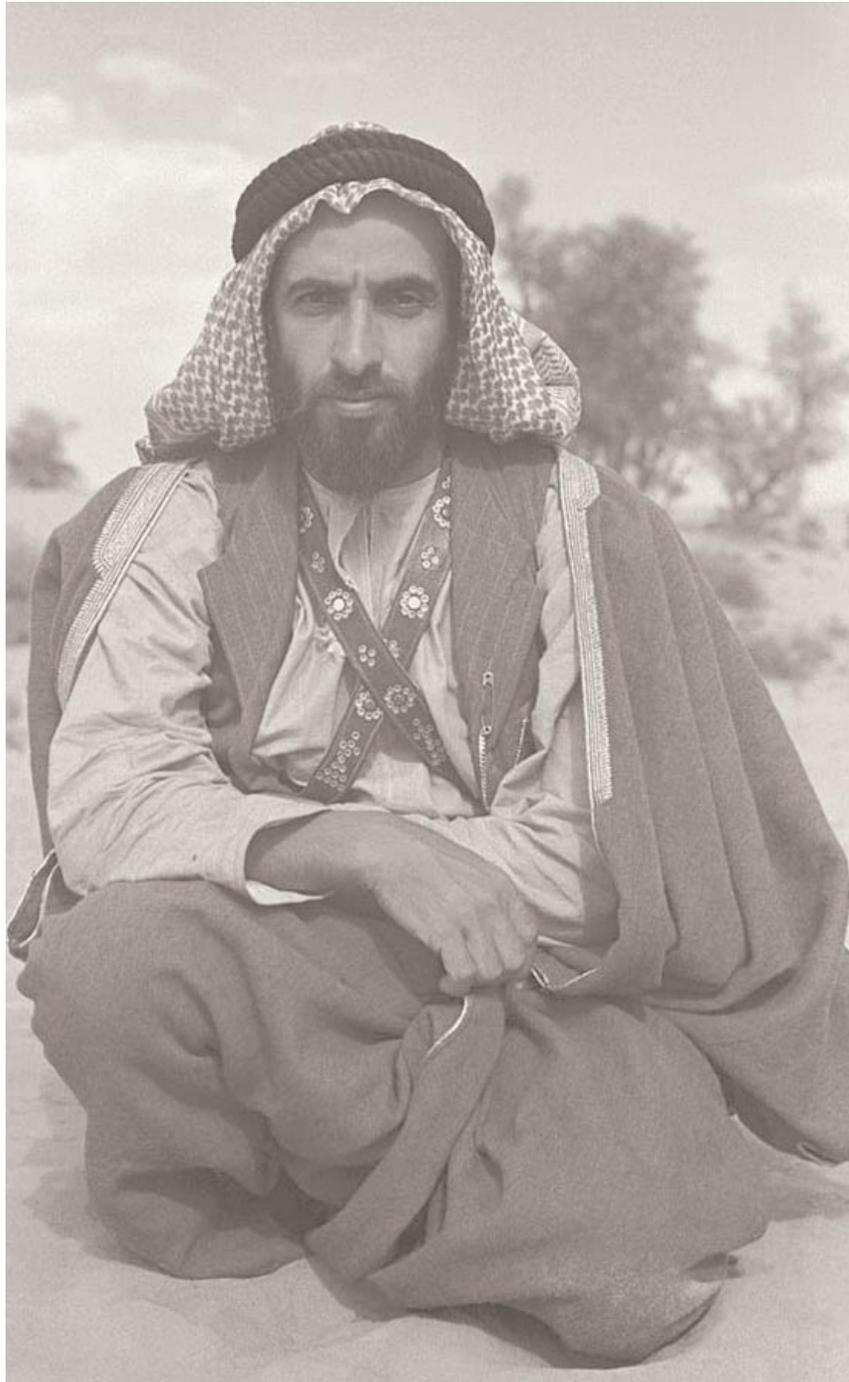




SHEIKH ZAYED



PRESIDENT OF THE UAE

ON 6 AUGUST 2001, His Highness Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan completed 35 years as Ruler of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, one of the seven emirates that together comprise the Federation of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), of which he has been President since its creation in December 1971. He was re-elected for a further five-year term in December 2001.

In 1946, Sheikh Zayed was appointed to the post of Ruler's Representative in Abu Dhabi's Eastern Region, based in the oasis of Al Ain. He has now provided leadership to the country for well over half a century.

Born around 1918 (the date is uncertain) in Abu Dhabi, Sheikh Zayed is the youngest of the four sons of Sheikh Sultan bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Ruler of Abu Dhabi from 1922 to 1926. He was named after his grandfather, Sheikh Zayed bin Khalifa, who ruled the emirate from 1855 to 1909, the longest reign in the three centuries since the Al Nahyan family emerged as leaders of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi.

Abu Dhabi, like the other emirates of the southern Arabian Gulf formerly known as the Trucial States, was then in treaty relations with Britain. At the time Sheikh Zayed was born, the emirate was poor and undeveloped, with an economy based primarily on fishing and pearl diving along the coast and offshore, and on simple agriculture in scattered oases inland. Part of the population was nomadic, ranging across a wide area of south-eastern Arabia in search of pasture.

Life, even for a member of the ruling family, was simple. Opportunities for education were generally confined to lessons in reading and writing, along with instruction in Islam from the local preacher, while modern facilities such as roads, communications and health care were conspicuous only by their absence. Transport was by camel or boat, and the harshness of the arid climate meant that survival itself was often a major concern.

In early 1926, following the death of Sheikh Sultan's successor, his brother

Sheikh Saqr, a family conclave selected as Ruler Sheikh Shakhbut, Sheikh Sultan's eldest son. He was to hold the post until August 1966, when he stepped down in favour of his brother Zayed.

Throughout the late 1920s and 1930s, as Sheikh Zayed grew to manhood, he displayed an early thirst for knowledge that took him out into the desert with the bedu tribesmen to learn all he could about the way of life of the people and the environment in which they lived. He recalls with pleasure his experience of desert life and his initiation into the sport of falconry, which has been a lifelong passion.

In his book, *Falconry: Our Arab Heritage*, published in 1977, Sheikh Zayed noted that the companionship of a hunting party

. . . permits each and every member of the expedition to speak freely and express his ideas and viewpoints without inhibition and restraint, and allows the one responsible to acquaint himself with the wishes of his people, to know their problems and perceive their views accurately, and thus to be in a position to help and improve their situation.

From his desert journeys, Sheikh Zayed developed an understanding of the relationship between man and his environment and, in particular, the need to ensure that sustainable use was made of natural resources. Once an avid shot, he abandoned the gun for falconry at the age of 25, aware that hunting with a gun could lead rapidly to extinction of the native wildlife.

He also learned to appreciate that man's ability to survive in the harsh deserts was possible only through his relationship with the camel, the 'ship of the desert.' He became a fine judge of camels, whether as beasts of burden, for racing, or for the provision of food. In the years since Abu Dhabi and the United Arab Emirates have begun their rapid development, Sheikh Zayed has worked to ensure that the role of the camel is not forgotten. Although camels are now used but rarely for transport, many tens of thousands are still kept in the UAE, and camel-racing has become one of the country's most popular sports. The UAE is a world leader in terms of scientific research into camels, and has pioneered techniques of artificial insemination as part of a programme of enhancing breeds of camels used for racing and for dairy production.

His travels in the remoter areas of Abu Dhabi provided Sheikh Zayed with a deep understanding both of the country and of its people. In the early 1930s, when the first oil company teams arrived to carry out preliminary

surface geological surveys, he was assigned by his brother the task of guiding them around the desert. At the same time, he obtained his first exposure to the industry that was later to have such a great impact upon the country.

In the year 1946, Sheikh Zayed was chosen to fill a vacancy as Ruler's Representative in the Eastern Region of Abu Dhabi, centred on the oasis of Al Ain, approximately 160 kilometres east of the island of Abu Dhabi itself. Inhabited continuously for at least 5000 years, the oasis had nine villages, six of which belonged to Abu Dhabi and three, including Buraimi, by which name the oasis was also known, which belonged to the Sultanate of Oman. The job involved not only the task of administering the six villages but also the whole of the adjacent desert region, enabling Sheikh Zayed to learn the techniques of government as well as deepening his knowledge of the tribes. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, Saudi Arabia's territorial claims to Buraimi provided him with the opportunity to gain experience of politics on a broader scale.

Sheikh Zayed brought to his new task a firm belief in the values of consultation and consensus, in contrast to confrontation. Foreign visitors, such as the British explorer Sir Wilfred Thesiger, who first met him at this time, noted with approbation that his judgements 'were distinguished by their acute insights, wisdom and fairness.'

Sheikh Zayed swiftly established himself not only as someone who had a clear vision of what he wished to achieve for the people of Al Ain, but also as someone who led by example.

A key task in the early years in Al Ain was that of stimulating the local economy, which was largely based on agriculture. To do this, he ensured that the ancient subterranean water channels or falajes (*afaj*) were cleaned out, and personally financed the construction of a new one, taking part in the strenuous labour that was involved.

He also ordered a revision of local water ownership rights to ensure a more equitable distribution, surrendering the rights of his own family as an example to others. The consequent expansion of the area under cultivation in turn generated more income for the residents of Al Ain, helping to re-establish the oasis as the predominant market centre for a wide area.

This interest in ensuring the provision of water to the people has remained a focus of Sheikh Zayed's attention throughout his life. From his own experiences in his youth, he recognised that life is impossible without water, and it is a topic to which he has frequently turned in his speeches as Ruler of Abu Dhabi and UAE President.

With development in Al Ain gradually beginning to get under way in the late 1940s and early 1950s, Sheikh Zayed commenced the laying out of a visionary city plan, and, in a foretaste of the massive afforestation programme of today, he ordered the planting of ornamental trees that, now grown to maturity, have made Al Ain one of the greenest cities in Arabia. In recent years, much of the irrigation of the plantations has been carried out with the use of recycled water, part of plans to ensure that this valuable resource is used as carefully as possible.

In 1953, Sheikh Zayed made his first visit abroad, accompanying his brother Shakhbut to Britain and France and attending an international arbitration tribunal on the legality of offshore oil concessions in the Emirate. He recalled later how impressed he had been by the schools and hospitals he visited, becoming determined that his own people should benefit from similar facilities:

There were a lot of dreams I was dreaming about our land catching up with the modern world, but I was not able to do anything because I did not have the wherewithal in my hands to achieve these dreams. I was sure, however, that one day they would become true.

Despite constraints through lack of government revenues, Sheikh Zayed succeeded in bringing progress to Al Ain, establishing the rudiments of an administrative machinery, personally funding the first modern school in the emirate and coaxing relatives and friends to contribute towards small-scale development programmes.

Oil production was to provide Sheikh Zayed with the means to fund his dreams, with the export of the first cargo of Abu Dhabi crude in 1962. Although oil prices were then far lower than they are today, the rapidly growing volume of exports, from both onshore and offshore, revolutionised the economy of Abu Dhabi and its people began to look forward eagerly to receiving similar benefits to those already being enjoyed by their neighbours in Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. The pearling industry, which had begun thousands of years earlier, had finally come to an end shortly after the Second World War, and little had emerged to take its place. Indeed, during the late 1950s and early 1960s, many people had left Abu Dhabi for other, oil-producing, Gulf states where there were opportunities for employment.

The economic hardships experienced by Abu Dhabi since the 1930s had accustomed the Ruler, Sheikh Shakhbut, to a cautious frugality. Despite the

growing aspiration of his people for progress, he was reluctant to invest the new oil revenues in development. Attempts by members of his family, including Sheikh Zayed, and by the leaders of the other tribes in the emirate to persuade him to move with the times were unsuccessful, and eventually the Al Nahyan family decided that the time had come for him to step down. The record of Sheikh Zayed over the previous 20 years in Al Ain and his popularity among the people made him the obvious choice as successor.

On 6 August 1966, Sheikh Zayed became Ruler, with a mandate from his family to press ahead as fast as possible with the development of Abu Dhabi. He was a man in a hurry. His years in Al Ain had not only given him valuable experience in government, but had also provided him with the time to develop a vision of how the emirate could progress. With revenues growing year by year as oil production increased, he was determined to use them in the service of the people, and a massive programme of construction of schools, housing, hospitals and roads got rapidly under way.

Of his first few weeks, Sheikh Zayed has said:

All the picture was prepared. It was not a matter of fresh thinking, but of simply putting into effect the thoughts of years and years. First I knew we had to concentrate on Abu Dhabi and public welfare. In short, we had to obey the circumstances: the needs of the people as a whole. Second, I wanted to approach other emirates to work with us. In harmony, in some sort of federation, we could follow the example of other developing countries.

One of Sheikh Zayed's early steps was to increase contributions to the Trucial States Development Fund, established a few years earlier by the British. Abu Dhabi soon became its largest donor. At the beginning of 1968, when the British announced their intention of withdrawing from the Arabian Gulf by the end of 1971, Sheikh Zayed acted rapidly to initiate moves towards establishing closer ties with the emirates.

Along with the late Ruler of Dubai, Sheikh Rashid bin Saeed Al Maktoum, who was to become Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE, Sheikh Zayed took the lead in calling for a federation that would include not only the seven emirates that made up the Trucial States, but also Qatar and Bahrain. When early hopes of a federation of nine states eventually foundered, Sheikh Zayed led his fellow rulers in achieving agreement on the establishment of the UAE, which formally emerged on the international stage on 2 December 1971.

While his enthusiasm for federation was a key factor in the formation of the UAE, Sheikh Zayed also won support for the way in which he sought consensus and agreement among his fellow rulers:

I am not imposing change on anyone. That is tyranny. All of us have our opinions, and these opinions can change. Sometimes we put all opinions together, and then extract from them a single point of view. This is our democracy.

Sheikh Zayed was elected by his fellow rulers as the first President of the UAE, a post to which he has been successively re-elected at five-year intervals.

The new state came into being at a time of political turmoil in the region. A couple of days earlier, on the night of 30 November and the early morning of 1 December, Iran had forcibly and unlawfully seized the islands of Greater and Lesser Tunb, part of Ra' s al-Khaimah, and had landed troops on Abu Musa, part of Sharjah (see Foreign Policy).

On land, demarcation of the borders between the individual emirates and with the federation's neighbours had not been completed, although a preliminary agreement had been reached between Abu Dhabi and Oman.

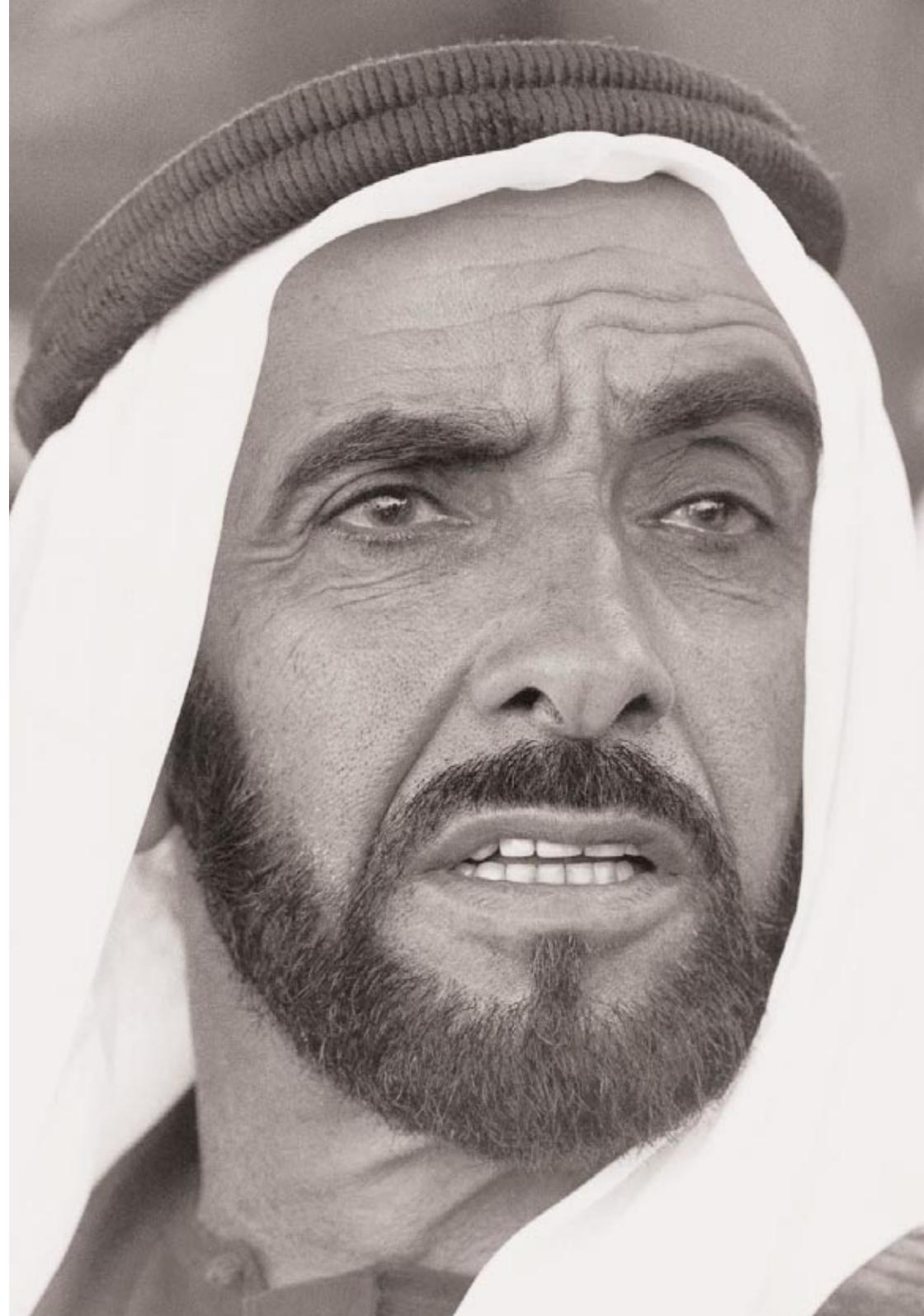
Foreign observers, who lacked an understanding of the importance of a common history and heritage in bringing together the people of the UAE, predicted that the new state would survive only with difficulty, pointing to disputes with its neighbours and to the wide disparity in the size, population and level of development of the seven emirates.

Better informed about the character of the country, Sheikh Zayed was naturally more optimistic. Looking back a quarter of a century later he noted:

Our experiment in federation, in the first instance, arose from a desire to increase the ties that bind us, as well as from the conviction of all that they were part of one family, and that they must gather together under one leadership. We had never (previously) had an experience in federation, but our proximity to each other and the ties of blood relationship between us are factors which led us to believe that we must establish a federation that should compensate for the disunity and fragmentation that earlier prevailed.

That which has been accomplished has exceeded all our expectations, and that, with the help of God and a sincere will, confirms that there is nothing that cannot be achieved in the service of the people if determination is firm and intentions are sincere.

The predictions of those early pessimists have been overwhelmingly shown to be unfounded. Over the past 30 years, the UAE has not only survived, but



has developed at a rate that is almost without parallel. The country has been utterly transformed. Its population has risen from around 250,000 in 1971 to an estimate of around 3.3 million in mid-2001. Progress, in terms of the provision of social services, health and education, as well as in sectors such as communications and the oil and non-oil economy, has brought a high standard of living that has spread throughout the seven emirates, from the ultra-modern cities to the remotest areas of desert and mountains. The change has, moreover, occurred against a backdrop of enviable political and social stability, despite the insecurity and conflict that has dogged much of the rest of the Gulf region.

The country has also established itself firmly on the international scene, both within the Arab region and in the broader community of nations. Its pursuit of dialogue and consensus and its firm adherence to the tenets of the Charter of the United Nations, in particular those dealing with the principle of non-interference in the affairs of other states, have been coupled with a quiet but extensive involvement in the provision of development assistance and humanitarian aid that, in per capita terms, has few parallels.

There is no doubt that the experiment in federation has been a success and the undoubted key to the achievements of the UAE has been the central role played by Sheikh Zayed.

During his years in Al Ain he was able to develop a vision of how the country should progress, and, since becoming first Ruler of Abu Dhabi and then President of the UAE, he has devoted three and a half decades to making that vision a reality.

One foundation of his philosophy as a leader and statesman is that the resources of the country should be fully used to the benefit of the people. The UAE is fortunate to have been blessed with massive reserves of oil and gas and it is through careful utilisation of these, including the decision in 1973 that the government of Abu Dhabi, the emirate with the lion's share of reserves, should take a controlling share of the oil reserves and assume total ownership of associated and non-associated gas, that the financial resources necessary to underpin the development programme have always been available. Indeed there has been sufficient to permit the setting aside of large amounts for investment on behalf of future generations and, through the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority created by Sheikh Zayed, the country now has financial reserves unofficially estimated at around US\$200 billion.

The financial resources, however, have always been regarded by Sheikh

Zayed, not as a means unto themselves, but as a tool to facilitate the development of what he believes to be the real wealth of the country – its people, and, in particular, the younger generation. As he stated:

Wealth is not money. Wealth lies in men. This is where true power lies, the power that we value. They are the shield behind which we seek protection. This is what has convinced us to direct all our resources to building the individual, and to using the wealth with which God has provided us in the service of the nation, so that it may grow and prosper.

Unless wealth is used in conjunction with knowledge to plan for its use, and unless there are enlightened intellects to direct it, its fate is to diminish and to disappear. The greatest use that can be made of wealth is to invest it in creating generations of educated and trained people.

Addressing the graduation ceremony of the first class of students from the Emirates University in 1982, Sheikh Zayed said:

The building of mankind is difficult and hard. It represents, however, the real wealth [of the country]. This is not found in material wealth. It is made up of men, of children, and of future generations. It is this which constitutes the real treasure.

Within this framework, Sheikh Zayed believes that all of the country's citizens have a role to play in its development. Indeed he defines it not simply as a right, but as a duty. Addressing his colleagues in the Federal Supreme Council, he noted:

The most important of our duties as Rulers is to raise the standard of living of our people. To carry out one's duty is a responsibility given by God, and to follow up on work is the responsibility of everyone, both the old and the young.

Both men and women, he believes, should play their part. Recognising that in the past a lack of education and development had prevented women from playing a full role in much of the activity of society, he has taken action to ensure that this situation does not continue. Although women's advocates might argue that there is still much to be done, the achievements have been remarkable, and the country's women are now increasingly playing their part in political and economic life by taking up positions at all levels in the public and private sectors. In so doing, they have enjoyed full support from the President:

Women have the right to work everywhere. Islam affords to women their rightful status, and encourages them to work in all sectors, as long as they are

afforded the appropriate respect. The basic role of women is the upbringing of children, but, over and above that, we must offer opportunities to a woman who chooses to perform other functions. What women have achieved in the Emirates in only a short space of time makes me both happy and content. We sowed our seeds yesterday, and today the fruit has already begun to appear. We praise God for the role that women play in our society. It is clear that this role is beneficial for both present and future generations.

Remarkable progress has now been achieved by the women of the Emirates, due in no small measure to initiatives taken by President Sheikh Zayed and by his wife, the UAE First Lady, HH Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak, who is the President of the country's General Women's Union. With women already playing a prominent role in the civil service, health, education and business, they are now set to raise their profile in the political process, through membership in the various consultative and legislative bodies.

Sheikh Zayed has made it clear that he believes that the younger generation, those who have enjoyed the fruits of the UAE's development programme throughout their lives, must now take up the burden once carried by their parents. Within his immediate family, Sheikh Zayed has ensured that his sons have taken up posts in government at which they are expected to work, and not simply enjoy as sinecures. Young UAE men who have complained about the perceived lack of employment opportunities at a realistic salary level have been offered positions on farms as agricultural labourers, so that they may learn the dignity of work:

Work is of great importance, and of great value in building both individuals and societies. The size of a salary is not a measure of the worth of an individual. What is important is an individual's sense of dignity and self-respect. It is my duty as the leader of the young people of this country to encourage them to work and to exert themselves in order to raise their own standards and to be of service to the country. The individual who is healthy and of a sound mind and body but who does not work commits a crime against himself and against society.

We look forward in the future to seeing our sons and daughters playing a more active role broadening their participation in the process of development and shouldering their share of the responsibilities, especially in the private sector, so as to lay the foundations for the success of this participation and effectiveness. At the same time, we are greatly concerned to raise the standard and dignity of the work ethic in our society, and to increase the percentage of

citizens in the labour force. This can be achieved by following a realistic and well-planned approach that will improve performance and productivity, moving towards the long-term goal of secure and comprehensive development.

In this sphere, as in other areas, Sheikh Zayed has long been concerned about the possible adverse impact upon the younger generation of the easy life they enjoy, so far removed from the resilient, resourceful lifestyle of their parents. One key feature of Sheikh Zayed's strategy of government, therefore, has been the encouragement of initiatives designed to conserve and cherish features of the traditional culture of the people, in order to familiarise the younger generation with the ways of their ancestors. In his view, it is essential that the lessons and heritage of the past are not forgotten. They provide, he believes, an essential foundation upon which real progress can be achieved:

History is a continuous chain of events. The present is only an extension of the past. He who does not know his past cannot make the best of his present and future, for it is from the past that we learn. We gain experience and we take advantage of the lessons and results [of the past]. Then we adopt the best and that which suits our present needs, while avoiding the mistakes made by our fathers and grandfathers. The new generation should have a proper appreciation of the role played by their forefathers. They should adopt their model, and the supreme ideal of patience, fortitude, hard work and dedication to doing their duty.

Once believed to have been little more than an insignificant backwater in the history of mankind in the Middle East, the UAE has been shown in recent years to have been a country which has played a vital role in the development of civilisation in the region for thousands of years.

The first archaeological excavations in the UAE took place over 40 years ago, in 1959, with the archaeologists benefiting extensively from the interest shown in their work by Sheikh Zayed. Indeed, he himself invited them to visit the Al Ain area to examine remains in and around the oasis that proved to be some of the most important yet found in south-eastern Arabia. In the intervening decades, Sheikh Zayed has continued to support archaeological studies throughout the country, eager to make certain that knowledge of the achievements of the past becomes available to educate and inspire the people of today. In so doing he has underlined his belief that knowledge from elsewhere, and foreigners as well as UAE citizens, have a role to play in the development of the country.

Appropriately, one of the UAE's most important archaeological sites has

been discovered on Abu Dhabi's western island of Sir Bani Yas, which for nearly 25 years has been a private wildlife reserve created by Sheikh Zayed to ensure the survival of some of Arabia's most endangered species.

If the heritage of the people of the UAE is important to Sheikh Zayed, so too is the conservation of its natural environment and wildlife. He believes the strength of character of the Emirati people derives, in part, from the struggle that they were obliged to wage in order to survive in the harsh and arid local environment.

As acknowledged by the presentation to him of the prestigious Gold Panda award of the Worldwide Fund for Nature, and by the inauguration, early in 2001, of the Zayed International Prize for the Environment (whose first recipient was former US President Jimmy Carter), his belief in conservation of the environment owes nothing to mere modern fashions. It derives instead from his own upbringing, where a sustainable use of resources required man to live in harmony with nature. This has led him to ensure that conservation of wildlife and the environment is a key part of government policy. At the same time he has stimulated and personally supervised a massive programme of afforestation that has now seen over 150 million trees planted.

In a speech given on the occasion of the UAE's first Environment Day in February 1998, Sheikh Zayed spelt out his beliefs:

We cherish our environment because it is an integral part of our country, our history and our heritage. On land and in the sea, our forefathers lived and survived in this environment. They were able to do so only because they recognised the need to conserve it, to take from it only what they needed to live, and to preserve it for succeeding generations.

With God's will, we shall continue to work to protect our environment and our wildlife, as did our forefathers before us. It is a duty, and, if we fail, our children, rightly, will reproach us for squandering an essential part of their inheritance, and of our heritage.

Like most conservationists, Sheikh Zayed is concerned wherever possible to remedy the damage done by man to wildlife. His programme on the island of Sir Bani Yas for the captive breeding of endangered native animals such as the Arabian oryx and the Arabian gazelle has achieved impressive results, so much so that not only is the survival of both species now assured, but animals are also being carefully reintroduced to the wild.

As in other areas of national life, Sheikh Zayed has made it clear that



conservation is not simply the task of government. Despite the creation of official institutions like the Federal Environment Agency and Abu Dhabi's Environmental Research and Wildlife Development Agency (ERWDA), the UAE's President has stressed that there is a role both for the individual and for non-governmental organisations, whether of citizens or expatriates.

He believes that society can only develop and flourish if all of its members acknowledge their responsibilities. This applies not only to concerns such as environmental conservation, but to other areas of national life as well.

Members of the Al Nahyan family, of which Sheikh Zayed is the current head, have been rulers of Abu Dhabi since at least the beginning of the eighteenth century, longer than any other ruling dynasty in Arabia. In Arabian *bedu* society, however, the legitimacy of a ruler, and of a ruling family, derives essentially from consensus and from consent. Just as Sheikh Zayed himself was chosen by members of his family to become Ruler of Abu Dhabi in 1966, when his elder brother was no longer able to retain their confidence, so too does the legitimacy of the political system today derive from the support it draws from the people of the UAE. The principle of consultation (*shura*) is an essential part of that system.

At an informal level, that principle has long been practiced through the institution of the *majlis* (council) where a leading member of society holds an 'open-house' discussion forum, at which any individual may put forward views for consideration. While the *majlis* system – the UAE's form of direct democracy – still continues, it is, naturally, best suited to a relatively small community. In 1970, recognising that Abu Dhabi was embarking on a process of rapid change and development, Sheikh Zayed established the emirate's National Consultative Council, bringing together the leaders of each of the main tribes and families which comprised the population. A similar body was created in 1971 for the entire UAE, the Federal National Council, the state's parliament. Both institutions represent the formalisation of the traditional process of consultation and discussion, and their members are frequently urged by Sheikh Zayed to express their views openly, without fear or favour.

At present members of both Councils, as well as lower-level Municipal Councils, continue to be selected by Sheikh Zayed and the other rulers, in consultation with leading members of the community in each emirate. Sheikh Zayed has said that a formula for direct elections will be devised in the future. He notes, though, that in this, as in so many other fields, it is necessary to move ahead with care in order to ensure that only such institutions as are

appropriate for Emirati society are adopted.

Questioned in 1998 by the *New York Times* on the topic of the possible introduction of an elected parliamentary democracy, Sheikh Zayed replied: *Why should we abandon a system that satisfied our people in order to introduce a system that seems to engender dissent and confrontation? Our system of government is based upon our religion, and is what our people want. Should they seek alternatives, we are ready to listen to them. We have always said that our people should voice their demands openly. We are all in the same boat, and they are both captain and crew.*

Our doors here are open for any opinion to be expressed, and this is well known by all our citizens. It is our deep conviction that God the Creator has created people free, and has prescribed that each individual must enjoy freedom of choice. No-one should act as if he owns others. Those in a position of leadership should deal with their subjects with compassion and understanding, because this is the duty enjoined upon them by God Almighty, who enjoins us to treat all living creatures with dignity. How can there be anything less for man, created as God's vicegerent on earth? Our system of government does not derive its authority from man, but is enshrined in our religion, and is based on God's book, the Holy Quran. What need have we of what others have conjured up? Its teachings are eternal and complete, while the systems conjured up by man are transitory and incomplete.

Sheikh Zayed imbibed the principles of Islam in his childhood and they remain the foundation of his beliefs and principles today. Indeed, the ability with which he and the people of the UAE have been able to absorb and adjust to the remarkable changes of recent decades can be ascribed largely to the fact that Islam has provided an immutable and steadfast core to their lives. Today, it provides the inspiration for the UAE judicial system and its place as the ultimate source of legislation is enshrined in the country's Constitution.

Islam, like other divinely-revealed religions, has those among its claimed adherents who purport to interpret its message as justifying harsh dogmas and intolerance. In Sheikh Zayed's view, however, such an approach is not merely a perversion of the message but is in direct contradiction of it. Extremism, he believes, has no place in Islam. In contrast, he stresses that:

Islam is a civilising religion that gives mankind dignity. A Muslim is he who does not inflict evil upon others. Islam is the religion of tolerance and forgiveness, and not of war, but of dialogue and understanding. It is Islamic social justice which

has asked every Muslim to respect the other. To treat every person, no matter what his creed or race, as a special soul is a mark of Islam. It is just that point, embodied in the humanitarian tenets of Islam, that makes us so proud of it. Within that context, Sheikh Zayed has set his face firmly against those who preach intolerance and hatred:

In these times, we see around us violent men who claim to talk on behalf of Islam. Islam is far removed from their talk. If such people really wish for recognition from Muslims and the world, they should themselves first heed the words of God and His Prophet. Regrettably, however, these people have nothing whatsoever that connects them to Islam. They are apostates and criminals. We see them slaughtering children and the innocent. They kill people, spill their blood and destroy their property, and then claim to be Muslims.

In September 2001, following the terrorist attacks against targets in New York and Washington by persons claiming to be Muslim, Sheikh Zayed returned to the issue.

In a message on 16 September to the heads of government of the members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) as well as to the leaders of Russia and China, he noted that:

. . . the UAE clearly and unequivocally condemns the criminal acts that took place last week in New York and Washington, resulting in the deaths and injuries of thousands . . . There should be a direct move and a strong international alliance to eradicate terrorism, and all those who provide assistance to it or harbour it . . . The UAE condemns all acts of terrorism everywhere.

While endorsing the international campaign against terrorism, Sheikh Zayed called for an equally determined effort by the international community to find a just and lasting solution to the Middle East conflict (*see under Foreign Policy*).

Sheikh Zayed is an eager advocate of tolerance, discussion and a better understanding between those of different faiths, and, in particular, has been an ardent advocate of dialogue between Muslims and Christians, recognising that this is essential if mankind is ever to move forward in harmony. His faith is well summed up by a statement explaining the essential basis of his own beliefs: 'my religion is based neither on hope, nor on fear. I worship my God because I love Him.'

That faith, with its belief in the brotherhood of man and in the duty incumbent upon the strong to provide assistance to those less fortunate than

themselves, is fundamental to Sheikh Zayed's vision of how his country and people should develop. It is, too, a key to the foreign policy of the UAE, which he has devised and guided since the establishment of the state.

The UAE itself has been able to progress only because of the way in which its component parts have successfully been brought together in a relationship of harmony, working together for common goals. That approach has also been applied in the sphere of foreign policy.

Within the Arabian Gulf region, and in the broader Arab world, the UAE has sought to enhance cooperation and to resolve disagreement through a calm pursuit of dialogue and consensus. Thus one of the central features of the country's foreign policy has been the development of closer ties with its neighbours in the Arabian peninsula. The Arab Gulf Cooperation Council (AGCC), grouping the UAE, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar and Oman, was founded at a summit conference held in Abu Dhabi in May 1981, and has since become, with strong UAE support, an effective and widely-respected grouping.

Intended to facilitate the development of closer ties between its members and to enable them to work together to ensure their security, the AGCC has faced two major external challenges during its short lifetime, first the long and costly conflict in the 1980s between Iraq and Iran, which itself prompted the Council's formation, and then the August 1990 invasion by Iraq of one of its members, Kuwait.

Following the invasion of Kuwait, President Zayed was one of the first Arab leaders to offer support to its people, and units from the UAE Armed Forces played a significant role in the alliance that liberated the Gulf state in early 1991.

While fully supporting the international condemnation of the policies of the Iraqi regime and the sanctions imposed on Iraq by the United Nations during and after the conflict, the UAE has, however, expressed its serious concern about the impact that the sanctions have had upon the country's people.

In his interview with the *New York Times* in mid-1998, Sheikh Zayed noted:

Moderate states in the Arab world recognise that Saddam (Hussein) did injustice, and received the appropriate response. He paid the price, and sanctions have now been imposed on Iraq for seven years.

Now, Iraq is sick, tired, hungry and naked. How can you continue to impose sanctions on it for ever in a situation like this? It (Iraq) should not continue to receive punishment, and should no longer have sanctions imposed upon it. We believe that the time has come to say that 'enough is enough.'

Continuing to argue forcefully for a lifting of sanctions, the UAE has at the same time provided an extensive amount of humanitarian assistance to the Iraqi people, ensuring, as far as possible, that the aid reaches those for whom it is intended. Diplomatic relations were re-established with Baghdad in 2000. Another key focus of the UAE's foreign policy in an Arab context has been the provision of support to the Palestinian people in their efforts to regain their legitimate rights to self-determination and to the establishment of their own state. As early as 1968, before the formation of the United Arab Emirates, Sheikh Zayed extended assistance to Palestinian organisations, and has done so throughout the last three decades, although he has always believed that it is for the Palestinians themselves to determine their own policies.

Following the establishment of the Palestinian Authority in Gaza and on parts of the occupied West Bank, the UAE has provided substantial help for the building of a national infrastructure, including houses, roads, schools and hospitals, and also for the refurbishment of Muslim and Christian sites in the city of Jerusalem. While much of the aid has been bilateral, the UAE has also taken part in development programmes funded by multilateral agencies and groupings and has long been a major contributor to the United Nations Relief Works Agency, (UNRWA). With the outbreak of the second Palestinian Intifada (Uprising) in September 2000, the UAE, acting on the instructions of Sheikh Zayed, stepped up its assistance to the Palestine Authority, and has been a vocal and forceful critic not only of the repressive policies of the Israeli Government, but of the failure of the international community, in particular the United States, to force the Israelis to desist.

Substantial amounts of aid have also been given to a number of other countries in the Arab world. In Lebanon, for example, the UAE has funded a major programme of clearing the many hundreds of thousands of land mines left behind by the Israelis when they were forced to withdraw in 2000, so that the Lebanese civilian population may return to their homes and land. Other countries like Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Yemen and Morocco have received sizeable loans and other aid for their infrastructural development programmes.

Sheikh Zayed has a deeply held belief in the cherished objective of greater political and economic unity within the Arab world. At the same time, however, he has long adopted a realistic approach on the issue, recognising that any unity, to be effective, must grow slowly, and with the support of the people. Arab unity, he believes, is not something that can simply be created through decrees of governments that may be simply temporary political phenomena.



His approach has been tried and tested both at the level of the UAE itself, which is the longest-lived experiment in recent times in Arab unity, and at the level of the Arabian Gulf Cooperation Council.

On a broader plane, Sheikh Zayed has sought consistently to promote greater understanding and consensus between Arab countries and to reinventorise the League of Arab States.

Relations between the Arab leaders should be based on openness and frankness. They must make it clear to each other that each one of them needs the other, and they should understand that only through mutual support can they survive in times of need.

A brother should tell his brother: you support me, and I will support you, when you are in the right. But not when you are in the wrong. If I am in the right, you should support and help me, and help to remove the results of any injustice that has been imposed on me.

Wise and mature leaders should listen to sound advice, and should take the necessary action to correct their mistakes. As for those leaders who are unwise or immature, they can be brought to the right path through advice from their sincere friends.

Within that context, Sheikh Zayed consistently argued throughout the 1990s for the holding of a new Arab summit conference (the first of which took place in Jordan in March 2001) at which the leaders could honestly and frankly address the disputes between them. Only thus, he believes, can the Arab world as a whole move forward to tackle the challenges that face it, both internally and on the broader international plane (see under Foreign Policy).

I believe that an all-inclusive Arab summit must be held, but before attending it, the Arabs must open their hearts to each other and be frank with each other about the rifts between them and their wounds. They should then come to the summit, to make the necessary corrections to their policies, to address the issues, to heal their wounds and to affirm that the destiny of the Arabs is one, both for the weak and the strong. At the same time, they should not concede their rights, or ask for what is not rightfully theirs.

While advocating dialogue and cooperation, the UAE President recognises that unanimity, although desirable, cannot always be achieved. He has, therefore, been the only Arab leader to openly favour a revision of the Charter of the League of Arab States to permit decisions to be taken on the basis of the will

of the majority. Such a policy has been one of the foundations of the success of the federal experiment in the UAE, and Sheikh Zayed believes the time is ripe for the adoption of a similar approach within the broader Arab world.

Essential rights and principles should not, of course, be set aside. One such principle is the inviolability of the integrity of Arab territories.

This principle has been a matter of major concern to the United Arab Emirates since its formation, because of the Iranian occupation in 1971 of the UAE islands of Abu Musa and Greater and Lesser Tunb. President Sheikh Zayed and other senior UAE Government officials have made repeated calls for the occupation to be resolved peacefully, either through direct negotiations, or by referral to the International Court of Justice or to international arbitration. For many years this call met with no response from Iran, but an exchange of visits in July and August 2001 has now initiated a dialogue which may bring about a solution and will contribute towards the UAE objective of strengthening mutual trust, peaceful co-existence and good neighbourliness within the Gulf region.

Here, as on other foreign policy issues, Sheikh Zayed has consistently adopted a firm but calmly worded approach, eschewing rhetoric that could make the search for a solution to problems more difficult.

In recent years, the conflicts ensuing from the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia have been the cause of considerable concern to the UAE President. Prior to the imposition of a peace in Bosnia by the Western powers, Sheikh Zayed's frustration with the continued slaughter of Bosnian Muslims was scarcely concealed.

Commenting to the Emirates News Agency, WAM, at the height of the Serbian campaign of 'ethnic cleansing' against the Muslims, he said that the United Nations seemed 'enfeebled like a dead machine' in the face of Serbian atrocities.

It is as if the United Nations has been turned into stone, with no feeling or compassion for the agony of the Bosnian people. We call on all people with a conscience, those who believe in justice and who deplore aggression and unjust wars to stand up against the horrors being perpetrated against the innocent people of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The world has to move forcefully to put an end to the horrifying tragedy. Governments must move now to enable the people of that besieged country to defend themselves. The right of self-defence is the most basic human and elementary right.

Once the international community had forced the Serbs to cease their

campaign of slaughter in Bosnia, Sheikh Zayed promptly moved to ensure that substantial assistance was sent by the UAE to enable the Bosnian Muslims to begin the task of rebuilding their society.

The lessons of the Bosnian tragedy were not, however, lost on Sheikh Zayed. The time had come, he recognised, for the United Arab Emirates itself to play a more pro-active role in international peacekeeping operations.

The UAE Armed Forces had already begun to establish a record in such peacekeeping activities, first as part of the joint Arab Deterrent Force that sought for a few years to bring to an end the civil strife in Lebanon, and then through participation in UNISOM TWO, the United Nations peacekeeping and reconstruction force in Somalia.

In early 1999, as a new campaign of Serbian atrocities began to get under way against the Albanian population of Kosovo, Sheikh Zayed was among the first world leaders to express support for the decision by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) to launch its aerial campaign to force Serbia to halt its genocidal activities.

Recognising early on in the campaign that there would be a need for an international peacekeeping force once the NATO campaign ended, Sheikh Zayed ordered that the UAE Armed Forces should be a part of any such force operating under the aegis of the United Nations. In late 1999, with the UN's KFOR force in place in Kosovo, the contingent from the UAE was the largest taking part from any of the non-NATO states, and the only one from an Arab or Muslim country. By the time the unit was withdrawn, in late 2001, it had done much not only in terms of contributing to the rebuilding of peace and security in Kosovo, but also to strengthening the UAE's reputation on the international plane.

While ensuring that the UAE should now increasingly come to shoulder such international responsibilities, however, Sheikh Zayed has made it clear that the UAE's role is one that is focused on relief and rehabilitation. Through bodies like the Zayed Foundation and the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development, established by Sheikh Zayed before the foundation of the UAE, as well as through institutions like the Red Crescent Society, chaired by his son, Sheikh Hamdan bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the country now plays a major role in the provision of relief and development assistance worldwide.

The calm pursuit of rights and principles has characterised the foreign policy of the state, bringing Sheikh Zayed's own philosophy and humanitarianism to bear far from the boundaries of the state itself.