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EMIRATES: **NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE**

Guide to the **new center of the business world**

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Methodological BACKGROUND

The objective of this document is to immerse the reader in the reality of the United Arab Emirates in order to enable him or her to understand the culture of its inhabitants with their behavior, customs and traditions which derive from the heritage of their ancestors. Precisely for this reason, we always put the title **Sheikh** and sometimes **His Highness** before the names of those

belonging to the royal houses of the individual Emirates. This should not appear cloying or reverential, but constitutes the absolute normality of behavior in the Emirates which should be learned immediately. In the pages of the book, furthermore, I will often distinguish between **locals** (those of Emirati nationality) and **expats** (residents of non-Emirati nationality) as is usual.

Another indispensable clarification concerns the indication of the positions of *Ruler*, which identifies the Emir who governs a single Emirate, and *Crown Prince*, which identifies his designated successor. Data, information related to local laws, projects in progress and any references to current events are updated to the latest revision of the text, at the end of September 2021.



HISTORY OF THE EMIRATES FROM THEIR ORIGINS TO 2071

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The United Arab Emirates were established in 1971. The United Arab Emirates has existed since 6000 BC. I didn't misspell that, nor did you misread it. The country's official birth date is December 2, 1971, but in fact its oldest history, deep history, has its roots in the remotest prehistory.

A red thread runs through the history of the Emirates, at once both evident and subterranean: the commercial vocation and the fact that, since ancient times, the territory has been a crossroads of peoples and cultures.

From approximately 6000 to 3500 B.C.E., the Bedouin communities who had settled on the territory of the future Emirates lived by fishing, sheep farming, hunting and gathering. In parallel with the peoples of Mesopotamia, Egypt, Turkey and the Near East, the tribes began to model ceramics, as demonstrated by the remains found at Al Jazeera, at Al Hamra (Emirate of Ras Al Khaimah), at Hamriyah (Emirate of Sharjah) and at Al Madar (Emirate of Umm Al Quwain).

The climate was different than today: humid and rainy, no deserts. It is around 3200 B.C.E. that conditions change and the increase in temperature begins to shape the territory. The Bronze Age in the Emirates is divided by scholars into three periods, each of which takes its name from an archaeological site: Jebel Hafeet (near Al Ain, in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi); Umm Al Nar (in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi); Wadi Suq (between Al Ain and the coast of Oman). (Wadi or usdi in Arabic means "bed of a stream.")

The archaeological excavations have brought to light circular tombs, remains of villages and traces of fortifications, perhaps in defense of water resources, already a precious commodity in the area. Evidence has also emerged of a sort of commercial network with the Sumerians of Mesopotamia, today's Iraq.

That portion of the Arabian Peninsula which today we call the United Arab Emirates already had a commercial vocation thousands of years before the Common Era, both with the Sumerians and with the peoples who lived in the Indus Valley, as well as in Iran and in what is now northern Afghanistan. Its geographical position, facing the Arabian Gulf, placed it in a strategic position.

The Wadi Suq period also marks the domestication of what would become the Bedouins' faithful companion, the camel.

By convention, Prehistory gives way to History both with the invention of writing and with the emergence of civilizations in Egypt, Mesopotamia and the Indus Valley.

1.2 FROM THE **SUMERIANS** TO **300 B.C.E.**

The word, let us say, will now pass to the peoples of Mesopotamia. The Sumerian tablets tell, in the period of Umm Al Nar, of a land called Magan dominated by "thirty-two lords". With Magan the Sumerians traded as much as they waged war. Already in such remote times the Emirates were a land of fierce traders.

The Iron Age in the Emirates (1300-300 B.C.E.) is characterized by an entirely different type of warfare; that against the desert. Once the fertility of the past had become a myth, the local populations converted to agriculture and worked to irrigate their fields using the system of underground irrigation, the falaj: a system still in use today. It seems that there were also some embryonic factories for the working of metals.

To another Mesopotamian people, the Assyrians, we owe the first appearance of the word "Arab." An inscription of 853 B.C.E. tells how the Assyrian King Salmanassar III defeated in battle a group of rebellious princes. Among the rebels mentioned in the inscription appears the name Gindibu the Arab: the inscription says that he had contributed to the coalition with one thousand camels. Gindibu was the King of the Qedarites, a confederation of tribes in northern Arabia. The Assyrians were famous for their ferocity against their enemies both on the battlefield and after the victory, so it is likely that Gindibu died either fighting or after being taken prisoner.

1.3 FROM THE AGE OF EMPIRES TO ISLAM

In the very long period from the end of the Iron Age to the rise of Islam, the history of the Emirates is relatively poor in relevant facts. Around the Emirates, the wheel of history kept turning, but the only great empire of antiquity which invested the territory with its power (albeit only the coasts) was the Persian empire in the sixth century C.E.

The Arabian Peninsula, and consequently the Emirates, were cut off from this shadow cone at the beginning of the 7th century C.E.



A CHRISTIAN MONASTERY AT SIR BANI YAS

In the early 1990s archaeologists discovered Christian settlements in the Emirates, settlements that dated back to the 7th century C.E. The monastery built in 600 C.E. on the island of Sir Bani Yas, southwest of Abu Dhabi, was built by Nestorian clerics.

The Nestorians maintained that Jesus had been born of Mary as a man and that only later did the divine nature enter him, in his body. Considered heretical by both the Roman Church and the Byzantine Empire and persecuted by them, the Nestorians sought refuge in the most isolated areas on the borders of the empire. According to historians, the monastery of Sir Bani Yas was abandoned in 750 C.E. There was no persecution by Muslims; it is more likely that the monks converted to Islam, given the similarities between the two religions.

Already at that time, the United Arab Emirates positioned itself as a land of tolerance and encounter between different religions.

1.4 THE RISE OF ISLAM

Like other peoples of the Arabian Peninsula, those who lived in the Emirates were polytheists. In the year 610 Abu l-Qasim Muhammad ibn Abd Allah

ibn Abd Al Muttalib Al Hashimi (but for convenience I will call him by his westernized name, Muhammad) began preaching a new monotheistic religion, Islam, first in Mecca then in the rest of Arabia. It would be fascinating to recount how the new faith quickly flared up in the hearts of so many, but that would take us too far off track.

Let's get back into the groove of our narrative. In 630, two years before his death, Muhammad sent a letter to the king of Oman, Jaifer, and to his brother, 'Abd Al Jalandi, inviting them to recognize him as the Prophet of God and to convert to Islam.

The letter has come down to us. Here is the text:

"In the name of Allah, the Most Generous, the Most Merciful. From Muhammad son of Abdullah to Jaifer and 'Abd Al Jalandi. Peace be upon the one who follows the true guidance; so I invite you both to join Islam. Embrace Islam. Allah has sent me as a Prophet for all His creatures so that I can instill the fear of Allah in the hearts of His disobedient creatures so that there is no excuse for those who deny Allah. If you two accept Islam, you will remain in charge of your country; but if you reject my invitation, you must remember that all the things you possess are perishable. My horsemen will take possession of your land, and my prophethood will take precedence over your kingship."

After consulting the correspondents, who had already converted to Islam, the elders of the tribe and the scholars of the law, the two princes accepted and joined Islam.

At the same time, Al Ala Al Hadhrami, also an envoy of the Prophet, brought the word of Islam from Kuwait to Ras Al Khaimah.

On the death of Mohammed, the centrifugal tendencies typical of the tribes of the Arabian Peninsula also took over in the Emirates: the Prophet's successor, Caliph Abu Bakr, had to send troops to tame the rebellion and complete the conquest of the territory.

Under the Umayyad (661-750) and Abbasid (750-1258) caliphates, maritime trade between the Gulf region and other areas in Southeast Asia and along

the West African coast prospered. In 637 the bay of Ras Al Khaimah was the base for a first attack on the Sassanid Empire in Persia.



ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

In September 2018, archaeologists unearthed the remains of a mosque attributable to the era of the Abbasid Caliphate, around the year 1000, the so-called “Golden Age of Islam,” which saw the flourishing of science and culture. The discovery, which took place at the archaeological site of Al Ain, in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, is a further confirmation of the richness of the history of the region and demonstrates the profound influences of Islamic culture in this territory, despite the distance from the place where Islam was born. Near the mosque archaeologists have also found the remains of an ancient falaj, an ingenious irrigation system that made cultivation possible even in desert territories.

The first archaeological discoveries in what were to become the United Arab Emirates were made by the Founding Father Sheikh Zayed, who in 1959 gave the impulse to the research which brought to light the remains of constructions and tombs dating back to the Bronze Age on the island of Umm Al Nar in Abu Dhabi. Since then, numerous discoveries have followed, from tombs on the slopes of Mount Jebel Hafeet (5,000 years old), revealing trade connections with Mesopotamia and the Indus Valley, to the remains of Stone Age villages found east of the Liwa oasis.

The discovery of the remains of the Al Ain mosque adds a new chapter to the compelling history of this people who for millennia played a central role in the economic and cultural development of the region.

1.5 BACK IN THE SHADOWS

The end of the Abbasid dynasty also marked the end of the strategic importance of the Arabian Peninsula. The relocation of the empire's capital to Baghdad meant that the political center of gravity migrated in a definitive manner, leaving the cradle of Islam with only symbolic value. The Emirates settlements on the coast were important crossroads for trade, but the rest of the country became depopulated.

A new shock came at the end of the fifteenth century: in 1498 the Portuguese Vasco da Gama (with the help of Ahmad ibn Majid from Ras Al Khaimah) arrived in the Arabian Gulf from his motherland, opening a new sea and trade route to India. The coasts of the Emirates became again strategic as at the dawn of their history, but this time it was the European colonial powers who pulled the strings.

Until almost the end of the sixteenth century, the Portuguese monopolized or almost monopolized the trade of spices and pepper in the area between the Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Oman and took possession of the territory both by force of arms and by acting as intermediaries between the Indian ports and the Emirates merchants.

In the meantime, the tribes that have dominated the political scene to this day were formed in the country: for example, the Bani Yas in Abu Dhabi and the Al Qasimi in Sharjah. Relations between the Emirates tribes and the Portuguese often led to battles.

Around 1622 the decline of Portugal gave way to the rise of Holland, which signed an agreement with Abbas I, Shah of Persia, drawing huge profits. By the end of the century, the Dutch dominated the trade between the Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Persia.

1.6 ENGLISH DOMINANCE AND PIRACY

Around 1750 the Dutch dominance was broken by the English ships, which however had to face an insidious enemy. The tribe of Al Qasimi in fact had armed a fleet that sailed in the waters of the Arabian Gulf, inflicting damage to the British.

Like the protagonists of the novels, the most famous of the Arab buccaneers, Rahmah ibn Jabir Al Jalhami (1760-1826), became famous for his ruthlessness, courage, and eye patch. Hired by the British, he had no qualms about fighting against the Al Qasimi.

Rahmah ibn Jabir Al Jalhami's end was also fictional. He died blowing up his ship, along with his son and his men, rather than be captured by his enemies, led by his nephew Ahmed bin Salman Al Khalifa.

In 1809 and again in 1819, Great Britain engaged in a real war, putting the coasts to fire and sword, against those whom they branded as pirates. (At the time of Queen Elizabeth I, of course, piracy against the Spanish had been considered a legitimate weapon...).

More than a century later, in 1986, the Emir of Sharjah H.H. Sultan bin Muhammad Al Qasimi, a distinguished historian and descendant of those "pirates," would describe that conflict in his essay "The Myth of Arab Piracy in the Gulf."

In 1820, the war with the Al Qasimi ended with a truce and others were made in the following years with the other tribes. Until the period 1968-1971, the Emirates would be called "Trucial States".

In 1892, the Trucial States became a British protectorate; they could not freely dispose of their territories nor enter into relations with other governments without British consent. One of the clauses of the treaty also provided for the abolition of the slave market, which deprived the states of an important source of income. In return, the United Kingdom would defend the Emirates against foreign aggression.

One of the consequences of the various foreign dominations was the removal of the territory of the Emirates from the control of the Ottoman

Empire, which instead had influence over neighboring Saudi Arabia. Throughout the 19th century and part of the 20th, the Arabian Gulf, including Persia (later Iran), was under British tutelage. The early 1920s saw the first surveys in the subsoil in search of natural resources (oil and natural gas), but it was only in 1958 that the first deposit of “black gold”, oil, was discovered in Murban Bab oil field, in the territory of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi.

1.7 THE **PATH TO INDEPENDENCE**

In 1952, the seven Sheikhs of the Trucial States, while becoming owners of the oil extracted in their territories, decided to create a common body, a Council.

Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, Emir of Abu Dhabi, and Sheikh Rashid bin Saeed Al Maktoum, Emir of Dubai and the Northern Territories, met on February 18, 1968 at Al Samha, in what is now the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, near the south-western border of Dubai, and sanctioned the union between Dubai and Abu Dhabi in the Northern Tent. This historic meeting will be dealt with in detail shortly through the vivid words of H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, son of Sheikh Rashid bin Saeed Al Maktoum.

In October 1969 a summit was organized in Abu Dhabi, attended by the seven emirs of the Council plus the neighboring countries Qatar and Bahrain. The Union of the Arab Emirates was constituted with nine signatory countries. Sheikh Zayed was elected President, Sheikh Rashid Vice-President, the Crown Prince of Qatar Prime Minister and Abu Dhabi was declared provisional capital of the Union.

However, all these efforts were in vain: the Union never materialized because first Qatar and then Bahrain proclaimed their independence. Notwithstanding this, Sheikh Zayed and Sheikh Rashid multiplied their efforts to give life to an independent sovereign federal state and on July 18, 1971, after seven days of intense and continuous meetings, the Emirs of Abu

Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Fujairah, Ajman and Umm al Quwain officially decided on its constitution with the name of United Arab Emirates.

On December 1, 1971 the British officially withdrew from the territories, abrogating the General Maritime Treaty of 1820 and renouncing their commitment to protect the resident populations.

December 2, 1971 is the date of the official constitution, in Dubai, of the United Arab Emirates, with the election of Sheikh Zayed as President, Sheikh Rashid as Vice-President and Sheikh Maktoum, Crown Prince of Dubai, as Prime Minister.

Here is the official text of the Declaration:

“On Thursday, December 2, 1971, here in the Emirate of Dubai, the rulers of Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Umm Al Quwain and Fujairah met as signatories to the Interim Constitution of the United Arab Emirates, in an atmosphere of sincere brotherhood, mutual trust and firm determination to realize the aspirations of the people of the United Arab Emirates. They issued a declaration, whereby the terms and conditions of the said Constitution shall come into force with immediate effect from this date.

The Federal Council brings good news for the people of the UAE, their brotherly Arab countries and all other nations of the world. Today we are witnessing the establishment of the United Arab Emirates as an independent, sovereign state and part of a great Arab nation. The UAE aims to maintain its independence, sovereignty, security and stability in defense against any potential attack on any member of its people. The UAE also wants to protect the freedoms and rights of its people and strengthen cooperation between different countries so as to preserve the public interests of all. In addition to the above objectives, the UAE aims to work towards achieving the prosperity and progress of the nation in all fields, ensuring a better life for all its citizens, as well as providing the necessary support to defend Arab causes and interests, as well as the United Nations Charter in line with international conventions.

In this regard, the Union condemns the use of force and expresses its regret over the recent occupation of part of the Arab nation by Iran. Consequently, the Union believes that it is absolutely necessary to uphold legal rights and resolve conflicts and disputes arising between nations through the adoption of globally recognized and accepted means.

On this blessed and historic occasion, the Federal Supreme Council wishes to express its gratitude and great praise to God, the Almighty, for his help and support in achieving this joyous result.

The Federal Council also wishes to extend its warmest congratulations and blessings to the people of the Union for the achievement of security and safety, which is the result of its trust in the Council, affirming that any form of unity in this part of the world is a step on the right path towards full Arab unity. The Union reaffirms its commitment to welcome any other Arab country wishing to join the UAE, especially the Brother Emirates, which signed the UAE Union Agreement in Dubai on February 28, 1968."

In February 1972, the seventh state, Ras Al Khaimah, joined the new nation.

At that time many people in the country lived in difficult conditions, especially in those Emirates with scarce natural resources. They were forced to drink undrinkable water which caused a high infant mortality rate and there were few schools and hospitals, as well as few roads connecting the individual Emirates.

1.8 THE **NORTHERN TENT**

I promised from the beginning: **this book wants to give the reader something more than a simple exposition of facts and dates.** For this reason, I have enriched the text with personal testimonies that make it more experiential.

For obvious reasons, I was not there at those summits, but I can bring you the testimony of a person who witnessed and participated in that birth,

namely H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Emir of Dubai and son of H.H. Sheikh Rashid Al Maktoum.

In his book *My Story*, published in 2019, Sheikh Mohammed tells: **"In a tent positioned to the north. There the Emirates were born"**.

In 1968 the young Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid, born in 1949, was studying in England, at Cambridge, when "my father phoned me and told me to come back immediately; an important appointment had been fixed with Sheikh Zayed to start thinking about a union between Dubai and Abu Dhabi." Sheikh Rashid asked him to choose the place for the meeting "since I knew the desert well. I had two tents pitched, one facing North for my father and Sheikh Zayed, the other facing South, towards the border between Dubai and Abu Dhabi".

That summit was a "historic turning point that turned the dream of a union into reality." The two Emirs agreed on the cardinal principles of the Union: a single flag, a single health system and a single educational system.

Countries that succeed "are those where people's dreams are included in aspirations, where leaders abandon their egos, and where political power is used as a means of fulfilling citizens' desires, not just ruling over them."

Each of the two Emirs offered the other to assume the presidency of the new state and each declined. In the end, Sheikh Zayed gave in, accepted the position and Sheikh Rashid shook his hand, assuring him of his convinced blessing. As soon as the historic meeting was over, the Union between Dubai and Abu Dhabi was declared.

"My father told me that the new Union needed protection from enemies and that he had agreed with Sheikh Zayed to establish a federal entity for defense and internal security. And he concluded: I want you to become in charge of this sector."

This is how Sheikh Mohammed recalls that moment: "The life of every human being is made up of moments that separate one phase from another, one life from another, the end of one dream from the beginning of another... In my life, the turning point that separated me from adolescence and

introduced me to adult life was a simple sentence said by my father: We want you to become responsible for the protection of the Union”.

Sheikh Mohammed was only nineteen years old when Sheikh Rashid appointed him chief of police and public safety of the new state. He wanted his son to have specific military training, however, so he sent him to England, to Mons Officer Cadet School, Aldershot. And because “I was very competitive, I worked hard and finished the course at the top of my class.”

i THE POWER MAP

At the time of writing, the institutional framework of the United Arab Emirates sees at the top, as President of the Federation, H.H. Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, and as Prime Minister and Vice President H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum.

H.H. Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan is also Emir of Abu Dhabi, while H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum is of Dubai.

The other five Emirates are led by H.H. Sheikh Humaid bin Rashid Al Nuaimi III (Ajman); H.H. Sheikh Hamad bin Mohammed Al Sharqi (Fujairah); H.H. Sheikh Saud bin Saqr Al Qasimi (Ras Al Khaimah); H.H. Sheikh Sultan III bin Muhammad Al Qasimi (Sharjah); H.H. Sheikh Saud bin Rashid Al Mualla (Umm Al Quwain).

1.9 A PERFECT MOSAIC

The United Arab Emirates is a federation of seven Emirates: Abu Dhabi, Ajman, Dubai, Fujairah, Ras Al Khaimah, Sharjah and Umm Al Quwain. The absolute head is the President of the Federation, appointed for five years by the Federal Supreme Council, a body composed of the Emirs who are at the top of the federated states.

The President exercises his supreme powers with the help of the Prime Minister, who is normally the Sheikh of Dubai, who is also the Vice President of the Federation. On the other hand, it is customary for the office of President to fall to the Emir of Abu Dhabi.

Their powers and those of the other government bodies are regulated by the Constitution passed in 1971, which I will discuss at length in the next chapter.

1.10 AN EXTRAORDINARY DEVELOPMENT

The United Arab Emirates in half a century has become one of the richest states in the world, achieving impressive and steady economic growth with brief periods of recession (in the years of the global financial and economic crisis of 2008-2009).

Between 2000 and 2018, average annual gross domestic product (GDP) growth was close to 4%, making the Emirates the second largest economy in the Gulf region after Saudi Arabia.

Since the year of independence, 1971, the economy of the Emirates has grown to almost 230 times its original size and today they are one of the richest countries in the world, with a GDP per capita almost 80% higher than the OECD average.

Although they are the owners of the seventh largest deposit of oil and natural gas in the world, in recent times the Emirates have launched a policy of diversification away from oil and gas. In particular, the strategy initially focused on sectors such as construction, education, information, communication, arts, defense, and leisure, and then extended to many other fields.

In recent times, there has been an increasing tendency to develop a process of industrialization in the country, incentivizing foreign manufacturing companies to relocate part of their production activity.

In this scenario, the Emirates are considered one of the best countries in the world for doing business: in the “Doing Business 2020” report – published in October 2019 by World Bank – are ranked 16th globally and first among Arab countries and feature prominently in several global indices, such as the Global Competitiveness Report (GCR) and the Global Innovation Index (GII).

Another report, the “World Happiness Report” (WHR), published on March 23, 2020, sees the Emirates in first place among Arab countries, with Abu Dhabi and Dubai as the happiest of all Arab cities.

According to public opinion in the rest of the Arab world, the Emirates, in terms of lifestyle, security and protection, economic opportunities, and the launching of commercial activities, represent an example to be emulated by their states.

1.11 DIVERSIFICATION

The UAE leadership had been pursuing diversification policies even before the oil price collapse in the 1980s, and theirs is now the most diversified economy in the Middle East and North Africa region.

One of the assets on which leadership has focused most has been tourism, with billions of dollars invested in infrastructure. According to the September 2019 Mastercard Global Destination Cities Index, Dubai ranks fourth in the world among tourist destinations, with 15.93 million visitors from abroad.



NAMES

In Arab countries, the name structure can be complex and misleading. First of all there is the *kunya*, which is derived from the name of a son, especially the first-born and is defined with the prefix Abu (father of) in males and Umm (mother of) in females.

The proper name, *ism* (Ali, Muhammad, Fatima, etc.), is only used by friends and family. An acquaintance or stranger calling a person only by the *ism* can be regarded as offensive.

Then comes the patronymic, *nasab*, which is derived only from the father's name. It follows the *ism* and precedes the father's name: for males it is *ibn* or *bin* (son of), for females *bint* (daughter of). The longer the *nasab* is, including also the name of the grandfather, of the great-great-grandfather, etc., the more it marks the importance and the nobility of the family. Example: Muhammad bin Abd Allah bin Yusuf means "Muhammad son of Abd Allah (who was) son of Yusuf". Then there is the *nisba*, an adjective ending in -i and indicating the geographical origin: for example, Al Misri means "the Egyptian". The sequence is completed by *laqab*, which is an honorific title or a nickname. For example Al Mansur is "the one who is made a winner by God", Al Atrash is "the deaf one" and so on. The Father of the Nation is Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan. Sheikh is "Sheikh," Zayed is the *ism*; bin Sultan is the *nasab* (son of Sultan); Al Nahyan is the **laqab**, the family name, which has ruled Abu Dhabi since 1760. Sheikh Zayed's *kunya* would have been Abu Khalifa, father of Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the current Emir of Abu Dhabi and President of the UAE.



TITLES

Each Emirate is led by a Ruler, who takes the title of Emir and belongs to the Royal Family. Emir, in Arabic, means "commander" and is a title equivalent to that of Prince, which goes to the monarch of an Arab kingdom. Sheikh (or Sheikha) is the title given to the members of each Royal Family.

Emirs are the seven monarchs of the individual states of the United Arab Emirates; the Rulers of Kuwait and Qatar are also Emirs. Until 2002 the Ruler of Bahrain was an Emir, but in that year he proclaimed himself King.

In the rest of the Arabian Peninsula, Saudi Arabia is a kingdom, Oman a sultanate and Yemen a republic.

The Caliph (Khalifa), lest there be any confusion, is Muhammad's successor. Established in 632 with Abu Bakr, the Prophet's successor, the office officially lasted until 1922, the year of its abolition by Turkey. (The last Caliph, Abdumecid II, number 101 after Abu Bakr, died in 1944.) Khalifa is also used as a proper name and should not be confused with the title.

Sultan (Sultan) is a military and political ruler. The term was coined around 1100 and was used by many Arab and Muslim dynasties. Currently, Oman, Brunei, and seven of the nine states of the Federation of Malaysia are sultanates. Like Khalifa, Sultan is also used as a proper name and should not be confused with the title.

H.H. stands for "His/Her Highness" and is used for members of the Royal Family of each Emirate, while H.E. stands for "His/Her Excellency" and is used for high-profile governmental personalities, for example ministers.

Pasha and Vizier, positions familiar from novels and movies, derive from Persian terms and were in use under the Ottoman Empire.

1.12 BEYOND 2021

Up to this point, I have spoken of the past and present of the Emirates. It is time to talk about their future, already planned by the leadership.

Because while a politician looks to the next election, a statesman looks to the next generation. A politician thinks about the success of his party, a statesman about the success of his country.

VISION 2021

In 2021 the United Arab Emirates will celebrate their first fifty years. To mark this Golden Jubilee, H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates and Emir of Dubai, launched the Vision 2021 project as long ago as 2010. This is a long-term

plan which aims to make the Emirates one of the best countries in the world by the momentous date of December 2, 2021.

Vision 2021: four pillars

There are four pillars on which the Vision 2021 agenda is based: they represent the key areas of government action in the coming years.

1. **United in responsibility:** an ambitious and confident nation, rooted in its heritage.
2. **United in destiny:** a strong union united by a common destiny.
3. **United in knowledge:** a competitive economy led by experienced and innovative Emirates.
4. **United in prosperity:** an educational and sustainable environment for quality living.

This is how H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum explains Vision 2021: "The UAE owes a great debt of gratitude to the perseverance, wisdom and far-sighted vision of the founding fathers, who in those early days employed all their strength and carefully budgeted their resources to chart the course that shaped our great nation. On this path they faced the challenge of building a modern and progressive nation, so that the people of the Emirates could share in the fruits of their common development. The UAE can count on many impressive achievements since its inception and now stands among the most advanced nations in the world. The Emirates have reaped many benefits from this extraordinary pace of development, while preserving the fabric of their society, the essence of their way of life, and the strength of their culture.

This Vision charts the next stage of our journey leading up to the year 2021, when we will celebrate the Golden Jubilee of our beloved Union. While this Vision is inspired by the principles of our founding fathers, it is also guided by the National Work Program launched by His Highness Sheikh Khalifa Bin

Zayed Al Nahyan, the President of the United Arab Emirates, and adopted by Their Highnesses the Emir members of the Federal Supreme Council.

As we look to the future and embark on a journey of empowerment at all levels, we must follow a path on many fronts with confidence, optimism and determination. There will be challenges to the family ties that bind us to the fabric of our society; challenges to economic competitiveness; challenges to our national identity; and challenges to health, education, the environment, and well-being.

An ambitious nation like ours cannot achieve its goals by relying on past performance. We must work harder, be more innovative, more organized, and more vigilant in examining the trends and challenges ahead.

We will begin with a deep and honest analysis of our current situation, taking into account emerging regional and international changes.

We are determined to proactively respond to all challenges in a way that will bequeath to future generations a legacy worthy of the pioneers who founded our great nation, a legacy of prosperity, security, stability and a life filled with dignity and respect.”

UAE Centennial Plan 2071

2071 will be the year of the centenary of the United Arab Emirates. And the Emirates are already working towards that goal. This may seem far away at the moment, but in a long-range perspective, not “hit and run” as we are often used to in the West, it is just around the corner.

And this ambitious project has a name: UAE Centennial Plan 2071. This means having a Vision, setting goals to achieve, being motivated and motivating your country!

Revolutionary changes

Most likely in 2071, the UAE will be among the world's leading nations, and the Federation will have achieved its goal peacefully through the implementation of a series of initiatives, commissioned by H.H. Sheikh

Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum and H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, which are based on four pillars.

- 1. Future-oriented government:** with the goal of becoming the best government in the world, with a long-term Vision and leadership capable of inspiring citizens and anticipating the future.
- 2. Excellence in education:** The theme of education has always been of fundamental importance in the choices made by the leaders of the Arab Emirates. Centennial Plan 2071 highlights the importance of the continuous search for excellence in education, with a specific focus on certain areas of knowledge such as advanced sciences, technology, space sciences, engineering, medicine, etc.
- 3. Diversification of the economy:** The UAE aspires to increase the process of diversification of its economy and make it one of the best and strongest in the world. This can be achieved by boosting domestic productivity, supporting local companies, supporting scientific research and promising sectors, and focusing on innovation and entrepreneurship of citizens.
- 4. A happy and cohesive society:** This last aspect seems trivial, but it is not. Indeed, it represents another of the cornerstones of the leadership of the country, which has always been very attentive to all the needs of its citizens, not just the material ones. Community development is one of the essential points of Centennial Plan 2071 and the government will implement a series of initiatives aimed at creating a safe, tolerant, cohesive and ethical society that embraces happiness and positivity as a way of life. All with the larger goal of making the UAE one of the best places in the world to live.

The seven Emirates immediately adopted these pillars and launched internal programs aimed at pursuing the same objectives. By way of example, the following is an in-depth examination of Area 2071, the initiative of the Emirate of Dubai.

UAE Centennial Plan 2071: Area 2071 in Dubai

“It is today that we must sow the seeds for future generations and tomorrow’s prosperity.”

– Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum

Area 2071 is the visual statement of the idea of H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Ruler of Dubai: to create a positive global impact. Starting from the realization that the systems we are used to – from education to transportation to health care – were designed and built in a very different era than the one we have today and especially than the one we will experience in 2071, in order to make substantial changes we need to start asking disruptive questions.

Area 2071 represents a platform designed and developed to attract the finest minds globally, start-ups, entrepreneurs and innovators in technology, and offer them a competitive environment in which to work, confront and innovate especially in the field of technology and Artificial Intelligence, with the aim of reinventing the future and solving global challenges.

Area 2071’s space is located inside the Emirates Towers, one of the most iconic buildings in Dubai, which among other things is the location of the hotel where I stay during my travels in the country.

Emirates Towers has been designed to offer a flexible atmosphere and to enrich creativity and interaction; it is also an interesting place to visit, because it often contains futuristic and immersive exhibitions that allow you to touch some of the most innovative technologies that will probably be part of our everyday life tomorrow.