CHAPTER I
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the past, several Arab nations had attempted to form federations or Unions among themselves in quest of the ultimate Arab Nation. All attempts proved to be either short-lived or out-right failures. In early 1958, Egypt and Syria merged together to establish the United Arab Republic (UAR). A month later Yemen joined the federation. An almost simultaneous merger of Iraq and Jordan lasted only six months. And in 1961, the UAR collapsed when Syria withdrew from it. Many a time Libya and Syria made unsuccessful attempts to come together.¹

In addition to attempts at federations and unifications, there were many proposals to bring all or some of the Gulf/Arab states under regional groupings. In 1974, the Shah of Iran sought to form a regional grouping (excluding Iraq) under his leadership. However, the Arabs suspected that the Shah was trying to fill the power vacuum created by the withdrawal of the British. Saudi Arabia and Kuwait came up with their own versions of regional integration in 1976 and 1978 respectively. In 1979 and 1980 Iraq made two proposals which failed to

¹ The latest in the series was been the unification of North and South Yemens in 1990.
evoke any enthusiasm. In the 1979 proposal Iraq made a provision for an Arab Deterrent Force for the Gulf and offered to send its troops to Bahrain and Kuwait in the event of internal uprisings as well as external aggression. As a counter to Iraqi proposal, Oman advocated the creation of a multilateral naval force, drawn from the US, the UK and West Germany, for the security of the Gulf.

The federation created by the establishment of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in 1971 was the third attempt between 1968 and 1971 at federation-building by the Gulf Sheikhdoms. The idea of union or federation came into being in 1955. In the autumn of 1964 the Arab League mission called for strengthening ties among the Gulf States to preserve their common interests and to provide protection against foreign dangers. The wider federation, the second in the series, lasted barely three years of prolonged negotiations. The UAE is the only instance among these experiments, which has survived for nearly quarter a century. The UAE came into existence in 1971 incorporating six Trucial States of the Gulf namely Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ummal-Qaiwain, Ajman and Fujairah. In 1972, Ras al-Khaimah joined the federation bringing the number of the constituents to seven. In the process of establishing an effective federation, it had to solve several border problems with in and outside the territory.

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3 SWB, ME/3056 A/1, 24 April 1969.
THE ERA OF COLONIALISM

Ever since Portugal established its hegemony over the Gulf area in 1506, the history of the region witnessed power rivalries among various European colonial powers. The Portuguese dominance had continued for nearly a century and a half. Finally, they were forced out of the coast of Oman in 1650. This 'power vacuum' led to commercial and political rivalry between the Dutch and the British. Though the Dutch had maintained their predominance in the area but by 1766, it came virtually to an end, at a time when the British were establishing their power in India.

The British East India Company was established in 1600. The success of the company was indicated in the fact that in 1763 the Shah of Persia designated the British agent of the company the Governor - General for the English nation in the Gulf of Persia. The Great Britain had signed her first Arabian treaty with the Sultan of Muscat in 1798, in a successful attempt to close the Gulf to French naval forces during the Napoleonic wars. Since then, a 'special relationship' existed between Britain and the territories around the Gulf. The diffusion of political authority among a

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number of tribes, their small size and economically poor conditions became hurdles to establish and maintain a sound system. These factors encouraged other nations to venture into the region. Moreover, the political instability persisted in spite of the presence of the East India Company. The area’s inhospitable environment contributed, in part, to its long isolation. But, Britain had increased this isolation by imposing its treaties on the Omani coast rulers, thus curbing the seafaring activities of the people and restricting their main channel of communication with the outside world. One outcome of poverty and instability was that some people had resorted to ‘piracy’. By 1747 several local Arab tribes came together under the Qassimi alliance in order to safeguard their maritime trade. They naturally demanded the British to pay taxes if the latter wanted to make use of the Gulf and the ports owned by the Qassimi alliance.

During the eighteenth century the Arab-British rivalry, or what the British called ‘piracy’ had began to flourish. It had reached its peak in the first half of the nineteenth century. In an attempt to enforce their tax laws on British vessels and because of the British involvement in the Oman-Qassimi war on the side of the

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7 Arab Historians contest the use of the word ‘piracy’ and contend that it was ‘rather a national reaction against European intrusion into the area. They claim that attacks on foreign ships were a form of retaliation, and that the operations were in the nature of a local war rather than piracy’ see, K.G. Fenelon, The United Arab Emirates: An Economic and Social Survey (London: 1973) p. 16.
Sultan of Muscat, the Qassimi tribes began to attack and rob British ships. On the other hand, both European and Arab pirates were very active in the Gulf during the 17th, 18th and the early 19th centuries. Those who operated from Sharjah were particularly disruptive of trade. To retaliate the attacks, a British punitive expedition from Bombay was dispatched.

The British, in order to end any threat to their hegemony in the Gulf either domestic or external, waged four wars against the Qassimi headquarters in 1805, 1809, 1816 and 1819. In the last of these, Ras al-Khaimah was burned and almost all the Qassimi vessels were destroyed in Ras al-Khaimah, Rams, al-Jazirah al-Hamra and Sharjah. This was the first venture and it succeeded. The second punitive expedition took place when the British-flag vessels were attacked. It’s target this time was the 'pirate' head quarters at Ras al-Khaimah and other harbours along the 240 kms of the so-called pirate coast.

**THE EMERGENCE OF TRUCIAL STATES**

As a result of these punitive expeditions, the Sheikhs of the various coastal settlements including the Sheikh of Bahrain agreed to sign a treaty of peace to end 'Piracy' at sea. The power of the Qassimi was finally destroyed.

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when the British attacked Ras al-Khaimah in 1819. And in the following year the British made a general treaty (1820) for the cessation of plunder and Piracy. It imposed the first of the ‘three commandments’ which later governed the relations between British and Trucial States. It was ‘Thou Shalt not commit piracy against British shipping’.

To enforce the treaty British warships and cavalry was stationed at Ras al-Khaimah. But the piracy remained unchecked and, in 1835, the Sheikhs agreed in a ‘maritime truce’ not to engage under any circumstances in hostilities by sea during the pearl-diving season. Initially, this agreement was for six months. The advantages of this were so noticeable that the Sheikhs were willing to extend the truce until, in 1853, a treaty of maritime peace in perpetuity was concluded. It established a ‘perpetual maritime truce’ on the newly-named Trucial coast. This treaty gave the British supervisory power though they were never to interfere in wars between the Sheikhs.

The second commandment arose from the truce of 1853 and its essence was ‘Thou Shalt not commit piracy against one another at sea.’ The British concern to stop the slave trade also led to contacts with the Trucial coast where the Sheikhs had been engaged in carrying slaves from Africa to India and Arabia. In 1838-39 and 1847 the Sheikhs undertook to prohibit the carriage of slaves on board vessels. The property of those found guilty used to

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12 Hawley, n. 10, p. 2.
be confiscated. These developments helped the Trucial coast becoming organised in general and, particularly, at emiratal level.

Towards the end of the 19th century the other external powers like France, Germany and Russia started showing interest in the Gulf area. Having realised the future dangers this trend might lead to the British government entered, in 1892, into separate identical 'exclusive' treaties with the Trucial rulers. The agreements called a final halt to all foreign contacts by the emirates, except with Britain and prevented the emirates from negating or signing any agreement with foreign countries without British consent. The Exclusive Agreements were an indication of Britain's determination to secure the area against any encroachment. Thus Britain became the undisputed power in the Gulf "by means of using force on the one hand (the destruction and burning of Ras al-Khaimah in 1819) and signing treaties with the local treacherous Arab rulers on the other hand". (1798 treaty with the Sultan of Muscat).

This gave the British exclusive powers like Sheikhs undertakings not to cede, mortgage or depose of their territories to anyone except British government. Moreover, the Sheikhs were not allowed to maintain any relationship with any foreign country. They were

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13 Zahlan, n. 6, p. 2.
restricted not to grant concessions for the exploration of oil or other minerals to any foreign state or foreign company without prior consultation and agreement with the British government. All these are contained in the third and last commandment: 'Thou shalt not deal with any other power except through the British government.' In 1900 there was a small incident which conformed the British attitude towards the Gulf. During that time the viceroy of India, Lord Curzon came to know that Sultan of Muscat and Oman was thinking to allow the Russians to establish a coaling station. Curzon was reported to have said that any Briton who allowed a foreign power to have a hold in the Gulf should be impeached and hanged. To reverse the Sultan's decision, Lord Curzon visited the Oman coast and told the Sultan that "the Persian Gulf was a Pearl which Britain considered beyond Price".

The principal purpose of British vigilance and control in the Trucial States was to secure a peaceful passage of their trade which was mainly concentrated on the Persian coast. In return, the British undertook to protect the Sheikhdoms from any internal or external threat and to preserve the autonomous entities of these emirates as well as protecting their political and economic interests abroad. Britain would assume responsibility for the conduct of the emirates external affairs. During this time trade had flourished after telegraph lines, postal and steamer services had been established.

15 Hawley, n. 10, p. 18.
The ascendancy of British power and influence in the Gulf in the second half of the nineteenth century attracted an antagonistic reaction from the two local powers i.e., Persia and Ottoman empire. While Britain concerned herself with preventing piracy and maintaining the maritime truce, other events were taking place on land. The people of the Trucial States were preoccupied with feuds, wars, raids and conspiracies. In the 1890's the major threat to the Gulf appeared to be from the Ottoman empire which claimed control of Qatar. British fears that Ottoman influence might be extended to the Gulf resulted in exclusive agreements being concluded in 1892 with the Sheikhs of the Omani coast emirates. The main motive of the Turks were to ensure their power over the province of Nejd. Later the official Baghdad Gazette listed, succumbing to the pressure of the Turks, Bahrain and eight towns in Trucial Oman as being apart of the province of Nejd.

Since 1820 many political dealings were carried on between the British and the Trucial States. These were made through the British East India Company from 1853 to 1858, by the Government of Bombay from 1858 to 1873, by the Government of British India from 1873 to 1947 and, from the granting of independence to India in 1947 to the

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19 Zahlan, n. 6, p. 256.
end of 1971, by the foreign office of the British Government.

SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CONDITIONS BEFORE 1971

Socio-Political Fabric
Basically, the lower-Gulf societies had been characterised by traditional-tribal life. Tribal chiefs used to enjoy political power and authority and, while exercising their duties, they would invoke the authority of the Holy Qoran (Shura). However, they were bound by customs related to the consultation process. For example, a tribal chief would not take any major decisions without consulting tribal elders and religious leaders. "Islam and tribal customs, which in many respects pre-date Islam but modified by it, provided the body of rulers -- tribal law that govern the life of every individual in both its religious and secular aspects".  

This tribal character underwent substantial changes due to the external threats. The tribal loyalty was basically personalistic and patrimonial type. The sovereign was the centre of the political system in which he had been assisted by ministers, advisors, military leaders, personal secretaries and confidants with unquestioned personal loyalty to the leader.  But, these changes did not affect the performance of the system until 1960s. Then, the exploration of oil had brought

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about fundamental transformation and the whole tribal power structure was shaken. Oil created wealth which in turn led to increasing developmental activities. However, economic development did not automatically lead to political awakening. By contemporary world standards, the UAE as well as most of the Arab countries are handicapped by low level of political participation and consciousness. While admitting this reality, Saad Eddin Ibrahim points out how politicisation is carried out by proxy:

In Arab countries, where political parties are still prohibited or severely restricted, some civil associations have served many of their functions by proxy -- for example, by articulating and debating of public issues, formulation of public policy alternatives, and exertion of pressure on decision makers. Kuwait's University Graduates Society, Qatar's Jassrah Cultural Club, and the UAE's Association of Social Professions have been performing such functions.  

**Historical Evolution**

Since the times immemorial, the Arabs engaged in extensive trade. Their commercial activities spread from India in the east to Constantinople in the west. They were the carriers of not only goods but ideas and customs. This process until the dawn of the European colonialism had worked to the advantages of all

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concerned. And, most of the societies of the Trucial coast had the common feature of being British Protectorates till early 1970s. During the Protectorate-period, the British did not interfere with the affairs of the tribal structures. This autonomy enjoyed by the emirates had finally resulted in the decay of political and economic processes.

**Subsistent Economy**

Exclusive reliance on trade and their having been under colonial rule had obviated any industrialisation. This trend continued until the oil was found in the 1960s. The infertile soil and the absence of any natural resource save oil further aggravated their economic underdevelopment. Even Abu Dhabi and Dubai, the two emirates who started producing oil before the creation of the federation, were forced to realise the importance in forming a federal union for their common economic development.

**THE BRITISH WITHDRAWAL**

Though the British government was able to manage the affairs of the Trucial states without much trouble, it had many reasons to withdraw from the Gulf area. The final withdrawal of British forces from the Emirate of Sharjah was to start on 22nd November 1971. It was also announced that the last British soldier would leave the Arabian Gulf area on 18th December 1971.²³

²³ SWB, ME/3829 A/1 3 November 1971.
hegemony over the Persian Gulf declined for various reasons of which withdrawal from the Indian sub-continent was not the immediate one. "Britain no longer had either the military strength or the political influence to maintain herself in the Gulf against local hostility - and ever since the Suez crisis there had been plenty of that".

1. The main reason was the growing importance of the oil companies and the consequent increase in the influence of the United States.

2. British exhaustion in two world wars may also be counted as an indirect cause.

3. The Suez war of 1956 was a disaster for Britain following so close to her failure to make Palestinian mandate even a partial success.

4. Perhaps the most important precedent for Gulf countries was the nationalization of Persian oil by a democratically elected government of Persia (Iran).

5. Tory imperialism was found inadequate because the United States, it was hinted, vetoed a gunboat policy in the Gulf.

6. Britain's deteriorating economy and the trade deficit had an impact on the pound sterling and made its withdrawal imminent.

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25 Mosley, n. 16, p. 354.
In the late 1960s, Britain was spending $20 million a year on maintaining its forces in the Gulf. Further, the instability of the British currency and the devaluation of the Pound Sterling in the autumn of 1967 made withdrawal from the east of Suez inevitable. The British decision was received with alarm by the governments of Singapore, Malaysia, Australia, New Zealand and most of the Persian Gulf States. Sheikh Zayed of Abu Dhabi and other rulers of Gulf Sheikhdoms had offered to pay the entire cost of maintaining British forces in the area which was estimated to be as much as $25 million a year. The large part of that expenditure was presumably shouldered by Sheikh Zayed. Some scholars argue, however, that withdrawal was far from an economic necessity, part of the price extracted by the left wing of the labour party in the Parliament for its support to the Wilson government’s 1968 budget. All these reasons forced Britain to announce in 1968 that she would withdraw from the Gulf not later than 1971 which she did.

It is clear, therefore, that the British decision was not entirely on economic, political and ideological

28 Ibid., p. 336.
31 Chatterji, n.24, p. 544.
considerations.\textsuperscript{32} As if to confirm this, the then British Defence Secretary, Mr. Denis Healey, declared that his government would not like the idea of being "a sort of white slave for Arab Sheikhs."\textsuperscript{33} The British decision surprised the rulers of the Omani coast emirates but they were assured by the US and Britain that Iran and Saudi Arabia would fill the political vacuum. This was to be known as the US 'Twin Pillar Policy'.\textsuperscript{34} At first the British decision was received by US officials "with horror and consternation" and the then Foreign Secretary George Brown visited Washington DC, to explain the underlying reasons.\textsuperscript{35} The British conservative party which was in opposition at that time criticised the Labour's decision without, however, explicitly promising to reverse the decision.\textsuperscript{36}

To understand Britain's position and interests in the Trucial States during the Post-war period one has to take into account two issues. First, is the internal developments during this period. Second, the treaty of 1892 remained the main reference point for both the parties.

\textsuperscript{33} \textit{Asian Recorder}, Vol. XIV, No. 14, April 7, 1968, p. 8251.
\textsuperscript{34} Mazher A. Hameed, \textit{Saudi Arabia, the West and the Security of the Gulf} (London, 1986), p. 3.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{36} Gause, n. 30, p. 253.
Under the 1892 treaty, the Trucial States were not allowed to make any treaties with other countries which remained a big obstacle for these Sheikdoms. The changes which occurred in Britain's administrative and political control within the area have to be examined. It adopted a policy of direct interference in certain fields in the internal affairs of the Trucial States. The British Prime Minister Harold Wilson, addressing the House of Commons on 16 January 1968, announced that 'we have decided to withdraw our forces from the Persian Gulf by the end of 1971.' The British Defence Secretary Denis Healey told the house of commons that Gulf was an area of such vital importance not only to the economy of western Europe as a whole, but to world peace that it would be totally irresponsible for us to withdraw our forces from the area. The decision had been taken within two months, after the Labour government assured all the Gulf rulers that it had no intention of leaving the area in the near future. Earlier, the minister of state for Foreign Affairs, Goronwy Roberts, was sent to the Gulf in November 1967 to reassure the Gulf rulers of Britain's continuing commitment. In June 1970, the Labour had been voted out of power. Now the new conservative government had to decide the future of the Gulf Sheikdoms. "Internally, the Sheikdoms hoped that the conservatives would reverse the Labour policy to disengage". The new conservative government appointed


38 Kelly, n. 26, p.47.

39 Gause, n. 30, p. 251.

40 SWB, ME/3056 A/1, 24 April 1969 also see Sadik and Snavely, No. 4, p. 196.
Sir William Luce as Britain's envoy to the Gulf to make recommendations to the government on whether or not it should follow the same policy. Luce advised that Britain should go ahead with the withdrawal.

The conservatives were also unable to reverse Labour's decision because of the strong Iranian reaction to any idea of back pedalling; the loss of faith in British policy among the emirates; and the realisation that overdue internal reforms in the emirates would remain suspended as long as the British withdrawal was in doubt. Indeed the conservative party condemned the Labour policy while it was in opposition, but implemented the same when it came to power. The former Prime Minister Sir Alec Douglas Home first tried to begin a series of consultations with the Gulf rulers from Shah of Iran downwards to find out whether there was any possibility of reversing the Labour policy. On the other hand, the larger-States of the Gulf were opposed to reversal of Britain's commitment to withdraw. Only a Sheikh Rashid among rulers of the nine protected Sheikhdoms would publicly call for such a course of action and then only obliquely. On its public statements, the British government appeared committed to 'the prosperity and security of the area'.

Since the close of the nineteenth century, British policy in the Trucial States was influenced by three main factors: the activities of the neighbouring countries,

the rivalry of other big powers and internal changes within the states. In addition, Britain's experience in South Yemen led to the realisation that the longer the British stayed greater the possibility that a radical government would seize power in the future.

According to Riad N. El-Rayyes, the British had put forward three possibilities for the reorganisation of the region:\footnote{Riad N. EL - Rayyes, 'The Arab Nationalism and the Gulf', in B.R. Pridham, ed., \textit{The Arab Gulf and the Arab World} (London, 1988) p. 88.}

1. A federation of all nine Sheikhdoms involved, Bahrain, Qatar, Abu Dhabi, Dubai Sharjah, Ajman, Oman at-Qaiwain, Ras al-Khaimah and Fujairah, the large and the small, the rich and the poor, which would be capable of resisting any expansionist ambitions that its neighbours might have.

2. The bigger (Bahrain) and the richer (Qatar and Abu Dhabi) Sheikhdoms, would declare their independence and would make provision for their safety from predatory neighbours by means of defence treaties with friendly states.

3. The vacuum left by the Britain would be filled by an Iranian presence, Iranian protection, or even Iranian occupation, thus leading the way towards the realisation of Iran's age-old dream of turning the 'Arabian Gulf' into a 'Persian Gulf', in reality -- and not in name only.\footnote{Ibid.}
However, logic dictated that every effort should be made to achieve the first alternative only.

At the time of withdrawal they had adopted a policy of encouraging the formation of a political union. The other Arab countries also favoured it. Sir William Luce was given the responsibility to encourage the Gulf states to forget their rivalries and work together to form a federation of Arab states with a joint Army, Air Force and Navy to protect their independence. 'Federation was the magic word that would work as many miracles for them as oil'. Then on 12 December 1967 UN General Assembly adopted a resolution reaffirming the "inalienable right of the people of Oman to self-determination and independence". The Gulf was not isolated from Pan-Arab political developments in the Arab world. This was in some way "the turning point at which the influence of the British companies and individuals became overshadowed by the influence which the Arab world rapidly gained over the people and politics of these seven Sheikhdoms".

Much earlier to this, British government made attempts to institutionalise the political process. "The age-old pattern of patriarchal rule was up-dated and adopted, in a varitable administrative cataclysm, to the more usual apparatus of ministries, municipalities and

45 Mosley, n. 16, p. 361 also see Arab Report and Record (London), Issue No. 24, December 16-30, 1969, p. 530. Hereafter, ARR.


47 Heard-Bey, n. 27, p. 319.
It had set-up the Trucial states council in 1952 in order to bring the rulers together in the hope that they might form some political and economic association in future. The Trucial States council consisted of the seven rulers and chaired by the political Agent who was assigned an advisory role. It did not start meeting regularly until 1960.49

Britain introduced this council with no written constitution, no executive and no policy-making powers. It remained as a consultative and advisory body. In 1964 it had appointed Ahmed Bitarus, a Jordanian, as a legal adviser to the council. It proposed to reform the area and extended the activities of the council to internal welfare. The Trucial Oman Scouts, a force of some 1600 men, officered and financed by Britain, was based in Sharjah. Moreover, in 1965 a British sponsored Development fund (in which Bahrain, Qatar and Abu Dhabi participated) was set-up to develop education, health and communication services in the Trucial coast region.50

The responsibility of chairmanship of the council was formally given to the Sheikh Saqr bin Muhammad, the ruler of Ras al-Khaimah. In the same period Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan had assumed power in Abu Dhabi. And the British remained the main contributor to the budget of development council. After he took over power Zayed had

49 Dilip Hiro, Inside the Middle East (London, 1982) p. 16.
initially contributed 50 per cent in 1967-68 and increased it to 90 per cent in 1968-69.\textsuperscript{51}

Finally, as already mentioned, Sir William Luce’s mission to the Gulf in October 1970 had negated all hopes and apprehensions that the British might decide to stay in the region.\textsuperscript{52} Hence, the stage was prepared for the creation of the United Arab Emirates.

**UNITY MOVES**

The British decision had left not many options for the small emirates. Independence made them insecure and vulnerable to internal as well as external threats. Under the British protection for more than a century and half, they never realised the importance of political institutions and military set-up. “Yet, however, inauspicious was the situation, the seven Trucial States and, Qatar and Bahrain began discussions in 1968 to consider the formation of a federation in which they could combine their resources despite an uncertain future”.\textsuperscript{53}

In the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, several Arab leaders and scholars had mooted the idea of a federation for the Arab world. Prominent among them was

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{51} Morsy, n. 17, p. 33.
\item \textsuperscript{52} Peck, n. 41, p. 51.
\item \textsuperscript{53} Ibid., p. 49.
\end{itemize}
'Abd al-Rahman al-Bazzaz, who later became the prime minister of Iraq in 1965. In his The Federal State and the Unitary State, published in 1960, he advocated the merits of federalism thus:

The federalism comes nearer to the spirit of our modern age, since it implies specialisation. In other words, the federal state concerns itself with the major problems relating to its over-all structure, its foreign policy, its defence, its finance and its economy in general. Regional governments are left to deal with local or regional problems, such as health, culture, city planning, roads and other problems that have become increasingly important in modern life.54

After a series of trips by VIPs in the region Sheikh Isa ben Khalifa of Bahrain announced in the second week of February 1968 that the Sheikhs would meet within a week to workout plans for a federation of the nine Gulf Sheikhdoms.55 Abu Dhabi and Dubai were the first two states to speak of the cooperation. Only a day later, the ruler of Abu Dhabi Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan and the ruler of Dubai Sheikh Rashid bin Said held a snap meeting at Semain and announced the formation of a federation between the two states. They agreed to form a federation and to share a common policy in the area of Foreign Affairs, Defence and citizenship. They, however, resolved

to look after their own internal and judicial affairs.\textsuperscript{56} Prior to this development, both the emirates managed to solve the problems involved in the border demarcation. The two rulers in the presence of the Ruler of Qatar Shaykh Ahmad Bin Ali Al-Jhani signed a treaty.\textsuperscript{57} According to experts on Persian Gulf matters in Arab capitals the move was designated to hasten the federating process and either to exclude Bahrain and Qatar from the set-up or allow them in only on a loose confederal basis.\textsuperscript{58}

Article 4 of the Abu Dhabi - Dubai bilateral agreement of 19 February 1968 invited the other Trucial states and the rulers of Qatar and Bahrain to discuss the future of the area. Rulers of nine Gulf States in quick response to the invitation, met in Dubai on 25 February 1968 to consider how they could pool their resources to form a solid federation after the British withdrawal. In three days, they were able to draft the Federal Agreement and signed it.

The period between February 1968 and July 1971 witnessed an intensive as well as extensive series of negotiations between the rulers of the nine Omani coast Emirates. This whole series of negotiations started with the Abu Dhabi and Dubai agreement to form a federation

\textsuperscript{56} Sadik and Snavely, n. 4, p. 190.

\textsuperscript{57} SWB, ME/3006 A/14, 20 February 1969.

uniting the two emirates - under one flag.59 The two emirates invited all the other Omani coast emirates and Bahrain and Qatar to join the federation. Sheikh Zayed felt strongly in favour of the proposed Gulf federation, "if we find there is any hesitation, this will not restrain us from moving forward with those who wish to join us in declaring the establishment of the Union - leaving the door open for dissenters to join in the near or distant future in accordance with their circumstances and as they see fit".60 The seven rulers accepted the invitation, and a meeting of the nine was called on 27 February 1968 in Dubai. The rulers agreed to establish the federation of Arab Emirates to safeguard their mutual security, safety and interests.61 The meeting had not been organised by the Trucial states council or by a British - sponsored constitutional authority, but at the invitation of the rulers of Abu Dhabi and Dubai each of whom had his own reasons.62

The rulers of nine Gulf States agreed to establish the federation and gave the name 'Federation of the Arab Emirates'. The British favoured a federation of nine - the seven Trucial States plus Qatar and Bahrain. It was hoped to have the presumed benefits of a larger population and the inclusion in its administrative


62 Heard-Bey, n. 27, p. 342.
structure of Bahrain trained civil servants. This would have helped them to co-operate and establish closer ties among themselves. These had the potential to considerably uplift them in socio-economic areas. The wide range co-operation would also boast the greater Arab Unity as well. It was agreed to share the foreign policy and defence activities which were under British control since 1892. As a matter of fact, though they had agreed on many aspects, disagreement on certain areas persisted. There were doubts about the allocation of power between the wealthy emirates of Bahrain, Qatar, Abu Dhabi and Dubai, and the remaining five emirates. Some of the challenges the proposed federation confronted are listed below.

1. How the union should operate? Would there be an elected or appointed assembly?
2. What would be the basis of representation wealth? Prestige? Size of territory Population?
3. The distribution of powers between the rulers and the Union government.
4. Would the assembly have consultative or legislative powers?
5. How would the Union be financed? Where would be permanent capital be located?

The proposed nine member federation would operate its federal political authority through the rules of nine

63 Peck, n. 41, p. 49.
states. According to the federal Agreement the ultimate authority was vested, in the Supreme Council. This body was made responsible for overall policies on political economic and social affairs. It was mentioned in the agreement that the Chairmanship of the council would be related annually among its members. The supreme council, being a highest body in the federation, would like to give equal weight to federative members irrespective of their wealth, population etc., "It envisioned a rather loose grouping of the nine states in which the rulers could act only with a unanimous vote". By giving all the equal position the federation carried with it its own seeds of destruction, for its decisions were to be taken by unanimous vote. Due to this problem the supreme council could not came out with any concrete decision on any subject. The Federation Agreement seems to have failed in finding a practical solution to the problem posed by conflicting concerns. Moreover, "a country the size of Ajman (pop. 5,5000) and a country the size of Bahrain (pop. 205,000) can not logically be given the same weight." The provision for unanimous vote had been replaced with majority vote. Sheikh Zayed of Abu Dhabi proposed that the states should be free to join the federation at a later date if they desired so.


66 Sadik and Snavely, n. 4, p. 191.

Executive Authority of the Federation of the Arab Emirates was assigned to a federal council which would serve as an executive arm of the Supreme Council. There were serious differences over the representation to the Federal council. To resolve the deadlock British government intervened and submitted a set of recommendations. It suggested three-level representation which was agreed to by Bahrain, Qatar, Abu Dhabi and Dubai. According to this suggestion the big four Bahrain Qatar, Abu Dhabi and Dubai would each send six representatives, Ras al-Khaimah and Sharjah each would send four, and the rest would each have three representatives.

The British intervention and counseling had helped to exchange ideas and arriving at agreement on a number of issues:

1. Regarding finance of the federation as it was mentioned in federal Agreement that the sources of revenue and the share to be contributed by each of the emirates shall be fixed by law.

2. The Federal Agreement provided that the parties should co-operate to strengthen their individual and collective defence capabilities. It required member countries not to resort to any armed aggression. But the agreement had not given clear indication for the common defence force.

3. The Federation Agreement called for the establishment of a 'federal supreme court'. It's
functions, organisation and jurisdiction were left to be defined by law.

4. It was left to be determined by the supreme council the location of the federal capital.

FAILURE OF THE NINE

The first meeting of the supreme council was held in Abu Dhabi on 6-7 July 1968. And more than one country claimed to be the first among equals. Long standing differences between Bahrain and Qatar could not be resolved. Both were at two opposite poles regarding the appointment of a legal advisor to the federation. So the Abu Dhabi was the modest mediator and was the most acceptable one. It also aspired to play a key role in the federation. Factors in favour of it were its large size and new found oil wealth more than double that of the Bahrain Qatar and Dubai combined. The meeting concluded without a proper settlement.

The second meeting of the supreme council took place in Doha on 20-22 October 1968. It also witnessed the continuation of long-standing differences between Bahrain and Qatar. As if to test the sincerity and commitment of the federating units, Bahrain proposed that the next supreme council meeting should take place in its capital i.e., Manama. Unfortunately, this proposal could not receive the unanimous vote. Qatar’s insistence that both capital city and chairmanship should be given to it had further complicated the process. For obvious reasons,
Bahrain was opposed to the demands of Qatar. This had given the first opportunity for outside powers to intervene in the federation affairs. Saudi Arabia indirectly supported Qatar, Dubai and Ras al-Khaimah must have sided with Qatar because these were close to Saudi Arabia. The final outcome of the second supreme council was the formation of a committee composed of Bahrain, Qatar and Abu Dhabi.

The third meeting of the supreme council that took place again in Doha in 10-14 May 1969 was not a success. Bahrain's Ruler, Sheikh Isa, said that the conference 'failed to agree on the major important steps' involved in setting up the federation. During its session Qatar submitted an agenda of 20 points, which Bahrain rejected and proposed the ruler of Qatar Sheikh Ahmad Bin Ali Al-Shani, who was re-elected as the Chairman of the new session, began discussing the subjects on its agenda including ratification of Bills, resolutions prepared by the provisional Federal council, organisational affairs. A committee formed with military experts to make a preparatory study on the federative defences. The supreme council meeting on 11 May ended again in deadlock over the number of seats to be allocated to each emirate in the Federation's proposed consultative council. If representation was to be on the basis of size, Bahrain would have had a sweeping majority of the seats.

69 SWB, ME/3072, A/9, 12 May 1969.
In the same meeting they had decided to apply for United Nations membership and to form a single Federal army. The supreme council decided to set up the posts President and Vice-president for the federation for two years term. The term can not be renewed. The Supreme Council decided to replace the federations provisional council by a cabinet of 13 ministers. The federation will have a unified flag to represent it abroad. However, each meeting supreme council approved the establishment of a jurists and advisers committee to frame a provisional constitution for the federation. During its session Qatar submitted an agenda of 20 points, which Bahrain rejected and proposed a similar counter agenda.

The fourth meeting of the supreme council was opened in Abu Dhabi on 21 October 1969. In this meeting Abu Dhabi was chosen as temporary capital, with the provision that a new one would be built on the Abu Dhabi - Dubai border. It was also agreed that each of the nine member states should have equal representation in the Federal Council, regardless of the size of its population. During this session had indeed been exhausted. During the meeting, the British political resident in Abu Dhabi, James Treadwell, interrupted its proceedings to read message from Sir, Stewart Crawford, the British political agent in Bahrain:

..........but I have been most disturbed to hear that serious difficulties have new arisen. My government will be extremely disappointed if these difficulties can not be overcome. I strongly urge

70 SWB, ME/3075, A/2, 14 May 1969.
all the rulers to do their utmost to find a way of resolving these difficulties.\footnote{Ali Mohammed Khalifa, \textit{The United Arab Emirates: Unity in Fragmentation} (London. 1979) p. 32.}

The rulers of Ras al-Khaimah and Qatar staged walkout, while the British Resident was reading the message, claiming that it was an offensive interference and that the British were trying to impose the federation after a short time.\footnote{G. Drambyantz, 'The Persian Gulf: Twixt the past and the present future' \textit{International Affairs} (Moscow) No. 41-42, October 1970, p. 69.} Later, the ruler of Qatar rejoined the meeting, but the ruler of Ras al-Khaimah did not. Though the British message was cited as the reason for the walkout, some reports suggested that underlying differences with other emirates were equally responsible.\footnote{ARR, Issue no. 20, October 16-31, 1963, p. 431.} Though the disruption of the meeting once again disclosed that the colonialists would like to exploit the striving of the peoples for unity and steer the activity of the federation into a channel they need.\footnote{Drambyantz, n. 72, p. 69.} Members unanimously agreed on the following points:

1. Sheikh Zayed, ruler of Abu Dhabi was selected to become the first Chairman for two years. Sheikh Rashid Bin said al-Muktum, ruler of Dubai was selected Deputy Chairman.

2. Sheikh Khalifa Bin Hamad al-Thani Deputy ruler of Qatar, was appointed as Prime Minister of the proposed federation.
3. It was agreed that Abu Dhabi should serve as the Federation capital until a new capital could be built on the border between Abu Dhabi and Dubai. A permanent capital would be constructed on land donated by Abu Dhabi and Dubai from both sides of their joint frontier at a place called Al-Karamah,\textsuperscript{75} 'Nobility' - an Arab Brasilia. It has not yet progressed beyond the pages of provisional constitution.

4. It was further agreed that each of the member states would have an equal number of representatives in the proposed federal council.

However, the meeting broke up without issuing a communique, and the nine rulers never met again as members of the Supreme Council. Unwillingly, the British resident, Sir. Stewart Crawford, who delivered a message to the Supreme Council, was held responsible for the break up.\textsuperscript{76} One specific problem with the formation of a nine-member federation was that Iran claimed that Bahrain was a part of its territory. Iran claims the islands on historic grounds which date back to 1783, the last time a Persian emperor exercised sovereignty there. Iran declared that it "reserves all its rights and will not tolerate this inequity and gross historical injustice in any shape or form".\textsuperscript{77} Iran’s stand had, indeed, discouraged a number of rulers. The day after the Supreme

\textsuperscript{75} J. D. Anthony, 'The Union of Arab Amirates' \textit{Middle East Journal}, Vol. 26, 1972, p. 272.
\textsuperscript{76} Peck, n. 41, 38, p. 50.
\textsuperscript{77} \textit{Asian Recorder}, Vol. XIV, No. 23, 3-9, June 1968, p. 8356.
Council meeting was adjourned. Iran announced that a "federation including Bahrain was 'unacceptable' until Bahrain's status was settled in accordance with accepted international principles".  

This problem had been handed over to an United Nations investigation. It conducted a referendum which favoured for Bahrain an independent sovereign state status. Having been protected from Iran, Bahrain opted to remain a separate state rather than to join the federation. Even at the moment the other rulers were fearful of Abu Dhabi because Saudi Arabia had claimed some four-fifths of that emirate's territory.

Following the breakdown of the fourth session the four emirates of Bahrain, Qatar, Abu Dhabi and Dubai started consolidating full-fledged states. Bahrain and Qatar, dropped out with confidence that they were "rich and secure enough not to need the federations protective umbrella". Both were more intended to build a modern state. In mid-January 1971 the ruler of Bahrain announced the formation of a higher executive body to formulate the policies on economic, legislative, administrative health and social welfare, cultural matters etc., This was called state council which comprised of twelve members including the appointed Chairman Sheikh Khalifa Bin Salman Al Khalifa, the brother of the ruler. The oil rich Sheikdom of Qatar had proclaimed independence in the first week of April 1970. On April 12 Prince Khalifa Bin

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79 Mosley, n. 16, p. 369.
Barnas Atah-Thani had been appointed head of the government of the Arabian Gulf Sheikhdom.\(^80\) Article 1 of the new constitution of Qatar stipulated that the country was a sovereign independent state and a members of the Union of Arab Emirates.\(^81\) The first government of the emirate was formed on May 1970 by Khalifa Bin Al Thani. It was setup by a decree of the ruler of the emirate.\(^82\) As soon as it got the United Nation’s approval to become an independent sovereign state on 15 August 1971, Bahrain declared its independence without prior preparatory steps.

On 1 July 1971 Abu Dhabi formed its first cabinet and on 3 October the Abu Dhabi National Assembly was inaugurated with a speech from the ruler. These steps were taken, however, after the six rulers of the Omani coast Emirates with the exception of Ras al-Khaimah had reached a virtual agreement on forming the federation. In a broad coast message on 4 July 1971, Sheikh Zayed of Abu Dhabi told the public that the Gulf federation remained Abu Dhabi's constant objective, and laws passed in the emirate would be modified if necessary to conform to an agreed federal constitution.\(^83\)


\(^{83}\) Al-Khalij, 23 June, 1971.
FORMATION OF THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

The United Arab Emirates came into existence on 2 December 1971. As the foreign office said in welcoming the federation, its formation is only a "preparatory step towards the establishment of a stable political structure in the lower Gulf. There is still a long way to go, both with in the federation and outside it. It would be unwise as Sheikh Zayed remarked for the rulers to "act like a butterfly - mistaking the merciless flames for the light". It became the eighteenth member of the Arab League and the one hundred and thirty second of the United Nations. Initially one or two emirates had tried for other partners but in vain, Ras al-Khaimah even proposed to the United States for special relationship and agreed in exchange to grant military base rights to the later. Having failed in this unusual attempt it opted to join the UAE as a lost resort.

Ras al-Khaimah was the only Omani coast emirate initially to ask for more time for reconsideration. Finally, it saw all the more justification for making its presence felt and insisting on its own terms for membership. Moreover, Sheikh Saqr had been the first

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84 Middle East International (London), No. 6, September 1971, p. 43.
85 'By joining these, the Arab procession in its march towards its goals, Arab and Islamic interest and problems and to strengthen the friendly ties and co-operation with all the fraternal countries and peoples on the basis of the UN Charter and principles and international agreements". See SWB, ME/3856 A/5, 4 December, 1971.
86 Heard-Bey, n. 27, p. 369.
ruler to chair meetings of the Trucial States Council after Britain had decided that its political agent would not serve as the council's Chairman. Sheikh Saqr thought that oil might be discovered in Ras al-Khaimah. If this was proved to be true, it would have offset the balance of power and promoted the emirate to an equal status with Abu Dhabi and Dubai. This possibility encouraged Sheikh Saqr to delay joining the federation. He had handed over the concession to the Union Oil Company of California. Sheikh Saqr was sure that at any time the Union Oil Company would hit a rich field of petroleum or gas. In 1971, John Turk, Union's General Manager informed the ruler that 'heavy shoals' of gas had been struck in one location at 17,900 feet, and that "high-quality oil" had been found in another location at 16,000 feet. Unfortunately, neither the flow of gas nor of oil had lived up to expectations. 87

A descendant of al-Qassimi family, Sheikh Saqr was motivated by tribal pride. His family had a history of courageous opposition to the British, who had burned Ras al-Khaimah in 1819. Actually the ruler of Ras al-Khaimah caused a stir in the Sheikh community by suggesting that the real solution to the Gulf problems can be found in 'republicanism'. 88 The emirate opposed the idea that Abu Dhabi and Dubai acquire veto powers and insisted both on the formula of equal voting for all members and on the principle of equal representation in the Federal National Council (FNC). Sheikh Saqr told a British Journalist that

87 Mosley, n. 16, p. 371.
the rulers should surrender their powers and sovereignty to prevent the possibility of one wealthy state imposing itself on another. He suggests that the wealth should be equally distributed - not among the people - but among the rulers. These two demands revealed in a broadcast on 22 July 1971. Saqr saw it was unacceptable that Abu Dhabi and Dubai should become dominant just because of their wealth and probably because of the size of their populations. After having realised his weakness to make an effective alternative, he sent a letter to the six member federation accepting the original formula of representation in Federal National Council (FNC) and urged for help to regain the Islands of the Greater and Lesser Tumbs, which had been occupied by Iran on the eve of UAE independence. In an immediate response to his letter, Abu Dhabi sent a delegation headed by Ahmad Khalifa al-Suwaidi, to hold talks with the ruler on the question of his state joining in the Federation. However, Sheikh Saqr put forward three conditions:

1. The union should undertake the defence of the Arab Islands in the Gulf,
2. No diplomatic relations should be established with Iran.
3. All Iranian citizens must be expelled from the federal state in retaliation for the expulsion of the island's inhabitants by Iranian forces.

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89 Ibid.
91 SWB, ME 3857 A/I, 6 December 1971. Also see Al-Khalij 4 December 1971.
Of course these conditions were put forward as an attempt to enhance his prestige and to gain time. He undoubtedly knew that the federal authority could not liberate the islands by force. In the end, having realised that the gains of joining the federation out weighted that of the loses, Ras al-Khaimah joined the UAE as the seventh and last member.

**FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE FEDERATION**

The formation of the UAE was inspired by many factors. The Omani coast people shared common history, geography, racial homogeneity, language, culture and religion. Individual rulers realised their survival depended on their co-operation and co-ordination of their policies with in one state. This was enhanced by the fact that
Ajman, Fujairah, Ras al-Khaimah, Sharjah and Ummal Qaiwan were, then, non-oil producing emirates and hence were poor in economic terms. Abu Dhabi on the other hand, was willing to finance almost 90 per cent of the federal budget, which would be spent on the development of the UAE.

The regional states were convinced that a federation of the small emirates would contribute to the stability and security of the region. Kuwait and Saudi Arabia played important supportive roles throughout the assiduous years of negotiations. Iran, out of its commitment to keeping the peace and maintaining Gulf Security, immediately recognised the UAE. However, Iraq withheld recognition of the UAE, until its three conditions (regarding island dispute) were fulfilled. Oman, despite its internal problems with the Dhufari revolution, also went ahead with Britain and the United States in extending the recognition to the UAE. In fact, the whole federal process was carried out under Britain's aegis. The US supported the formation of the UAE in order to deepen its involvement in the Gulf -- an area so vital to its national interests. Overall, it is clear that "the emergence of the United Arab Emirates as a federal entity was encouraged as much by regional factors as by local initiative and British support."
CONCLUSION

The preceding discussion has shown how the Trucial coast states had overcome many problems and successfully established a federation. Two factors characterise the process of federation-building.

Elitism: Not only the Great Britain but also the local influential rulers such as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait played an important role. They were more concerned with safeguarding the status quo than attempting any radical experiments. Abu Dhabi is the richest and the biggest of the seven emirates and it naturally played a leadership role. Even now, Abu Dhabi remains to be the main economic bed-rock of the federation and a rallying point for other members. "The federation of the seven Arab Emirates is primarily political union brought about by the deliberate action of political elites". 95

Security: The announcement of Britain's intention to withdraw from the Gulf gave an opportunity to regional powers to flex their muscles. For example, on November 30, 1971 Iran occupied the islands of Abu Musa and the two Tumbs which belong to Sharjah and Ras al-Khaimah respectively. The recurring fears of hegemonic intimidation led to the formation of the federation. "One of reasons for the formation of the UAE was the strong desire for mutual security; in an increasingly energy-conscious age a practical and efficient defence system,

95 Ibid., p. 11.
for what is a strategically and financially important area, is essential.⁹⁶

The legacy of British colonial rule never prepared the Trucial coast emirates for self-rule. Further, the divide and rule policy of the British had intensified dynastic rivalries. The idea of setting up of a federation in the Gulf developed out of the need to ensure future stability, security and prosperity of the region. As recent as eighteen years prior to the formation of the UAE, Sir Rupert Hay, the British Resident in Bahrain, had the following to convey to his foreign office on the 'incompetence' of locals and the impossibility and undesirability of a federation in the Gulf:

> with their present very primitive administrations, their mutual jealousies and the very poor loose nature of the control we have attempted exercise over them in the past, I do not consider anything in the nature of a formal federation possible for many years to come, and even if it is considered that this should be our ultimate object, a very long period of preparation and education will be necessary.⁹⁷

True, there had been hurdles to form the UAE and there have been problems ever since it was formed but, however, the people of the former Trucial States have ably demonstrated their desire and competence to come together

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⁹⁶ Zahlan, n. 6, p. 197.

as a federation. The following chapters will discuss how their 'tryst' with federation is faring.