones since the founding of the country, and these has been particularly paramount in recent years, after the jurisdiction of those courts were expanded. Nearly all criminal crimes can now be tried in Shari'ah courts, although there have been some complications. In 1990, Ras al-Khaimah experienced some chaos when a judge attempted to enforce some of the harsher penalties found in Islamic law, prompting an outcry from less strict areas of society. The UAE also maintains a

close watch on, and relationship with, the generally locally trained Imams⁴ in the country and they put a large amount of money into funding friendly religious leaders and building mosques. The leadership has therefore been fairly successful in making the religiously conservative nature of its population a strength instead of a threat (Cordesman 1997, 296; Crystal 2007, 182-183; Peck 1986, 60-61).

Changing Culture

If traditional culture is such a mainstay of the regime's legitimacy, what does modernization and globalization mean for the UAE's survival? Both forces have been closely linked with Western values, modernity since the invention of the term in Europe's enlightenment and globalization since Western liberalism became its paramount philosophy following the Soviet Union's downfall. Using tradition as a stronghold at founding made perfect sense: with high poverty, low literacy, and limited connections with the rest of the world, that was an area upon which the regime could lie. Things have changed, however, since the discovery of oil and the rapid modernization that it has brought. Globalization has entered the Gulf and remade the landscape, both human and physical. This has made cities like Dubai and Abu Dhabi among the most cosmopolitan in the world. Understanding these changes, and how the government of the UAE has responded to them, is essential for gauging the durability of this important support for the system.

One of the main factors in altering culture is education. In the pre-colonial UAE, traditional schooling was minimal and religiously based. The rote memorization of the Qur'an

⁴ Based on anecdotal evidence, particularly among the Imams that Emiratis visit

was paramount, along with basic calculation, and was taught by religious figures, called either a *mutawa* (a religious man or woman) or *kutub* (clergy). What higher education was available was similarly focused on religious instruction and basic mathematics. The goal of this type of curriculum seems to be a highly religious literati that has the basic skills necessary to succeed locally at business. One important factor of this time that has been maintained to the modern day is that opportunities both for learning and teaching were equally available to men and women. In the modern UAE, women have a literacy level about five percent higher than their male counterparts, indicating a fairly equal opportunity for education, the accessibility of which women have taken advantage (Central Intelligence Agency 2009; Lootah 2006, 237; Peck 1986, 76-77).

The traditional mode of education would change with the establishment of British Imperial control. They understood well the importance of education, and would stamp their influence on the future of learning in the UAE. They feared growing trends in Arab nationalism among their holdings, and saw the opening of schools sponsored by other Arab countries as a dangerous movement. They therefore countered with their own institutions, to which locals were essentially paid to attend, which were designed to prevent nationalistic feelings from growing in the then Trucial Coast. These schools taught in English, although the British also encouraged Iran to open up a school for its communities, all in an attempt to prevent the development of an Arab identity. The results can be seen today, with English as an official second language in which many Emiratis are fluent, along with close connections with Iran, particularly among the Northern Emirates of Dubai and Sharjah, where large Iranian communities existed that were allowed to remain distinctly Iranian through their separate education. Educational programs have

continued to look Westward, and the US in particular has been a model for higher education since independence (Lootah 2006, 238; Peck 1986, 76).

Providing free and universal education would rank high on the agenda of the Sheikhs following independence when oil money began to roll in, these different trends would influence the future of education in the post-independence UAE, and the main question of what ideologies would be taught to the young Emirati. Immediately following independence, perhaps as a response to both anti-colonialism and the influence of Arab sponsored schools, Arab nationalism was a paramount force. This petered out in the 1980's following the downfall of Arab nationalism as an ideology throughout the Middle East, to be replaced by a more Islamic-oriented educational program. This coincided with the Iranian Revolution and the subsequent direct conflict between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the radical Arab nationalist Iraq, as well as the general rise of Islamist movements around the Middle East. More recently a national identity has been the focus of education (Bahgat 1999, 128; Lootah 2006, 238-240).

All these movements would prove hampered in some way or another. The UAE's ability to coherently educate its youth is impaired by the lack of local teachers, forcing them to rely on imported expertise that, coupled with the changing ideologies in education, creates a less than stable system. The focus of education has also not changed substantially from the limited goals of the pre-independence Gulf. English language learning, a holdover from colonialism, is ranked high on the list of requirements. Beyond that, hard sciences and business-oriented studies are given special attention, similar to the focus of pre-colonial education on basic calculation, at the expense of the humanities. This system is meant to produce people for the express purposes of the local labor market without the concern for a "well rounded" education like what is sought in the West. Also, the emphasis on rote memorization at the expense of problem solving and

creating thinking has been maintained. Universities were not allowed the freedom necessary to focus on the arts as they had been created and funded for a specific purpose: to produce trained bureaucrats (Bahgat 1999,130; Lootah 2006, 240; Magnus 1980, 391; al-Saeed, Shaw and Wakelam 2000, 69).

Beyond the effects of education, the wealth of the Emirates has created two ways in which foreign cultures can penetrate the UAE. Firstly, the massive influx of foreign labor has gotten to the point whereby the Emiratis are vastly outnumbered by foreigners. Secondly, increasing technological advances coupled with higher standards of living have increased exposure to Western media. This has created a potentially dangerous situation of social dualism, as those who have more increased contact with foreigners and, particularly among the younger generations, those who have received Western style educations and grown up watching satellite television, seem at first glance to have acquired an entirely different culture than that of their more traditional countrymen. Traditionalists accept women's education but still believe they should remain at home or within certain fields, in contrast to more Westernized segments of society. This has been challenged though, most notably in 2001 when the Sheikh of Sharjah, one of the more conservative Emirates, appointed five women to his consultative council. Modernists seek change in society, particularly in areas they see as hampering their country's development, while traditionalists view this as a threat to their cultural integrity. The more educated and Western oriented people in society are more likely to demand a greater say in decision making beyond what is allowed in the traditional consultative processes and see the tribal organization and nepotism found in the UAE as counterproductive for development. This movement is countered by the fact that the government is a major employer of the educated middle class, tying their prosperity to the regime. Traditionalists fear the chaos this may create by separating

the economic and political system from the particular culture of the UAE. Movements toward more openness have occurred, especially in Dubai and particularly in the economic realm, which have since spread to the other Emirates. This is supported by the more liberal minded among the population, but has been greeted with skepticism by traditionalists. The conflict is more complicated than simply the modern and educated versus the traditionalists, though. Shifts in education and regional ideological trends have split the educated into liberal and Islamic camps, with the latter siding with the traditionalists on many issues. These splits may have dangerous consequences as the ruling Sheikhs have to balance the needs of both halves of their citizenry. Whether they have the ability to appease those who have adopted to some degree or another Western values along with their more traditional supporters may decide the future of the state (Ehteshami 2003, 70; Halperin 2005, 1138; Lootah 2006, 242-246; Magnus 1980, 400-402; Snider 1988, 462-463).

The government has recognized the threat that such a large immigrant population poses to the traditional culture of its citizens, and has undertaken projects aimed at increasing the rôle of citizens in the national work force. Programs to increase the pay of locals and to force companies to hire them have been imposed, but with limited effect. While nationals are heavily employed in the public sector, and are taking an increasing rôle in the financial sector, it is unlikely that they would be willing to take the low paying jobs that make up a large portion of the UAE's economy, and their reported lack of efficiency when compared with their foreign counterparts, makes the imposition of a national labor force seem to be in opposition to goals of economic development. Attempts have also been made to reduce the number of foreign workers in the country and increase their turnaround rate by preventing them from bringing their families into the country or owning property. The threat of foreign workers has also been dealt with by

reducing the rôle that Arabs play in labor migration. By promoting the immigration of Asians, the government ensures that the immigrant population is sharply contrasted with the local, preventing mixing and actually promoting an Emirati identity (Fox, Mourtada-Sabbah and al-Mutawa 2006a, 15; Peck 1986, 68-69; Willoughby 2006, 225-226, 232; Winckler 1997, 484-485).

Despite this threat of conflict based on Westernization, the fact is that wholesale adoption of foreign values and culture has not taken place. A degree of secularization has occurred, but those who could be identified as secularists still recognize Islam as a major part of their heritage. Separation between the ethnic groups and particular manners of dress that identify locals help to prevent change from occurring too rapidly. Further, the presence of non-Arab communities is not something new to the Gulf, and a number of the immigrant communities are long standing results of the trading history of the major cities. Instead, a type of hybridization appears to have taken place, where those things found in globalization that are compatible with the core values of the people are taken and adapted. What change has occurred has done so with the permission and guidance of the governing elites. This is possible both because of the flexibility of the religion and culture, and the compartmentalization of society that has allowed different tribal groups to respond differently to modernization. A distinction of this sort can be seen most clearly between the traditional Emirate of Abu Dhabi and the more commercial and Westernized Dubai, with the latter adopting more Western norms at a far quicker pace. Economics, the area where many experts see culture as an unwelcome intrusion, is in fact defined by the locality. Just as the Protestant Work Ethic fueled the American economic system, so too has a merging of local culture and business occurred in the UAE. This is possible, as very few in the Gulf view modern economics as wholly incompatible with Islam, so long as it is done with attention paid to cultural

and religious values (Dougherty 1980, 308; Fox, Mourtada-Sabbah and al-Mutawa 2006a, 9, 42; Kazan 1993, 91; Magnus 1980, 387, 408; Peck 1986, 67-68, 85; Peet 1997, 40-42).

While it is true that there have been some changes, such as the degradation of the extended family in favor of the nuclear one, this has been minimal. While the appearance of the people may have changed, as the younger generations adopt Western clothing, leaving traditional dress for more formal occasions, and conduct business in English, scratching the surface reveals a reality far different. A survey of students at the American University of Sharjah, an English language university, shows their core values to be far different from their Western brethren. Even among the most educated and Westernized, traditional values of family, religion, and group solidarity remain paramount over Western ideas of individualism, personal achievement and material wealth. That this last is ranked so low (fourteen out of fifteen) may surprise people who have visited the UAE and seen the ostentatious displays of wealth, but the fact that this survey was conducted at the American University of Sharjah, which places its participants in the higher strata of society, might be explanatory. Wealth is not likely a great concern for those who have it in abundance. While Emiratis might show a public face of Westernization, their home life remains relatively unchanged and is focused on more traditional values. Ideals of family solidarity in this culture are too strong for a few decades of Western influence to alter to any great degree. For the most part, capitalism in the UAE has been practiced in conjunction with the strong family and community values of the culture, and conducting business in a manner favorable to kin over others is not considered corrupt. While some Westerners might view this as nepotism and corruption, the reality is simply that, unlike in Western culture, the pursuit of profit is secondary to, and generally for the purpose of, aiding the family (Fox, Mourtada-Sabbah and al-Mutawa 2006a, 9-10, 41; Long 1978, 6-7; Lootah 2006, 241-242; Peck 1986, 64-65).

The government has attempted to promote some ideas of traditional culture and aid in the development of a national identity by promoting their heritage. This has been particularly true in Sharjah, which has sought to establish itself as the country's cultural capital. The Sheikh has built museums and heritage districts, constructed for the express purpose of crafting the identity of Emiratis. They are made to think of themselves as distinct from the foreigners that make up a large portion of their country in an attempt to lessen the cultural effects of those outsiders. The UAE's government is also able to maintain traditional values through its extensive controls in the various areas of society. It censors material coming in that may be damaging to the identity it wishes to establish, and the economic elite, connected to the ruling families, promote traditional tribal identity by hiring based on kinship. (Fox, Mourtada-Sabbah and al-Mutawa 2006a, 13-15; Fox, Mourtada-Sabbah and al-Mutawa 2006b, 269, 275; Kazan 1993, 93-94).

Economics

History

Unlike most former colonial holdings, the economy of the UAE has not been entirely crafted by the old imperial powers. This region has employed traditional modes of production until the discovery of oil, which quickly became the most important part of the economy. Before that, the primary commodities were the pearls harvested from the Gulf, with reliance on that industry resulting in chaos with its ultimate collapse. The story of the UAE's economy has been a reliance on a single monocrop and attempts to diversify away from that weakness.

As has already been discussed, the British did not directly administer the Trucial States like they did some of their other holdings, primarily for simple lack of interest. The chief colonial legacies that have directly impacted the country's economics are the borders that

currently exist on the map, as the British arbitrated land disputes and encouraged peace among the formerly hostile Sheikdoms, notably in the war between Dubai and Abu Dhabi in the 1940's. These borders would prove important as in numerous cases they cut across oil fields, producing friction over desert and sea territory that previously wasn't worth fighting over, such as the island of Abu Musa (Burrell and McLachlan 1980, 127-128; Cordesman 1997, 291; Magnus 1980, 389).

Prior to the discovery of oil, traditional industries were the primary wealth producers. Fishing, herding, trade, and agriculture all played a rôle, but pearl diving was paramount. When the cultivated pearl became a viable alternative in 1930, this industry collapsed. Between that time and the discovery of oil, Dubai was the strongest economic force among the Sheikdoms due to its rôle as a center of trade, particularly for luxury items both licit and illicit, with shipping routes connecting it to India and Iran. For most of its history, it shared the status of entrepot with its neighbor, Sharjah, more famous prior to this time as a port of call for the pirates that attracted the attention of the British. That situation changed when Sharjah's harbor began to silt up, making it difficult or impossible for larger vessels to enter, and was ended altogether when Dubai's own harbor, or creek as it is known locally, was dredged with the aid of the British and major port facilities were built. These advances allowed Dubai to establish itself as a major, and perhaps the primary, trading port of the Gulf, a rôle it has maintained to this day (Crystal 2007, 179; Graz 1990, 184-185; Heard-Bey 1982; Long 1978, 18; Melamid 1997, 544; Zahlan 1978, 7).

Oil was discovered in Dubai and Abu Dhabi in the early 1960's and quickly became the most important fact of economic life. Large numbers of expatriates were brought in to work in the oil industry and the other areas that oil money created. The leaders of the UAE sought a

degree and pace of economic advancement that could not be fulfilled by the relatively uneducated local populace, and so foreign expertise had to be brought in. This rapid movement toward development was necessitated by political realities, the importance of which was shown in the coup in Abu Dhabi just prior to independence. Sheikh Zayed was put in power in favor of his brother in 1966 because of the former's delay in using the newfound wealth to modernize the Sheikhdom. The British supported the move because they feared the chaos that could result if the newfound economic wealth was not used properly to appease various areas of society. Dubai was quicker at using its oil money to promote its economy. It had a leg up in this area, as it had already established itself as a trading center. Since the discovery of oil, revenues derived from its production have been used to attempt to diversify the economy of all the Emirates, but Dubai and Abu Dhabi remain the most advanced (Crystal 2007, 179; Herb 1999, 136-137; Khalaf and Alkobaisi 1999, 272).

The UAE's massive oil reserves are extremely important, as oil makes up a large portion of the UAE's wealth, in whatever way it is measured. Foreign estimates that include industries tied to oil indicate that its production in 1993 made up around 55% of its GDP, 65% of its exports, and 95% of its government revenues. The last figure is particularly important. The government has a limited ability to extract resources from its population or implement unpopular policies. Although the non-oil economy has grown considerably over the years, this has in large part been due to a lack of taxation and the expenditure of oil revenues and makes the possibility of gaining funds through those areas problematic, meaning that government revenues will likely continue to be dependent on oil (Cordesman 1997, 311; Snider 1988, 462).

The UAE currently has 7.5% of the world's oil reserves and 3.5% of its gas. The vast majority of these reserves are in Abu Dhabi with Dubai, Sharjah and Ras al Khaimah all having

far less⁵. Dubai's production is dropping, and Sharjah in particular is problematic because a large portion of its oil is in an area currently under a territorial dispute with Iran. This situation has led to Abu Dhabi essentially providing handouts for its poorer neighbors, something that has historically been distasteful for the Qasimi rulers of Sharjah and Ras al Khaimah in particular to accept. Furthermore, oil is an inherently volatile commodity, as has been shown by the massive price drops in recent months. Though the government claims to plan for low prices in its budget, the current panicked calls in OPEC for reduced production and increased prices seem to suggest that they are concerned with the prospects for long term shortfalls (Favennec 2005, 189-190; Ibrahim 2007, 17; Long 1978, 17).

Diversification

The disparity between the oil rich and oil poor Emirates, along with the dangers of a monocrop economy, has led the government of the UAE to funnel money into programs designed to diversify their economy. These have been particularly pushed during, and as a result of, times when the volatile oil market has brought the price per barrel down to the point where economic crisis has been feared. Though they have occurred in all the Emirates, being funded by the richest in an effort to diversify, they are most notable in Dubai and Sharjah, which have both money and a large incentive to find other areas of economic growth so as to rise to the level of their larger neighbor, Abu Dhabi. On the whole, the UAE seems to have been successful so far, as it possesses the third largest non-oil GDP of any Middle Eastern countries, behind Egypt and Morocco, neither of which are major oil exporters. It has become a major center of business, shopping, tourism, and technology. It has also made significant investments in light industry and

⁵ See Appendix 2

some in heavy industry, with special emphasis on energy intensive projects, such as the smelting of aluminum, in which they have an edge due to their oil and gas reserves (Abdulla 2006, 183; (Crystal 2007, 184; Looney 1990, 514).

The richest Emirate in the country is the capital, Abu Dhabi. It is responsible for a majority of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), in large part due to its massive oil reserves. While Dubai shoulders the second largest portion of the federal budget, Abu Dhabi is responsible for up to 80% of the total, a large portion of which goes toward development and welfare programs in the smaller Emirates. This does not impoverish the capital, however, as the real per capita GDP in 1993 was nearly five times that of Ajman, the poorest Emirate. Abu Dhabi has undertaken some development and construction projects, though not nearly to the grand scale of Dubai. Perhaps its most important use of oil revenues is through its sovereign wealth funds. These massive funds invest in companies around the world in an attempt to ensure the Emirate's solvency outside of oil production. These have been marred by scandals, though, most notably with the purchase of the Bank of Commerce and Credit (BCCI), which had committed fraud prior to the buy-out. The Abu Dhabi authorities were forced to pay \$1.8 billion and followed up by tightening their regulations. Despite these setbacks, though, the fund remains large and fairly lucrative, with the Emirate's massive excess oil revenues, estimated at around a half a trillion dollars, making the fund one of the largest institutional investors in the world. They have also followed Dubai's lead in encouraging foreign investment by eliminating the client system, by which foreigners have to have domestic business partners, in some areas. Abu Dhabi's wealth, and the use of it to support its poorer neighbors, allows it to control national policy even more effectively than would be allowed by its holding of the Presidency (Cordesman 1997, 329; Crystal 2007, 185; Roy 2006).

Despite, or perhaps because of, its low level of oil reserves in comparison to Abu Dhabi, Dubai is perhaps the most striking, and certainly the most famous, case of diversification in the Emirates. When talking about economic development, Dubai is not compared to the other Emirates but is placed as its own entity among the GCC nations. It has used its oil wealth to build on its pre-oil status as a trading hub, along with its close connections to the merchants of Iran. It has built on its usurpation of the rôle as trade hub from Sharjah when it dredged its harbor by developing an extensive and modern trade network that includes the world's largest man-made harbor. This has all resulted in Dubai becoming a major transshipment hub (Crystal 2007, 185; Rizvi 1993, 673).

Dubai has established itself as a major destination for high-class tourism with, among other things, the world's largest shopping mall and its tallest hotel. International advertising has spread the word of Dubai's wonders. Year-round sunshine and weather that ranges from temperate to sweltering make its extensive beaches, including those on a series of artificial islands, popular destinations. It sells itself as exotically Arabian to its wealthy European clientele, while still providing extraordinary luxury. The stark beauty of the desert can be enjoyed on a roller coaster like excursion in the air conditioned luxury of four-by-fours. Shopping festivals and massive malls are either faintly reminiscent of, or garishly copying, traditional markets and souks. It has also sought notoriety through the purchase of sports franchises and the hosting of sporting events (Fox, Mourtada-Sabbah and al-Mutawa, 2006a, 6; Crystal 2007, 185).

Dubai is also attempting to become a major international finance hub, but is reluctant to grant such a potentially lucrative area the degree of autonomy that some, including the man they hired to draw up regulations for the banking industry, say it would need. In its industrial sector, it

has built and maintained the Dubai Aluminum Smelter, one of the largest facilities of its kind. As the process of smelting aluminum requires a large amount of energy, doing so in an area, like the UAE, with access to large reserves of oil makes economic sense. Its main areas, however, remain trade, tourism, construction, and the luring of foreign owned businesses. Its success in these sectors can in part be explained by its infrastructural development, the almost complete lack of taxes and its allowances in certain areas of 100% foreign ownership of businesses, something that goes against the standard of the rest of the UAE and attracts international investment. The skyline of Dubai is dominated by massive cranes and soaring construction projects, evidence of a real estate boom that began when Dubai chose to allow foreigners to own real estate. It has established enough international connections to become a regional core, standing alongside nation states with a periphery that ranges from the Northern Emirates to the Indian subcontinent (Abdulla 2006, 183; Crystal 2007, 184-185; Fox, Mourtada-Sabbah and al-Mutawa 2006a, 8, 48-49).

Much of the diversification that has occurred in Dubai, however, does not seem to be reliable or sustainable. Instead of investing in domestic production facilities, the Emirate relies on imports and construction, which have created a massive real estate boom whose bubble is beginning to collapse. Homes and office buildings sit empty as they were constructed and sold, not to actual prospective residents, but to speculators. Another area on which the economy is dependent is the re-exportation of goods to Iran and the states of the former Soviet Union. Either of these areas could, and to some degrees already do, enact protectionist policies that will dry that market up (Cordesman 1997, 314-315).

As Dubai has expanded as a core, its neighbors in the Northern Emirates have grown. Sharjah's main source of revenue is the extraction and exportation of natural gas, the funds from

which it has used to develop an industrial sector, a trading industry that, while it does not rival Dubai's, is still substantial as well as establishing itself as a major cultural and education center. This last is likely a direct result of the background of the ruling Sheikh, Sultan bin Muhammad al-Qasimi: at independence he was the most educated of the seven rulers, and has continued his studies since, now holding a doctorate from Exeter. He has built a massive higher education complex in the form of University City, anchored by the American University of Sharjah, and is also funneling money toward museums and the establishment of a cultural center. It attempts to use its proximity to Dubai to lure tourists to its arguably more "authentic" old city. It has failed to attract a large tourist industry, perhaps because of strict anti-alcohol laws turning off European travelers. It also has a large commuter community, as the high real estate prices in Dubai have encouraged a number of people to move to neighboring Sharjah (Fox, Mourtada-Sabbah and al-Mutawa 2006b, 268; Graz 1990, 190-191).

The poorest of the Emirates have not been as successful at expanding their economies, as they lack the massive funds accrued through oil wealth, and what progress has been made has been due to the wealth of the others Emirates, particularly Abu Dhabi. A large portion of the funds that pay the budgets of the poorer Emirates and invest in their development comes from their richer neighbors. Ajman has capitalized on the success of the other Emirates by establishing itself as, essentially, a suburb of Dubai and Sharjah, the three of which are merging into a globalised metropolis. It is currently the only Emirate that allows residents of any nationality to own property outright, making it an attractive location for investment and development. Fujairah is also dependent on its richer neighbors, receiving massive subsidies from Abu Dhabi. Furthermore, its major industries involve producing building materials to feed the construction booms in the richer areas of the country. Ras al-Khaima and Umm al-Quwain have made limited

progress in development, and what industries they possess tend to fall along the same lines as Fujairah. Despite these attempts, the four poorer Emirates remain dependent on their richer neighbors for the basic services that modern states are required to supply (Cordesman 1997, 294; Fox, Mourtada-Sabbah and al-Mutawa 2006a, 32; Rizvi 1993, 667-669).

Traditional modes of production have not been particularly successful, with agriculture being the most obvious. The extreme aridity of the environment prevents much growth in this sector beyond its traditional limits and the presence of oil wealth has limited the impetus to expand, or even maintain, those boundaries. The UAE allocates massive amounts of its limited water resources to agriculture, and sees poor labor efficiency. The country has approximately one-sixth the renewable water supplies per capita as the United States, and has been forced to rely on desalination. This, however, is extremely expensive and is only a reasonable solution for countries with a large and reliable energy supply and for the most fundamental needs. With the UAE's growing population, it is unlikely that it will be able to become self-sufficient in food production for the foreseeable future. (Cordesman 1997, 311-314; Kazan 1993, 83-84; Schuurman and Salib 1990, 22).

What success there has been in the UAE in terms of economic development has been built on cheap and easily controlled immigrant labor. Eighty percent of the country's workforce is foreign, and close to half of that is Asian. This has led one scholar to describe Dubai as "the most successful Asian nation in the Gulf"⁶ (Cordesman 1997, 308). This is not just due to the small population of nationals, though, as there is actually about fifteen percent unemployment

⁶ As the UAE is in Asia, the meaning of this statement is somewhat lost. The author, however, was referring to the South Asian nature of Dubai's economy

among nationals. Employers prefer foreign labor because they are cheaper and more efficient. Locals are thought to have a poor work ethic, and at times do not even show up to work. The poor public education system in the UAE, coupled with the tendency of nationals to seek lucrative, non-productive, jobs may also be to blame for the low value placed on citizen workers. On top of this, government programs to protect local workers make hiring them far more expensive and make firing them extremely difficult. This reliance on a work force that is not, and never will be, considered a part of the country makes nation-building a difficult proposition. On the higher end of the scale, educated professional expatriates work in the UAE in large part due to the high revenues, low cost of living, and lack of taxation. These are threatened in times of crisis, however, when their skills are needed most. In response to the oil price decline of 1993-1994, the expat population was targeted to fill out the government's coffers. Greater taxes and costs for visas and utilities were imposed, reducing the economic incentive that brought them to the country in the first place (Cordesman 1997, 307, 333, 336-337; Kazan 1993, 88; al-Saeed, Shaw and Wakelam 2000, 64, 66-67).

The UAE's economic development may be further hampered by increasing movements toward globalization. These processes seem unavoidable, with the pressure both from outside as well as domestic forces pushing the government towards opening up more and more to the international marketplace. While tourism may be aided by this openness, it seems unlikely that the country's limited industry will be able to compete with the larger and more established powers. Even with protective tariffs GCC-wide, the UAE runs a trade deficit, not including oil exports, with the European Union and US its largest sources of imports. While the modern infrastructure and lack of taxation of the UAE gives it an edge, more fundamental problems outweigh those advantages. Traditional modes of business that do not put profit making as the

primary goal will have trouble competing with Western corporations, such as the rules of Islamic banking that are put in place in many of the financial institutions in the country. The poor work ethic and, in some cases, less than modern education of many of the locals makes them less than ideal employees, and government programs to encourage their hiring are likely to reduce the efficiency of corporations that comply. Further, much of the UAE's economy is built on the exploitation of cheap and easily controlled labor. Aside from the fact that a reliance on the labor of non-citizens is less than ideal for nation-building, increasing openness and interconnectedness is likely to create greater pressure to sign human rights agreements and provide greater protections and rights to foreign workers, which could severely weaken the country's ability to develop. If those agreements extend to allowing foreign workers political rights and economic equality, clashes could occur between the immigrant population and the local citizenry (Cordesman 1997, 297; Fox, Mourtada-Sabbah and al-Mutawa 2006a, 13-15; Ibrahim 2007, 18, 72; Lootah 2006, 245; Schuurman and Salib 1990, 23; Willoughby 2006, 225-226).

Just as the UAE has unified and strengthened its constituents, so there have been moves to further unify the GCC countries for the betterment of all. They have attempted to use this larger grouping to compete in the international economic arena by investing in each other's countries instead of Western markets, trying to create a cooperative similar to the European Union, and have achieved some success. Tariffs between the countries were heavily reduced or eliminated in 1982, joint tariffs were imposed on external imports, and intra-regional trade has increased since the union's founding, though it still only makes up 5.8% of its exports and 8.4% of its imports. These movements have been limited, however, by the US, a major economic partner and military backer of all the countries that form the GCC. Thus far, it has refused to undertake any negotiations with the union as a whole, and provides economic incentives for

countries who do not show favoritism to other members. The UAE has responded, and has established extensive trade ties with the US, signing successive trade deals. (Bearce 2003, 360; Fox, Mourtada-Sabbah and al-Mutawa 2006a, 24; Ibrahim 2007, 7, 19).

While extensive efforts toward diversification have been undertaken, they are hampered by numerous and extensive problems. It is unlikely that the country as a whole will be able to wean itself from a reliance on the exportation of oil in the foreseeable future, and while the abundance of oil reserves in the UAE mean that this is not a dire threat, it does pose some problems. As the population grows at a pace outstripping job creation for locals and oil prices remain unpredictable, drops in per capita income are likely. The youth in particular will be effected by the lack of employment opportunities which, coupled with their educated and Westernized nature, will serve to widen the gap between them and the traditional, older generations. Continued reliance on oil will also result in Abu Dhabi gaining more and more influence in the federation as what oil the other Emirates possess runs out and their economic diversification efforts continue to limp along, generally dependent on the handouts of the federal government. Whether the other Emirates, particularly Dubai, will be willing to allow this rise in the capitals power to occur without protest remains to be seen (Cordesman 1997, 314-315, 381).

Economics and Regime Legitimacy

The flow of oil, along with all the other aspects of the UAE's economy, is especially important because of their direct effect on the ability of the regime to govern. One of the ways in which the UAE derives its legitimacy is the distribution of its considerable wealth to its population. Billions of dollars flow into the UAE every year, particularly to the richer Emirates of Abu Dhabi and Dubai, and most of that money goes directly to the government. This allows

the regime to shore up its rule, essentially buying the loyalty of its citizenry through social welfare programs and managing the economy in such a way as to benefit the UAE nationals, or Emiratis.

The first, and most obvious, example of the economic benefits awarded to Emiratis is the lack of taxation within the UAE. This provides the converse of “no taxation without representation”, as people feel less entitled to a say in government if their rulers are not funding themselves out of the citizenry’s pockets. The only taxes that are employed are essentially immorality fines: high levies placed on alcohol, which serves to shore up the regime’s religious and traditional supports. The lack of taxes also helps boost the UAE economy, as it raises the wages of workers and encourages the influx of skilled labor.

The high amount of foreign labor is yet another way in which the economy of the UAE is made to work for the citizens. Foreign expertise is brought in to educate Emiratis, or they are given aid to study abroad. Any low income, dangerous, or otherwise distasteful job is performed by foreigners brought in, in many cases, through funds provided by the government. The arriving foreigners put money directly into the pockets of many Emirati citizens, as they generally rent from locals. Nearly half the income of citizens in Dubai comes from rents, as do about twenty percent for citizens of Abu Dhabi (Dresch 2006, 209). These immigrants are kept strictly under the control of locals through various policies. A workers presence in the country is almost entirely dependent on the will of their employer, as they tend to hold the visa of the employee, who also do not tend to have much ability to move from one job to another. The ease with which labor can be imported, and the control over the worker afforded the employer, also allows a large number of Emiratis to employ household servants and nannies (Willoughby 2006, 232, 236).

The infrastructure and economic development programs employed by the government are seen by its citizens as aiding the country, and is immune from criticism of its methods because the people are not paying for it. A number of the major construction projects in the UAE are undertaken by members of the royal family drawing on government oil revenues. The roads being built, the wiring of the country, and the massive construction projects facilitated, and in many cases paid for, by the government are all seen as benefits without any cost. Not only are the services provided by government aiding corporations used by the citizens, but put money directly into the pockets of the Emiratis. Except for certain free trade areas, business have to be undertaken with local partners. These undertakings are not taxed, and are therefore given an edge in the international marketplace, bringing money in for the local Emiratis. A number of the choicest jobs are also held by Emiratis, a trend increased by the process of “Emiratization” that encourages the hiring of locals by imposing fines in some industries if a business does not employ Emiratis. These are hefty enough that it can be cheaper for a company to hire an Emirati who does not actually do anything than pay the penalty. Relevant skills, experience, work ethic, or even a willingness to show up at work are irrelevant; an Emirati will have no difficulty finding a job if he chooses (Fox, Mourtada-Sabbah and al-Mutawa 2006a, 7, 14).

This manner of redistribution maintains the status quo by reinforcing the traditional social order and providing more direct benefits than those of the economy as a whole. This started when oil first began to flow and the rulers used the funds to build the first schools, copying the way the British attempted to co-opt the locals. In the modern UAE, education, medicine, and land are free, utilities and foodstuffs are subsidized, and cash is directly transferred to locals in a number of ways. Just as Rome pacified its people through bread and circuses, the UAE provides its citizens numerous benefits for being Emirati so that they will find no tangible benefits in

challenging the regimes rule (Crystal 2007, 155; Fox, Mourtada-Sabbah and al-Mutawa 2006a, 11-15).

The policies of the rentier state are the most powerful source of legitimacy the regime of the UAE employs. If the people's stomachs and bank accounts are full, it is difficult to incite them toward rebellion. So long as the economy of the country remains strong, allowing these programs to continue, and the government does not go too far to undermine its other sources of legitimacy, it faces little danger of widespread popular dissent.

Enforcement

When the UAE's softer tools fail, they have a number of methods to deal with the resulting problems. Rebelliousness among the citizens is rare, but any actions that threaten the status quo are dealt with effectively. Perhaps more importantly, the UAE has a number of methods for controlling the country's immigrants. This group makes up a large majority of the country's population, and many of them do not benefit economically compared to the massive wealth they see around them.

No direct criticism of the government is tolerated, whether it comes from media, groups, individuals, or schools. Self-censorship forms the primary method of control over televised media and newspapers, and the internet has enforced bans on certain sites, though this last is easily circumvented. If news agencies do not censor themselves, the government has a number of methods at its disposal to enforce its preferences, some more direct than others. Radio and television stations are government owned and, while many domestic newspapers are not, they do receive subsidies that give authorities great influence in what is published. If that does not work, the government has shut down publications that have reported on areas that the government finds

disagreeable. Foreign publications are under even greater scrutiny and are far more openly censored for anything that would appear to go against the government, including criticism of the royal family or friendly states. The internet is also censored, and attempting to access web sites ranging from those deemed pornographic to the US State Department's report on the UAE's human rights violations are met with a message that the web page is blocked as it goes against the UAE's "cultural and religious values". These are all fairly easily circumvented by methods known to most who live there, and satellite television also offers what appears to be uncensored foreign programming (Cordesman 1997, 376; Kazan 1993, 93-94).

Political parties are outlawed in the UAE, though this ban seems somewhat superfluous as other regulations would limit their power. The parliament has no real power, and only half its members are actually elected. Any form of political organization is outlawed, including trade unions and student groups, and any gathering requires a government permit, which is almost never granted for political organizations. Protests and rallies are outlawed, individual discussions are also kept between known acquaintances and foreigners in particular, including teachers, will steer themselves away from being overly critical of the government. In this way, most political discussions are kept in private, between known acquaintances or in the private *majlises* held in people's homes (Cordesman 1997, 375-376; Crystal 2007, 183).

The police force is not overly oppressive, and is in fact one of the better controlled in the Gulf. The constitution of the UAE has several strong guarantees of human rights to which the government generally adheres, though with some exceptions. It prohibits torture, though *shari'a* courts do impose flogging as a punishment. Unwarranted search or arrest is also outlawed, though this is mitigated by the allowance of incommunicado detention without appeal. Invasion of privacy is prohibited, though there have been instances of the censorship of international

correspondences. Though the constitution establishes freedom of expression, criticism of the government, and the ruling family in particular, is limited. Religious worship is also assured by the law, though it does limit public religious actions. There are no known political prisoners and exile, a common manner of dealing with political undesirables, is not allowed under Emirati law. All these protections, however, have one glaring exception: foreigners. As they make up the majority of the population, these are seen as the primary security threat, and so are given special attention. The large Iranian population in particular is seen as a potential threat, and is subject to extensive monitoring. A close eye is also kept on the armed forces, especially the foreigners that make up the majority of its numbers. The primary method of dealing with troublesome foreigners is simple: they are sent out on the next available flight (Cordesman 1997, 374-377, Al Roken 1997, 96-98, U.S. Department of State 2009).

The large and, in many cases, impoverished immigrant community is a primary target of government controls and, according to some, human rights abuses. Poor and unsafe working and living conditions, refusal to pay salaries, debt bondage, and actual physical abuse, particularly women, have all been recorded. They have a limited ability to pursue their grievances with the laws against political activity and the refusal by the government to allow the formation of human rights groups. Foreign workers are generally excluded from even the limited political life of the UAE and, as many are not fluent in either Arabic or English, have great difficulty in getting their grievances heard. Any type of disturbance is broken up without delay, and any foreigner who involves himself in politics is subject to summary deportation. Employers are also granted extensive powers, including their holding the employees passports to prevent them from leaving and the fact that employees are almost entirely dependent on their employer for their ability to live in the country. Employees have little to no ability to switch jobs, as they are required to

leave the country in between employers. There are forums set up for complaints by employees, but these are understaffed, underfunded, and generally under-utilized for fear of reprisal (Cordesman 1997, 307, 376-377; Crystal 2007, 183; Herb 1999, 63-64; Winckler 1997, 485).

Conclusion

The UAE is a novel creation. It is a federation of seven unique and, throughout their history, rival Sheikhdoms. Each of these employs a manner of rule unique to the Persian Gulf monarchies, a combination of traditional tribalism and unprecedented wealth. The country as a whole is both one of the most conservative and one of the most globalized places on the planet. Gauging this country's future is like determining the life expectancy of a bridge built with no model or blueprint: potential stress points can be identified and their possibility of failure guessed, but its fatal flaw cannot truly be ascertained unless and until it collapses.

There are four possible sources of danger for the UAE: the threat of foreign powers, the breakup of the federation due to conflicts among the ruling Sheikhs, and the collapse of individual Emirates due to internal conflicts among the elites or an uprising from below. Outside dangers include Iran, lying just across the Straits of Hormuz, and conflicts of interest with neighboring countries. Clashes between the Sheikhs could result from border disputes, economic concerns, foreign policy disagreements, or old tribal disputes. The individual Emirates could fall prey to palace coups or clashes with prominent, but not ruling, families. They could also be endangered by losing contact with their population due to cultural dualism among the citizens or the poor treatment of the large immigrant population, or by problems in the economic realms.

Border disputes with neighboring countries concerning economically important areas, most notably the Buraimi oasis, do exist, and in the past these have resulted in armed conflict.

The Emirates has also interfered in the internal politics of a neighboring country, namely Qatar. These could spark off violent conflicts, but this seems unlikely due to the nearly three decade long history of co-operation in the GCC. The member countries have established treaties to make both their economies and militaries interdependent, and have allied against common threats. To these ends, the member countries have been attempting to solve potential sources of conflicts, and have made progress.

Outside the GCC, the most likely threat is Iran. The rhetoric of this country is decidedly anti-Western, which puts it at odds with the Western-allied Gulf monarchies, and aggression has occurred due to opposed foreign policies and conflicts over natural resources. Economic ties, particularly with the Northern Emirates of Dubai and Sharjah, counter these confrontational trends. What the future holds for this complicated relationship is unknown, and may well depend as much on the upcoming Iranian elections and the foreign policy of the United States as ideology or economics, but there do not appear to be any great tensions at the moment with explosive potential. If a conflict with Iran does arise, neither the UAE nor the GCC as a whole would likely be able to effectively combat it militarily. The UAE's alliances with Western powers, particularly the US, would prove a far more effective defense.

Like the GCC countries, the individual Emirates of the UAE have had their border disputes and violent histories. They have also had serious conflicts over foreign policy, and have allied into conflicting blocs. It seems unlikely, however, that the smaller, poorer Emirates will threaten the federation's unity: they rely on handouts from the federal government, which essentially means from Abu Dhabi. So long as that Emirate remains a wealthy and benevolent proponent of unity, they will probably remain. A greater question revolves around Dubai and Abu Dhabi, with their long running, and at times violent, rivalry. Dubai, though, has recently

shown itself dependent on the largess of its rival by selling \$10 billion worth of bonds to the federal government, which is backed by its rival. Essentially, then, the unity of the UAE rests on the leadership of Abu Dhabi's willingness and ability to keep the country together. This should be no surprise, as the formation of the country in the first place was largely a result of the statesmanship of Sheikh Zayed. While it may yet be too early to tell, Sheikh Khalifa so far has proven successful in steering the UAE through the present economic crisis, boding well for his ability to fill his father's shoes (Koury 1980, 8-12) (Merzaban and Irish 2009).

Within each Emirate, the possibility of disputes among the elites is entirely possible, as shown by the rather chaotic history of the area. Despite generations of palace coups and familial violence, however, the ruling families still hold sway, proving that the government and dynasty is larger than any individual Sheikh. Even this threat has been reduced by the growth of dynastic monarchy, which also makes it extremely difficult for outsiders to overthrow the government as the ruling family holds the main positions of power.

The final threat to the UAE would be popular uprisings in the individual Emirates. Each Sheikh relies on his relationship with his traditionally minded citizens and economic handouts to maintain his legitimacy. While there have been changes to the Emirati culture due to globalization, modernization, and large scale immigration, these do not appear to have been sufficient to endanger the regime. The ruling Sheikhs will likely be able to maintain a balancing act between traditionalists and modernists for the foreseeable future. The ability of the Sheikhs to maintain economic strength and social welfare programs is also likely to continue, barring the world suddenly no longer needing oil. Diversification efforts are important due to their ability to help the country weather volatile oil prices, but the ability of the country to weather even the

massive price drops of recent months indicates that the country's future does not hinge on these programs' success or failure.

Perhaps the greatest threat facing the UAE is its large immigrant population, vastly outnumbering native Emirati. These foreigners pervade every aspect of the country's work force, driving its economic development and manning its military and police forces. Unlike the local population, they have little cultural ties to the regime, lack even a minimal voice in politics, and are in the country for primarily economic motives. This is not a problem so long as times are good and foreigner and citizen alike are reaping the benefits. In less prosperous circumstances, though, the leadership will face a harsh dilemma: attempting to support the foreigners along with the native population would put a major strain on the economy, but the country would likely cease to function without them. If benefits are reduced for, or taxes imposed on, the immigrant population, the economic incentive that brought them to the country and keeps them politically docile will begin to evaporate. The government has programs in place to deal with troublesome foreigners, but these are based on forces populated by non-citizens. The UAE has been dealing with this demographic problem almost since its founding, though, and has not succumbed to its dangers yet. Whether or not it can continue to do so may be the deciding factor for the country's future.

The UAE has existed for thirty-seven years, and has faced numerous challenges in that time, both as a federation and as individual Emirates. Some of these have histories that stretch back for years before independence, while others are entirely novel. To date, it has navigated through these troubled waters ably, finding ways to deal with problems both old and new. Its greatest strength is not any single policy or economic mainstay, but the statesmanship of its leaders. So long as the country's rulers remain capable, its future is likely secure.

Appendix A

Al Nuhayyan, ruling family of Abu Dhabi, members of the Bani Yas tribal confederacy

Sheikh	Reign	
Zayid bin Khalifah	1855-1909	
Tahnun bin Zayid	1909-1912	Zayid bin Khalifah's son
Hamdan bin Zayid	1912-1922	Zayid bin Khalifah's son, Tahnun's brother
Sultan bin Zayid	1922-1926	Zayid bin Khalifah's son. Overthrew and killed his brother, Hamdan

Saqr bin Zayid	1926-1928	Zayid bin Khalifah's son. Overthrew and killed his brother, Sultan
Shakhbut bin Sultan	1928- 1966	Sultan bin Zayid's son. Succeeded Saqr after Khalifah bin Zayid, Saqr's brother, had him killed.
Zayid bin Sultan	1966-2004	Sultan bin Zayid's son, overthrew his brother
Khalifa bin Zayid	2004-present	Zayid's son, peacefully succeeded his father

Al bu-Falasah rulers of Dubai, members of the Bani Yas tribal confederacy

Sheikh	Reign	
Maktum bin Butti	1833-1852	Split from Abu Dhabi
Hashar bin Maktum	1859-1866	Maktum bin Butti's son
Rashid bin Maktum	1866-1894	Hashar's brother
Maktum bin Hashar	1894-1906	Hashar's son, contested by Rashid's descendents
Butti bin Suhayl	1906-1912	Hashar and Rashid's nephew
Sa'id bin Maktum	1912-1958	Maktum bin Hashar's son
Rashid bin Sa'id	1958-1990	Sa'id bin Maktum's son
Maktum bin Rashid	1990-2006	Rashid bin Sa'id's son
Muhammad bin Rashid	2006-present	Rashid bin Sa'id's son, Maktum bin Rashid's brother

Al-Qasimi, ruling family of Sharjah

Sheikh	Ruler	
Sultan bin Saqr	1803-1866	
Khalid bin Sultan	1866-1888	
Salim bin Sultan	1868-1883	Khalid bin Sultan
Saqr bin Khalid	1883-1914	Son of Khalid bin Sultan, overthrew his uncle, Salim
Khalid bin Ahmad	1914-1924	Saqr bin Khalid's cousin
Sultan bin Saqr	1924-1951	Saqr bin Khalid's son
Saqr bin Sultan	1951-1965	Sultan bin Khalid's son
Khalid bin Muhammad	1965-1972	Saqr bin Sultan's cousin
Sultan bin Muhammad (First	1972-6/17/1987	Khalid's bin Muhammad's

time)		brother
‘Abd al ‘Aziz bin Muhammad	6/17/1987-6/23/1987	Failed coup against his brother, Sultan bin Muhammad
Sultan bin Muhammad (Second time)	6/23/1987-present	Put back in power by a power sharing deal

Al-Qasimi, Ruling family of Ras al-Khaimah

Sheikh	Reign	
Sultan bin Salim	1921-1948	Son of Salim bin Sultan, ruler of Sharjah (1868-1883), governor of Ras al-Khaimah (1908-1919). First ruler of recognized, independent Ras al-Khaimah
Saqr bin Muhammad	1948-present	Sultan bin Salim’s nephew

Al-bu-Khurrayban, ruling family of Ajman

Sheikh	Reign	
Humayd bin Rashid (First time)	1838-1841	
‘Abd al ‘Aziz bin Rashid	1841-1848	Humayd bin Rashid’s brother
Humayd bin Rashid (Second time)	1848-1873	
Rashid bin Humayd	1873-1891	Humayd bin Rashid’s son
Humayd bin Rashid	1891-1900	Rashid bin Humayd’s son
‘Abd al ‘Aziz bin Humayd	1900-1910	Rashid bin Humayd’s brother
Humayd bin ‘Abd al ‘Aziz	1910-1928	‘Abd al ‘Aziz’s son
Rashid bin Humayd	1928-1981	Humayd bin ‘Abd al ‘Aziz’s son
Hamad bin Rashid	1981-present	Rashid bin Humayd’s son

Sharqiyyin, Ruling family of Fujairah

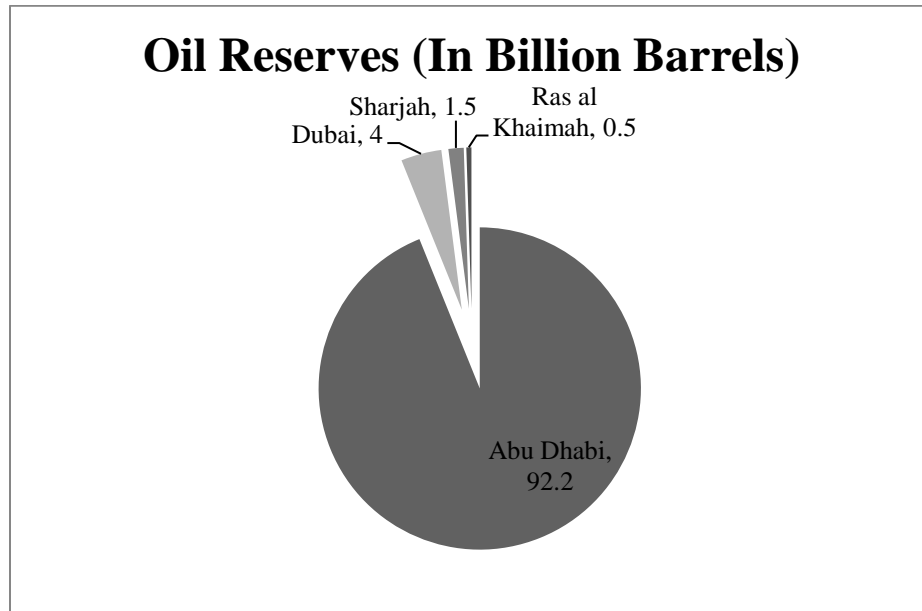
Sheikh	Reign	
Muhammad bin Hamad	1952-1975	First recognized ruler of

		independent Fujairah
Hamad bin Muhammad	1975-present	Muhammad bin Hamad's son

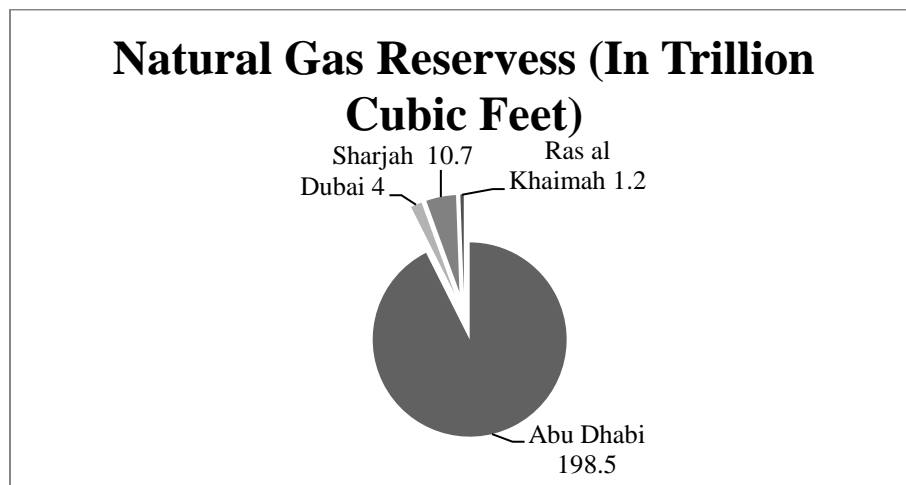
Al-‘Ali, ruling family of Umm al-Qaiwain

Sheikh	Reign	
Ahmad bin ‘Abdallah	1873-1904	
Rashid bin Ahmad	1904-1922	Ahmad bin ‘Abdallah's son
‘Abdallah bin Rashid	1922-1923	Rashid bin Ahmad's son
Hamad bin Ibrahim	1923-1929	‘Abdallah bin Rashid's cousin
Ahmad bin Rashid	1929-1981	‘Abdallah bin Rashid's brother, Hamad bin Ibrahim's cousin
Rashid bin Ahmad	1981-2009	Ahmad bin Rashid's son
Saud bin Rashid	2009-present	Rashid bin Ahmad's son

Appendix B



(Department of Energy 2007)



(Department of Energy 2007)

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