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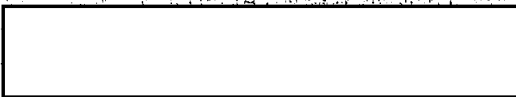


STAFF NOTES:

Middle East Africa South Asia

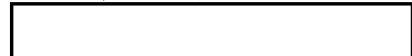
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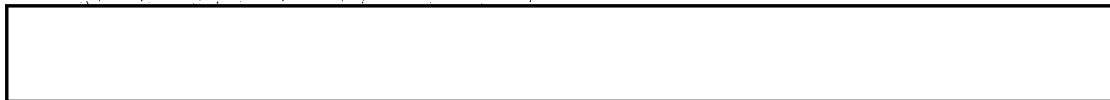
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MIDDLE EAST - AFRICA - SOUTH ASIA



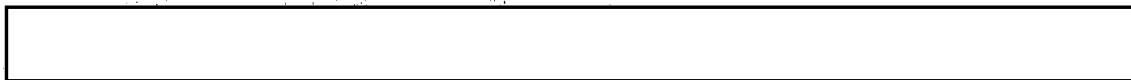
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United Arab Emirates*Three Years of Union*

The United Arab Emirates (UAE), a union of seven Persian Gulf sheikhdoms that was launched in December 1971, appears fairly well established as a federal state, confounding observers who predicted its early break up. Much of the credit for its existence and survival belongs to its President Sheikh Zayid, ruler of Abu Dhabi, the union's most important member-state. From the outset, Zayid shaped the UAE's institutions and had the vision to place federal interests ahead of those of any of the member states.

The pace of integration is retarded by continuing rivalries, often petty, among the rulers, most of whom want to maintain only a very loose confederation. As a result, some key federal institutions have not become significantly stronger during the past three years. The member sheikhdoms, for example, are still autonomous in the important matters of oil revenues, defense, and internal security. The rulers who oppose close ties appear, however, to be fighting a losing battle; like it or not, economic forces set in motion by the oil boom in which the sheikhdoms are sharing are fostering the growth of national cohesion. UAE merchants, who comprise an important political interest group, support the federation. They realize that the economic boom has been fueled by innovations and activities sponsored by the central government, such as the creation of a stable uniform currency, the building of roads and communications systems, and the abolition of customs between the sheikhdoms.

Favorable attitudes among young people toward the union is also a solid asset for Sheikh Zayid and other UAE leaders who would like to move ahead with integration of the seven sheikhdoms. Unlike the older generation, which is still conditioned

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by the parochial values previously dominant in the area, the young identify more readily with the new system. The federal government has control over educational system and funds; this gives it a powerful influence in strengthening support for the union among the country's future leaders.

Sheikh Zayid is the cement that binds together the member states. The greatest foreseeable threat to the federation would come from his early death; his likely successor Sheikh Rashid, UAE vice president and ruler of Dubai, is lukewarm toward the union. Zayid, in his late fifties, is in reasonably good health and may have time to put succession on a sounder footing, perhaps by grooming and maneuvering into position his capable younger son, Sultan.

The leadership that Zayid has given the fledging state is, to a large extent, attributable to his personal style of dealing with his fellow rulers. Using a deft combination of consensus politics and timely handouts of money, Zayid has maintained good relations with each of them, no mean feat since they constantly squabble among themselves. Zayid's cautious middle-of-the-road course in domestic and foreign policy, moreover, has not given too many openings to his enemies.

Even though centrifugal forces in the UAE now seem in check, Zayid has taken out some insurance against moves by member states to break away from the federation and against power grabs within the sheikhdoms. He has built the 10,000-man Abu Dhabi Defense Force, which is personally responsive to him, into the largest and by far the best equipped military force in the UAE. The prospect of taking on this powerful force which would be supported by the 2400-man Union Defense Force, will presumably make any elements considering insurrection think twice.

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