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## THE EMIRATES OF ABU DHABI AND DUBAI: CONTRASTING ROLES IN THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM

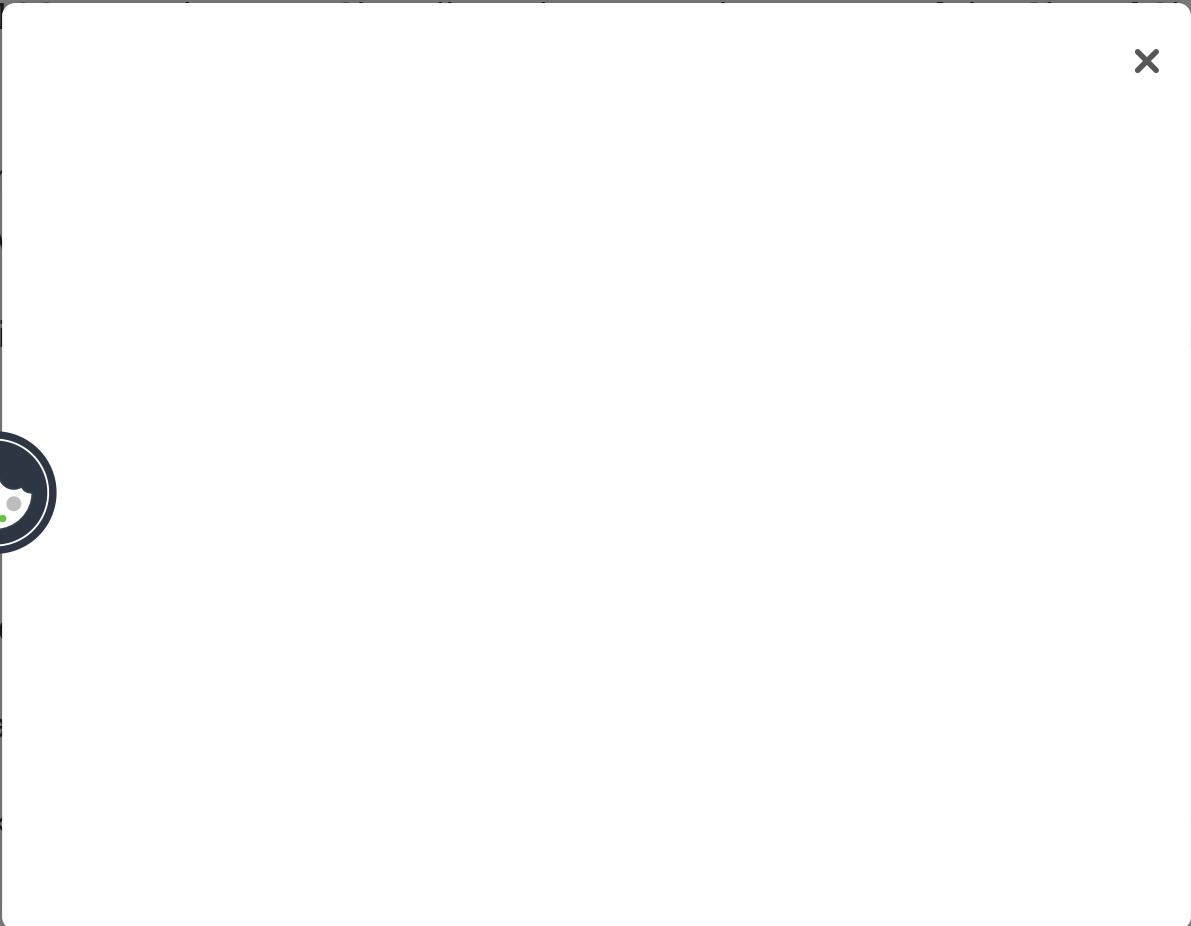
CHRISTOPHER DAVIDSON

Christopher M. Davidson is a Lecturer in Middle Eastern Politics at the Institute for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies at the University of Durham. He is a former Assistant Professor of Political Science at Shaikh Zayed University in Dubai, and is the author of the recent book *The United Arab Emirates: A Study in Survival*.

Almost everything is remarkable about the United Arab Emirates (UAE), from its enormous oil wealth and tiny indigenous population to its record-breaking socio-economic development, resting awkwardly astride one of the region's most opaque and constricted political systems. Most extraordinary of all, however, at least in terms of immediate impact and sheer visibility, is the stark contrast between the UAE's two most powerful constituent members, the emirates of Abu Dhabi and Dubai; a contrast made particularly spectacular given that their eponymous cities are just a 90 minute car journey apart. The skylines of both cities are dominated by modern steel and glass skyscrapers, but Dubai has always held the edge and can now boast some of the world's tallest and most innovative buildings, the flagship properties of many prestigious international hotel chains and real estate developers, man-made islands rising out of the sea, and enormous artificial lakes and canals. Moreover, while Abu Dhabi continues to exude a certain sleepiness and still retains many of its Arabic and Islamic traditions and customs, Dubai is well on its



1. Presidential Court Center for Documentation and Research, *Qasr al-Hosn: The History of the Rulers of Abu Dhabi, 1793–1966*. Abu Dhabi: Motivate Publishing, 2001, p. 179.
2. Muhammad Morsy Abdullah, *The United Arab Emirates: A Modern History*. London: Croom Helm, 1978, p. 104.
3. Personal interviews with Frauke Heard-Bey, Abu Dhabi, January 2004; also see *ibid.*, p. 181; and Presidential Court Center for Documentation and Research, *Qasr al-Hosn*, p. 201.
4. Rosemarie Sa'id Zahlan, *The Origins of the United Arab Emirates*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978, p. 12.
5. Frauke Heard-Bey, *From Trucial States to United Arab Emirates*. London: Longman 1996, pp. 189–191.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 245.
7. Muhammad al-Fahim, *From Rags to Riches: A Story of Abu Dhabi*. London: Center of Arab Studies, 1995, pp. 32, 38.
8. See Christopher M. Davidson, *The United Arab Emirates: A Study in Survival*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2005, p. 158; and 'The Reason for the Iran Connection', *Gulf News*, 21 August 1997, p. 1; and 'Shipping Agency'.
9. Hendrik ... s of the United A ... 1997, p. 86.
10. Presi ... n, p. 224.
11. *Ibid.*
12. Al-
13. Perso
14. Al-Fa
15. Shak ... e potential ... ler of Dubai during the tribal wars of the 1940s, see Derek Hopwood (ed.), *The Arabian Peninsula:*



Society and Politics. London: Allen and Unwin, 1972, p. 206; and Presidential Court Center for Documentation and Research, Qasr al-Hosn, pp. 246-247.

16. Salaries for these teachers and maintenance costs for schools were channelled through the Kuwaiti-backed Gulf Permanent Assistance Committee, see Davidson, *The United Arab Emirates*, p. 44; and Presidential Court Center for Documentation and Research, Qasr al-Hosn, pp. 246-247.

17. These families included members of the Sudan clan and the Qubeisat, see Presidential Court Center for Documentation and Research, Qasr al-Hosn, p. 235.

18. Personal interviews, Abu Dhabi June 2005.

19. Al-Fahim, *From Rags to Riches*, p. 94.

20. Personal interviews, Dubai, March 2005.

21. John Duke Anthony, *The United Arab Emirates: Dynamics of State Formation*. Abu Dhabi: Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research, 2002, p. 82.

22. The dredging operation was undertaken by the British Consultancy firm Halcrow's and the Austrian engineering company Austrian Ast.

23. These being the Trucial States Council and the Trucial States Development Office – both for

24. Give to discuss projects hand, see Heard-Bell

25. The g scandal, when th n, bringing four rings attached Arab Emirates don: Oxford Business

26. For a p. 21.

27. This the world. See Van Der Meulen, 'The Role of Tribal and Kinship Ties', pp. 76-78; and CIA world



Factbook. New York: CIA, 2005.

28. The CIA's 2005 estimate being \$25,200, CIA World Factbook.

29. This is the author's estimate based on the last official figure of 3.5 million listed in a 2003 UAE Central Bank report.

30. See Dubai Municipality, Results of Income and Expenditure Survey. Dubai: Administrative Affairs Department, Statistics Center, 1999, p. 133; and Davidson, The United Arab Emirates, pp. 145–146.

31. This is the author's estimate based on personal interviews in Dubai and Abu Dhabi, 2004.

32. For a general discussion of the reluctant transferral of powers to the federal government, see Davidson, The United Arab Emirates, pp. 199–208. For a specific discussion of control over oil policy and the ineffectiveness of the federal ministry see Davidson, The United Arab Emirates, pp. 204–205.

33. Abu Dhabi's stake is around 92.2 percent, with Dubai having 4 percent, Sharjah 1.5 percent and Ra's al-Khaimah 0.4 percent, see Van Der Meulen, 'The Role of Tribal and Kinship Ties', p. 77.

34. These are the findings of Van Der Meulen, 'The Role of Tribal and Kinship Ties'.

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37. Oxf

38. The  
ary 2004.

39. Oxf

40. Econ  
Unit, 200

41. The  
completed  
in late 2006, and now easily eclipses the Hilton's Burj Baynunah to become Abu Dhabi's



tallest building.

42. Personal interviews, Abu Dhabi, June 2005.

43. Oxford Business Group, Emerging Emirates, p. 43.

44. Personal interviews, Abu Dhabi, June 2005.

45. Oxford Business Group, Emerging Emirates, pp. 90-91.

46. 'Abu Dhabi Shipbuilding Profits Rise', Gulf News, 2 August 2005.

47. Al Sharan International Consultancy, United Arab Emirates Country Report. Dubai: Al Sharan International Consultancy, 2001, pp. 14-15.

48. Dubai's aluminium capabilities fall under the auspices of DUBAL - a semi-government parastatal.

49. Oxford Business Group, Emerging Emirates, pp. 90-91.

50. Davidson, The United Arab Emirates, p. 125.

51. Dubai Department of Ports and Customs, 'Dubai: Non-oil Foreign Trade', in Dubai Department of Economic Development, Development Statistics. Dubai: DDED, 2002, p. 109.

52. Personal

53. Dubai Department of Economic Development, Department of

54. Ibid.



56. David

57. Kevin ... London: Longman

58. 'Brid

59. For a more detailed, albeit now slightly dated discussion see Davidson, *The United Arab Emirates*, pp. 229–232.
60. Dubai Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing, 'Hotels and Tourists', in Dubai Department of Economic Development, *Development Statistics*, pp. 167, 172.
61. Davidson, *The United Arab Emirates*, p. 167.
62. *Ibid.*, p. 134.
63. Dubai Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing, 'Hotels and Tourists' in Dubai Department of Economic Development, *Development Statistics*, p. 167.
64. *Ibid.*, p. 171.
65. *Ibid.*, p. 172.
66. Personal interviews with members of the UAE Ministry of Finance and Industry, Abu Dhabi, January 2004.
67. Personal interviews with members of the UAE Ministry of Planning, Abu Dhabi, January 2004.
68. For a discussion of duplication of investments see Davidson, *The United Arab Emirates*
69. *Business Report*, London: [unclear] report.
70. See [unclear] of the Emiratization [unclear]
71. 'Bridging the Gap' [unclear] *Arabian Business*, p. 199 for a [unclear]
72. 'Bridging the Gap' [unclear]
73. *Ibid.* [unclear] Islamic Studies, [unclear]
74. Personal [unclear]
75. Economist Intelligence Unit, *United Arab Emirates*, pp. 4–5.



76. See Jill Crystal, *Oil and Politics in the Gulf: Rulers and Merchants in Kuwait and Qatar*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995; Davidson, *The United Arab Emirates*; and Michael Herb, *All in the Family: Absolutism, Revolution, and Democracy in the Middle Eastern Monarchies*. New York: State University of New York Press, 1999.
77. For a full discussion see Davidson, *The United Arab Emirates*, pp. 65–118.
78. For a discussion of ‘new rentiers’ see *ibid.*, p. 225.
79. *Ibid.*, pp. 73–77.
80. *Ibid.*, p. 252.
81. *Ibid.*, pp. 81–82.
82. *Ibid.*, p. 81.
83. Ra's al-Khaimah born and Al-'Ayn educated Marawan al-Shehhi was a UAE national. Personal interviews, undisclosed locations, October 2003. Also see Davidson, *The United Arab Emirates*, p.80; and ‘Fingers Point at Iraqi Leader as Evidence Grows’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 1 December 2001.

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