

Polity IV Country Report 2010: United Arab Emirates

<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 15%;">Score:</td> <td style="width: 15%;">2009</td> <td style="width: 15%;">2010</td> <td style="width: 15%;">Change</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Polity:</td> <td>-8</td> <td>-8</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Democ:</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Autoc:</td> <td>8</td> <td>8</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Durable:</td> <td></td> <td>39</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tentative:</td> <td></td> <td>No</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Score:	2009	2010	Change	Polity:	-8	-8	0	Democ:	0	0	0	Autoc:	8	8	0	Durable:		39		Tentative:		No		
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SCODE	UAE	CCODE	696	Date of Report	1 June 2011																				
Polity IV Component Variables																									
XRREG	XRCOMP	XROPEN	XCONST	PARREG	PARCOMP																				
3	1	2	3	4	1																				
Date of Most Recent Polity Transition (3 or more point change)																									
End Date			Begin Date																						
			2 December 1971 (Ind.)																						
Polity Fragmentation: No																									
Constitution																									
1996 (provisional constitution of 1971)																									
Executive(s)																									
President Shaikh Khalifa Bin Zayed al-Nahyan; elected by Supreme Federation Council, 3 November 2009, following the death of his father Shaikh Zaid bin Sultan al-Nahyan Vice President and Prime Minister Muhammad bin Rashid al-Maktum; selected by Supreme Council of Rulers, 11 February 2006																									
Legislature																									
Federal National Council (Majlis al-Ittihad al-Watani) is an advisory body without legislative power (40 seats; 20 elected, 20 appointed by the rulers of the constituent states; first elections held, 16-20 December 2006). Non-partisans: 20 Appointed: 20																									
Judiciary																									
Union Supreme Court																									

Narrative Description:¹

Executive Recruitment: Dual Executive: Ascription + Designation (2)

UAE is an alliance of seven sheikdoms, each with a hereditary monarch who assumes power by right of descent. The seven sheiks constitute the Supreme Council of Rulers, the highest deliberative and executive body; it meets at least once a year. The Council selects a President and Vice President from its membership; the President in turn appoints the Prime Minister, the Cabinet, the Union Supreme Court and other federal officials. The relative wealth of the seven plays a primary role in the allocation of positions within the federal government: the sheik of Abu Dhabi, the emirate with the greatest oil production and

¹ The research described in this report was sponsored by the Political Instability Task Force (PITF). The PITF is funded by the Central Intelligence Agency. The views expressed herein are the authors' alone and do not represent the views of the US Government.

revenue, has always been the federal president, while the emirate of Dubai, the second wealthiest of the seven and the federation's commercial center, occupies the vice-presidency.

Executive Constraints: Slight to Moderate Limitations (3)

The arrangement between the seven emirates is a loose federation, in which each sheik maintains absolute control over his territory, people, and income. The union's constitution grants little real authority to the federal administration. The federal government asserts primacy in matters of foreign and defense policy, some aspects of internal security, and in matters of law and the supply of some government services. Supreme Council decisions require the approval of at least five members, two of whom must be the sheiks of Dubai and Abu Dhabi (who are also the president and the vice-president of the federation). The Cabinet oversees the day-to-day operation of the federal government. The Federal National Council has no legislative authority but questions government ministers in open sessions and makes policy recommendations to the Cabinet. In December 2005 the President announced plans for the country's first elections. Under the President's proposal, one half of the consultative Federal National Council would be elected. In these "elections," held in December 2006, a small number of hand-picked voters participated to elect these "legislators" from a field of hand-picked candidates. Less than 1% of the population was permitted to participate in this electoral process. The judiciary generally is independent, but its decisions are subject to review by the political leadership.

Political Participation: Repressed Competition (1)

Traditional rule in the emirates generally has been patriarchal, with political allegiance defined in terms of loyalty to the tribal leaders. Each sheik governs his emirate by decree, in adherence to Shari'a Islamic law. Citizens may express their concerns directly to the leaders via traditional mechanisms, such as the open majlis (council). However, most residents of the UAE are not involved in the political process because they are not citizens. Emirates make up only 20% of the entire population of the UAE. Moreover, none of the seven emirates has any democratically elected institutions. Political parties are not permitted. The freedoms of speech, press, assembly, association, and religion are significantly restricted. The press exercises self-censorship avoiding direct criticism of the Government.