



internationally recognized and it isn't."

Khaldoon's cellphone rings. "Hello, boss," he says, then whispers, "When the crown prince is on the phone, you answer." The 46-year-old crown prince, Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan, has been calling a lot lately. With three dozen construction projects planned in Abu Dhabi, plus infrastructure investments in Algeria, Pakistan, and other countries, there's plenty to talk about. "He's like a CEO running a major corporation," Khaldoon says. "He wants results, and he wants them now."

THE CITY OF ABU DHABI sits at the tip of a T-shaped island jutting into the Persian Gulf. Wide tree-lined boulevards run through clusters of utilitarian concrete-slab high-rises and modern mirrored towers. An elegant cornice stretches the length of the city along the coast. There are finely manicured roundabouts, abundant fountains, and more trees than anywhere else on the Gulf. But it's oddly quiet—there's little traffic, few pedestrians, and no nightlife to speak of.

That's all about to change. From a helicopter you can see sandy islands covered with dump trucks and crisscrossed with empty highways sitting offshore like blank canvases. It's a stark contrast to what lies just 15 minutes up the coast by air: a landscape of cranes, yacht harbors, man-made islands in exotic formations, and what will

GROUNDWORK No cranes yet, but hundreds of dump trucks like these on Al Raha Beach are paving the way for development.

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soon be the tallest building in the world. There's nothing subtle about Dubai. Its crowded, smoggy skyline is part Miami, part Las Vegas, and all new. There's scarcely a plot of open space or an uncongested highway.

As much as Khaldoon and others say they don't like to make comparisons, it's impossible to avoid them. Abu Dhabi and Dubai operate like family businesses. While the Maktoum family of Dubai and the Nahyan family of Abu Dhabi are cousins, they were born in very different neighborhoods. The population of Dubai, an emirate the size of Rhode Island, was concentrated in a small merchant community that capitalized on the town's sheltered and navigable creek. Abu Dhabi, roughly the size of West Virginia, was much poorer. Bedouin tribesmen roamed the desert; pearl divers lived in huts where the city is today.

Then, in 1958, British explorers discovered what would turn out to be the world's fifth-largest crude reserve, 90% of which was under Abu Dhabi. That discovery—and the wealth that came with it—made the Nahanys the dominant family in the region when the British pulled out in 1971. Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan al Nahyan, the ruler of Abu Dhabi, became President of the newly independent UAE, while Sheikh Rashid bin Saeed al Maktoum of Dubai became Prime Minister.

Zayed set out to carve a modern country in the sand. When the oil started flowing, the