CHAPTER II

Impact of The Islamic Revolution of Iran
The centuries-old monarchy and the apparently well entrenched state system in Iran was abolished and overthrown by a people's revolution which was predominantly led and guided by the ulama. A very important question arises as to why such a revolution did not occur in other Muslim states where the socio political situation was very similar. Why the conscious Muslims of Iran who are Shi'i and constitute an overwhelming majority revolted against the Shah's regime and overthrew him in 1979 and what is the basic difference between the Shi'i and Sunni ulama? To answer these questions it is necessary to know the basic Shi'i concepts and ideals on revolution, state system, the role of ulama and Islamic institutions in Iranian society.

It is essential, therefore, to write a few words about Shi'ism. There is a common belief that the shi'is have always been more revolutionary than other sects of Islam who have generally gone along acceptance of the status quo and closed the doors of Ijtehad. The Shi'i Muslims have their firm belief in the re-emergence of their 12th Imam who, according to their belief, is still alive and will re-appear in this world to reform the human society. This belief has prompted the Shi'is to consider themselves accountable for corruption in society and duty bound to prepare the ground for Imam Mehdi's Revolution and global reformation. History
testifies to this reality in Islamic societies including contemporary Iran. Islamic reformist movements and struggles of the Muslims against oppression, discrimination, suppression, disorder, prejudice, destruction, corruption, colonization and exploitation bear this out. It is for this reason that the Shi'is never desisted from reforming society and always kept fighting corruption, colonialism, cruelty and oppression and regarded insurgencies and revolutions as a precursor of global revolution and reformation of the world by the strong hands of the "General Reformer (Imam Mahdi)."  

Shi'i Muslims believe that the Imam of Islam had to be pure and sinless as the Prophet of Islam had been. Hazrat Ali and the patrilineal descendants of Ali inherited Prophet Mohammad's purity and sinlessness and they were the Imams of 'umma'. In subsequent decades, the physical absence of the Imam led to a new development in the Shi'i community. It was rejection of the political authority. Shi'is claim that in the absence of the Imam any worldly power that claimed to exercise authority de facto was illegitimate unless it could demonstrate in a clear and indisputable fashion that it exercised rule on behalf of the occulted Imam. This very

1. Murtaza Mutahhari, Qiyam wa Ingilab-e Mahdi (no date and place), pp. 62-64.
important belief led the Shi'i Muslims to assume throughout the major part of their history a stance of rejection of de facto existing political authority.

The Shi'i school of thought has had an important political and social impact both in Iran and other states of the region. In the Shi'i thought the doctrine of Imamat is of great importance. The Imam is not merely the successor of the prophet in legislative, administrative and military capacity but also in some sense an extension of the spiritual dimensions of the Prophetic mission. The Shi'i school of thought, like that of the Sunni school, believes and accepts that Prophet Mohammad is the last Prophet. Shi'i ulama's conception of the Imam is pure revolutionary leadership guiding the 'umma' and true constitution of society. The ulama as well as the Islamic intellectuals, by providing the revolutionary message of the 'Twelve Imams, inspired the Iranians against the regimes since the Qajar dynasty.

In Iran and elsewhere the Shi'i ulama since long time played a significant role in socio-political life of the people and largely they never supported or accepted the government in power. In Shi'i Islam, the Islamic institutions functioned independently. The institution of Marja'iyyat occupies an important place in socio-political life of the people. It is non-existent in Sunni Islam. The Marja'iyy-
at emerged out of the continuous struggle for authority among the representatives of speculative thought in Shi'i Islam. By basing his authority on the rational interpretation of the Imami traditions and the notion of his vicerency, the Marja' won the support of the Shi'i community. During the course of history the 'Maraje' (plural of Marja') played a key role in socio-political, economic and cultural life of the people.\(^2\) Maraje' and ulama generally served the masses in their demands for implementation of justice, equality and their participation in the administration of the government and decision making.

The Shi'i ulama have always been in close contact with the dissenting layer of Shi'i community. These ulama also played the role of intermediary between the rulers and ruled and voiced people's demands and public opinion. At the same time they believed that only the Imams or those who act on their behalf are the legitimate holders of authority. The Shi'i ulama, due to their economic independence from the state, wielded greater authority than their Sunni counterparts. This strength came mainly because the Muslims paid their religions taxes (Zakat and Khoms) to ulama regularly.

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and the masses paid a greater respect to them. The Shi'i Mujtahids exercised their judgment freely with much greater authority than other ulama.

The distinguishing factor between the Shi'i ulama and other ulama of the Muslim world as well as the religious leaders of the non-Muslims societies is that the Shi'i ulama have never been, and even now are not, dependent on governments and rulers of the time. In order to sustain themselves and to administer their religious institutions and establishments they do not accept anything from any source except the religious donations and Islamic taxes given by the Muslim masses. That is why they have preserved their independence and freedom of action. History bears testimony to the fact that the Shi'i ulama have always been at the forefront of most of the revolutions and national and religious changes and movements taking place over the centuries in Islamic countries so much so that on many such occasions they not only have suffered great tribulations but even sacrificed their lives to bring about changes in their society.³ In the Iranian society, since long time, the ulama's institution became the centre of socio-political

activities based on Islamic principles by virtue of system of checks and balances. It operated informally without being an organ of state. The harmony between the merchants and religious class in Iran generated a new socio-political situation in which the writ of the Marja' prevailed.

This position and role of the ulama does not have a parallel in Sunni society. Such a situation increased the influence of ulama in the state affairs and they emerged as an active supervisor of state policies. The ulama tried to preserve an Islamic order by opposing any change which would invite foreign influence and also any move in the government policies which was not in accordance with Islamic principles. Thus they sought to protect the society against alien influence.

In the Sunni societies the ulama have always encouraged acceptance of the changing status quo. In the Shi'i school of thought there is belief that only the Imams or those who act on their behalf (Marje' - Taqlid) are the legitimate holders of authority and all other governments are illegitimate. This belief has been expressed throughout history in Shi'i uprisings against different governments.

It is noteworthy to add that Mohammad Javad Mughniya in his book, Al Shi'iat Wa al Hakemoun (The Shi'is and the rulers), says that almost all the Sunni Muslims, mainly
their ulama, believed that it is obligatory on their part to obey the despotic rulers and accept their oppression and cruelty with patience and they did not permit revolt against them.\(^4\) The classical sunni ulama have believed in obeying their rulers. They regard the revolution against oppressive government as incompatible with Islam.

It is necessary to find out the reason for such an attitude and to see whether these views were due to purely personal or ethical reasons or something else. In fact, the \textit{Fiqhi} (jurisprudential) \textit{Kalami} (commandment) and \textit{Ijma} (consensus) approaches as well as the historical experiences of the Sunni Muslims set socio-political limitation on their ulama. As a result of this limitation, in the course of history, expectations of the Sunni Muslims had also been limited. They believed that a cleric is a faithful and pious man who is expert in the Islamic sciences and the Muslims go to them for guidance.\(^5\) The most important factor for this is that among the Sunnis the door of \textit{Ijtihad} was closed but among the Shi'is the gate of \textit{Ijtihad} is open and following and obeying of \textit{Mujtahid} is obligatory. In Sunni Islam the ulama are the narrators of \textit{fatwas} which are thou-


\(^5\) Ibid, p.23.
sand years' old but the Shi'i Mujtahid gives his views and fatwa according to the need of the time.

In the past due to relative stagnation of the Islamic societies mainly because of slow socio-political, economic and cultural developments the Sunni ulama's powers were limited and they were not able to encounter the rulers. But during the 19th and 20th centuries along with socio-political transfiguration they gained a fertile ground for emergence.  

This new trend changed their perception which was reflected in their Kalam (commandment) and they began encountering as well as struggling against their despotic rulers. Still, their frankness and decisiveness were much less than those of the Shi'i ulama. That is why their stands on socio-political, economic and cultural issues were different. Whereas the Sunni ulama believed that even an oppressive ruler must be obeyed the Shi'is have always been uncompromising and radical in their approach to tyrannical rulers.

The Shi'is and Sunnis differ with each other particularly with regard to their political outlook on the politico-religious movements that occurred in their societies in different respects.

The religious psyches of the Shi'i and Sunni Muslims, as well as their socio-religious structures, differ from each other and when such is the case the end result is also bound to be different. Mohammad Javad Mughniye, one of the most prominent Islamic scholars, says the following on the subject:

The Sunni Muslims regard obedience to the rulers justified and tolerance of his oppression obligatory and have no room for disobedience to him. But Shi'is consider resistance and insurGENCY against cruelty and corruption indispensable. From the viewpoint of the Sunnis, disobedience to the cruel ruler is disobedience of Islamic religion but to the Shi'is disobedience to the rulers is a part of religion and tolerance of cruelty is equal to disobedience of the Islamic religion. 7

In the Sunni school the religious leaders (ulama) are those people who are faithful, pious and experts in Islamic science. The masses approach them for guidance on religious matters. But among Shi'is the ulama have different position. An Alam is not only a Islamic scholar but also a protector, shelter and guard of the masses. The Shi'is look for guidance and direction to the ulama not only in religious but also in their individual socio-political and economic problems.

The impact of the Islamic revolution in Iran was widely felt in the Persian Gulf region. Right from the establishment of the Islamic government in Iran under the leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini, the leader of the revolution emphasized on Islamic solidarity based on Islamic ideology and Muslim brotherhood without differentiating between Shi'i or Sunni sects of Islam. This revolution, contrary to French, Russian and Chinese Revolutions, wanted to bring salvation to mankind. It negated the supremacy of money with its retinue of worldly desire, lust, ego, power and fame. The French Revolution was a revolution against tyranny, injustice, exploitation, lavishness and the extravagance of King Louis XIV. The revolution preached the democratic values of liberty, equality and fraternity which spread all over the world. Likewise, the two other revolutions which occurred in this century were Marxist revolutions, one in Russia in 1917 and the other in China in 1949. These revolutions fought against the exploitation of workers and peasants by

the tyrant rulers of the respective countries. The ideas and ideals of these revolutions spread all over the world.

The Islamic Revolution of 1979 in Iran was brought about by the Iranian people. This revolution was a rejection of Western imposed values on the Muslim masses by the Shah. This revolution was directed against both internal and external powers. It stood for the establishment of true governance of Muslims based on Sharia.9

This Revolution did not look to the past for models and social and economic relations and it did not want a repeat of tribal, feudal or even medieval system. However, at the same time, it rejected the modern capitalist system which is the product of several centuries of exploitation and plunder in vast parts of the world by the pioneer of the so-called modern civilization.

Originally, it was a genuine mass movement against a system (Shah's monarchy) which was autocratic, undemocratic, subservient to foreign control and which attempted to impose a culture which was contrary to the Islamic tradition of the Iranian masses of who, in any case, were permitted little share of participation in the socio-political, economic changes. This sense of deprivation intensified alienation

from the regime and it was the most powerful fillip for mass mobilization. It was in this respect that the Iranian revolution had a tremendous appeal among the masses far and wide in the region where the social, political and economic conditions were almost identical to those in Iran.\textsuperscript{10}

Indeed, the Islamic revolution was not exported by the Iranian regime. It was a reflection of socio-political, economic and cultural conditions of the Islamic countries which forced the intellectuals, Islamic thinkers and ulama as well as the revolutionary leaders to look to the ideas and ideals of the Islamic revolution. The intellectuals in the Arab world who were more inclined to engage in intellectual exercise than in political activism gave expression to their perceptions of a new threat to Islam from the western imperialism and un-Islamic rulers.\textsuperscript{11} They visualized a revolution which aimed at eliminating ignorance, uniting humanity, establishing brotherly love amongst people, and guiding mankind towards light and enlightenment.

However, the ideas and ideals of Islamic revolution, like other revolutions, spread beyond the Iranian boundary

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\textsuperscript{11} Fouad Ajami, \textit{The Arab Predicament: Arab Political Thought and Practice Since 1967} (Cambridge, 1981), p.52,
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especially in the Arab states of the Persian Gulf region.
The impact of the Islamic revolution is not only confined to the Islamic world as it is felt in the whole world at large.

The Iranian Islamic revolution is the first contemporary revolution in the world that has deserved the name since it is hitherto the only one carried out by the masses themselves and not by the military officers on their behalf. The Islamic revolution of Iran revived the hope to the Muslim masses around the world in general and the Persian Gulf region in particular where the governments of these countries are totally alienated from their own roots and depend for survival on external support. In fact, the events in Iran strengthened the idea of revival of Islam as a solution to the existing socio-political and economic problems in the Muslim societies of the region.

As a political event the Iranian revolution generated demonstrative effect in the Arab states of the Middle East. The most important impact of the Islamic revolution of Iran on growing Islamic movement has been witnessed in


Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Egypt, Algeria, Sudan, Pakistan, Afghanistan and the newly independent republics of Central Asia and elsewhere. Its success in dealing with domestic and global issues provoked Islamic movements in almost all Muslim societies. The question arises as to why the Islamic Revolution of Iran has attracted the Muslim masses in the world in general and the Persian Gulf region in particular. The societies of the Persian Gulf region are undergoing the process of rapid social change which, to a great extent, is induced by socio-political, economic and cultural influence of the West. The pattern of such socio-political, economic and cultural penetration generated several problems. First, the poor became poorer and the rich became richer. The spread of education and information contributed to increasing awareness among the masses which resulted in demands for people's participation in political and economic processes and institutions. But the rulers did not pay any attention to their demand and continued their oppressive policies. They tried to modernise their societies instead of building up institutions facilitating political participation of the

masses.15 Thus, these developments including the military coups in the region with imported ideas could not resolve the urgent socio-political and economic needs. The military governments were mainly concerned about the security policies rather than solving the socio-political and economic problems and they were unsuccessful in developing any kind of political institution for mass participation.

This socio-political, economic and cultural background gave incentive for the demand for Islamization of the Arab societies of the region. The Islamic revolution in Iran precipitated the issue. Arab scholars such as Ibrahim Dessuqi, Shetu, Salim al-Auwa, Professor al-Shabi, and Safodi not only consider this revolution as one of the most important events in this century but they also believe that the Islamic revolution in Iran has clearly initiated political debate in most of the Arab states.16 In the Arab world a large number of intellectuals and political groups have turned towards revolutionary Islam and they have actively involved themselves in struggle against the oppressive regimes.17 The message of the Islamic revolution of Iran that the "deprived and wretched of the earth would be the

final inheritors of this world" has drawn attention of the masses. The Islamic government of Iran gives moral and diplomatic support to the oppressed people who are struggling to bring Islamic revolution in their countries.18

The alienated, distressed and dispossessed Muslims have turned to Islam as a final solution to their problems.19 The Muslims too understood that the US full support to Israel and its intervention in Lebanon was at the expense of Muslims aimed at humiliating the Muslims by proving their total incompetence to fight the adversary. Next, the former Soviet Union's intervention in Afghanistan or support to the regimes in Algeria, Libya and Iraq are seen by the Muslims as reminder of the familiar policies of imperialism.

Islamic revivalist movements have erupted in a number of Muslim states. Islam makes no essential distinction between religion and politics and this affects the whole Muslim community. The Muslim umma all over the world believes that Islam can solve the existing problems and tensions in the world. Since the imported ideologies have not solved political, economic, and social problems bestr-


ting the Islamic world Islam has emerged as a strong alternative political force against the existing political establishments.\textsuperscript{20} After the victory of the Islamic revolution the Muslim societies of the Persian Gulf region have witnessed a widespread support by the Muslim masses to the Islamic revolution and opposition to the existing political system. In fact, a new language of political debate and dialogue has emerged. The political culture of Islam that motivates the global political community of Islam, the umma, has been reinvigorated by the Islamic revolution.\textsuperscript{21}

Ahmad Baha al-Din, an influential Arab political commentator, wrote that for the Arab and Islamic peoples, the Khomeini revolution was the most important happening of the 20th century. It brought to the Muslim masses, he argued, much of the trust in themselves which they lost in recent decades.\textsuperscript{22} For them it was a human and social revolution against social abuse and corruption.\textsuperscript{23}


The Islamic Revolution of Iran, irrespective of the sectarian Shi'i-Sunni division, captured the attention of the Muslim masses especially the Islamic organisations which were already struggling against the corrupt rulers and imperialism, such as Ikhwan al Muslimeen (Muslim Brotherhood) Jama'at-e Islami, Hezbollah, Aljihad, Al-Da'wa etc. in the Islamic world. "This revolution in fact was a direct outcome of the drive for political revival of Islam. Their deep interest in events happening far beyond the Islamic Republic of Iran's boundary showed the dilemma of a modern Muslim society which, though committed to the concept of a nation-state, could not resist getting involved in affairs that even remotely involve Islamic values."\textsuperscript{24} The Islamic organisations such as Ikhwan al-Muslimeen (Muslim Brotherhood) and al-Da'wa which were deeply involved in preaching revolutionary Islam, without any hesitation, supported the revolution and also criticised the forces which were opposed to it. They also condemned the malicious media campaign which the enemies of Islam in Europe and America launched against Islam and the Islamic movements ever since the success of the Islamic Revolution of Iran in 1979. This indicates that the Islamic activists in the Middle East in

\textsuperscript{24.} Zohurul Bari, \textit{Re-Emergence of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt} (Lancer Books, New Delhi), 1995, p.113.
general and those in the Persian Gulf region in particular enjoyed a common world view. This was particularly revealed in its perceptions of socio-political, economic and cultural issues and sources of threat to them. The rulers and the Western imperialists felt that with the victory of the Islamic Revolution and the establishment of the Islamic Republic in Iran, the Muslim masses all over the world became highly conscious. They also apprehended, that influenced by its ideas and ideals, they may adopt Islam completely in their lives and may also seek independence from these rulers and influence of Western powers. Under the new spell the people would not allow the plunder of their wealth because Islam does not allow its followers to become the servant of foreign powers or accept their guidance. Jabir Rizq, in his article "Reiya Islamiya" (Islamic View) in al-Da'wa, February 1979, fully supported the Islamic revolution of Iran and rejoiced at the fall of the Shah despite all powers which were protecting and supporting the Shah. The fall of the Shah and victory of Islamic revolution in Iran has been noted by several Islamic intel-


lectuals, writers, and ulama as well as the leaders of the Islamic organizations in their books, journals, newspapers and speeches. According to them this was a lesson to other rulers in the region who depended on their army and their secret apparatus to sustain themselves in power. They asked the rulers to turn instead to the people and elicit their support by meeting their demands relating to faith and behaviour. They also asserted that the rulers of oil-rich states of the region are spending the Muslim nation's money in the amusement centres in the European countries and instead of engaging morally depraved women or acquiring weapons to save their crown and destroy people, they should spend it for the well-being of the Muslims or help the refugees of Palestine, Lebanon, Afghanistan, Philippines and elsewhere.

The Arabic broadcasting programme of the revolutionary government of Iran for the Arab Muslims as well as Urdu and Turkish broadcasting has had a significant impact on the young generation in general and the Shi'i Muslims in particular in the Islamic world. The message of Islamic revolution reached the masses in the states of the region and influenced them. They became much more aware about the ideas and ideals of this revolution despite their regimes'
efforts to prevent the message of revolution. The Islamic revolution was considered as a threat by the Arab rulers of the region and they felt that this revolution would destabilize their regimes. For containing the revolution and its message to the borders of Iran almost all the Arab regimes of the Middle East, especially Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, supported Iraq in its war against the Islamic Republic of Iran in the 1980's.

Along with these anti-Islamic revolution policies of the regimes and western imperialism's efforts to prevent Islamic movement in the region, the rulers themselves provoked a debate on the implementation of Shari'a.

In fact the Muslims themselves were voluntarily applying part of the Shari'a in their private lives. The other part was, however, virtually left out by the government. To silence the masses or to corner the Islamic organisations which were struggling for the implementation of Shari'a the governments announced from time to time their readiness to codify Shari'a or at least to consider it as a source of law. Therefore, it became easy for the Islamists to demand

27. Stowasser, n.29, p.9.

the implementation of Islamic Shari'a by the regimes. For instance the Egyptian regime's announcement of implementation of Islamic Shari'a was a part of its policy to neutralize the Islamic activists in the state. Apart from Anwar Sadat's Egypt, after the victory of the Islamic revolution in Iran, Islamic political activism was encouraged in many parts of the Islamic world. As a consequence, both the opposition groups and established authorities began to work for the re-Islamisation of their societies.29 With the establishment of an Islamic government in Iran the Muslims became politically active with clearly defined goals and revolutionary aims and many of them considered that Islam should play a central and pervasive role in socio-political, economic and cultural life of the people. It was due to the impact of this revolution that the Islamic ideas and ideals as well as practices assumed a major significance.

Despite the distressing, discouraging and oppressive policies of political establishments many Muslim youths and students joined the Islamic organisations which already existed or they themselves formed new Islamic associations. A network of independent Islamic groups associated with

Islamic organisations and revolutionary ulama emerged during the 1980s. This development gave a glimmer of hope for the preservation of Islam as a way of life for the younger generation. The link of Islamic organizations and revolutionary government of Iran with these organizations led to the emergence of Iran as a center of Islamic movement and revival in the world. However, because of recent political developments and apparent failure of the regimes to promote a just and prosperous society, members and leaders of these Islamic organisations and associations who received encouragement from the revolutionary government of Iran urged the Muslim masses to criticise the regimes and demand political change.

The different Islamic groups operating in different Islamic countries and exploiting the socio-political and economic grievances of the masses aimed to capture the political power under the cover of Islam. The Islamic Revolution in Iran gave these groups much awaited ideological (Islamic) cover to pursue their aim by offering the Islamic value system to the Muslim people. The success of the revolution in Iran brought new hopes to the Muslim masses who failed to achieve their aspirations and demands from their respective existing political systems.
The Sunni Islamic groups had differences of opinion concerning the ideological background of the Iranian revolution due to sectarian factors. Yet they saw in the Islamic political ideology a new hope and strength in manipulating the masses in the name of religion. It is noteworthy to add that the revolution deeply influenced the better educated and growing professional classes of the region. They were highly impressed by its message.

The diplomatic support of Iran to the Palestinians following the 1982 Israeli invasion and Lebanon gained more popular appeal among the masses. In fact the Islamic government in Iran has been considered by the Muslim masses as an alternative model to the existing political system in the region. The announcement of the revolutionary government of Iran to give moral support to the Islamic movements and oppressed Muslims in the world intensified their activities, causing restlessness and concern among the existing regimes. As a result of events in Iran, the Arab states witnessed several anti-government demonstrations and defiance. For example, the seizure of Ka'bah, the attack on the life of the Amir of Kuwait, the killing of Anwar Sadat, the Egyptian president, by an Islamic group leader, revolutionary moves in Bahrain to topple the regime as well as several attempts to kill Saddam Hussein by the Iraqi muslims, and demonstra-
tion in the United Arab Emirate all indicate the growth of Islamic upsurge after 1979.

The Islamic revivalist groups in the Middle East like the *Ikhwan al-Muslimeen* (Muslim Brotherhood), the *Jamiyyat al-Takfir wal Hijra* (the Society for Repentance and Migration) and *al-Da'wa* were inspired by the Iranian revolution and they stand for a full-fledged Islamic government in Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Iraq respectively. The *Jamiyyat* exhorted its followers to overthrow the Anwar Sadat regime which they considered as un-Islamic. Elsewhere, the Muslims in the Philippines and Thailand began to press for their demands with much greater force than before. In Malaysia and Indonesia, the Muslim masses, including the opposition, were inspired and mobilized under the banner of Islam. However, the Islamic rhetoric in almost all the Islamic societies has acquired a more ominous character. Ayatollah Khomeini's emphasis on Islamic ideas such as social equality and justice became the chief plank of Islamic revivalism in these societies.

In the Arab States the governments carefully avoided confrontation with the Islamic revivalists and they tried to

accommodate them. The support of Muslim intellectuals including ulama has boosted the movements. It is, therefore, a fact that the Islamic Revolution has significantly influenced the masses and it was being debated every where in the Persian Gulf region.

It is important to note that almost all the Arab States of the Persian Gulf region have extremely repressive regimes. In some of these states the native population earns poorly and does not receive welfare services from the government. For instance, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is the worst managed and most divided state of the region which has done a worst job in equitable distribution of its oil wealth. It has experienced the most steady build-up of internal opposition. The Saudi Kings have been challenged by the Islamic activists who denounced the wahhabi interpretation of Islam as alien to true belief. The fact is that the Saudi ruling family had appropriated power by force and has wielded it against the manifest wishes of the majority of the Sunni Muslims living in Saudi Arabia. The November


34. Ibid.
1979 Ka'ba incident by the Ikhwan, led by Juhaïman al-Otaibi, was a clear evidence of this fact.

The Islamic revolution of Iran has legitimized the dissident movements in Saudi Arabia as well as in other neighbouring Arab States of the region working against the existing political system by reinforcing the Islamic values. With the consolidation of Islamic government in Iran under the charismatic leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini the Arab World has witnessed growing Islamic movements. In Bahrain, the Islamic revolt took place against the ruling family in June 1980 and December 1981. The Islamic organisations such as the Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain and Al-Sanduq al-Husseini became quite active and attempted to overthrow the Bahraini regime.

**Saudi Arabia**

The Shi'i Muslims who were treated as second class citizens revolted against the Saudi regime in December 1979. In fact the Shi'is constitute 45 per cent of the oil industry workers living in the oil region of Hasa. The Shi'i Muslims were inspired by the Islamic revolution in Iran and became active. For instance, there were several demonstrations by these people in Qatif which were brutally suppressed by the Saudi forces. In February 1980, people came
to the streets of Qatif and shouted slogans against the Saudi ruling family which led to clashes between them and Saudi security forces and several persons were either killed or arrested. In response the Saudi regime, expelled dozens of Iranian from Mecca and arrested 80 Saudis after they staged political demonstration aimed at motivating other Muslims to revolt against the ruling royal family.  

As an impact of this revolution a social and political fermentation closely related to the developments in Iran took place in Saudi Arabia. Reports from Saudi Arabia indicated that secret groups, including segments of the armed forces, were formed in the kingdom and that leaflets were distributed in the country calling upon the ruling family to follow Islam in its right form according to the teaching of the Salaf. No doubt the revivalist movement in Saudi Arabia could be linked with the Islamic movement in neighbouring states. However, the real reason for its upsurge in recent times was the revolution in Iran and the Saudi rulers' negligible contact with the masses.

35. Raj, n.33, p.5.

The social discontent and economic hardships, as well as the repressive traditional, social and political institutions in Saudi Arabia resulted in the popularity of the ideology of political Islam. There does not exist any political party, freedom of expression and free press. In this state publications generally fall in line with official policies. Islamic political trends are free to manifest themselves only to the extent that they strengthen the government's legitimacy. Therefore, in the face of these restrictions, the Islamic revivalists resorted to armed struggle against the Saudi ruling family.

In November 1979, the Islamic revivalists seized the Ka'ba, the Grand Mosque at Mecca. It was the most serious political development in Saudi Arabia after the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran. The revivalists wanted to topple the Saudi regime. It is a clear fact that the Islamic revolution in Iran has significantly influenced the Saudi Muslims especially the members of Islamic organizations there.

Kuwait

After the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran the royal family of Kuwait has been attacked by the Islamic activists and other groups for its failure to uphold Islamic norms. They demand more political participation.38

By holding elections in 1981 the Kuwaiti regime tried to meet the demands. However, only 3 per cent of the Kuwaiti population consisting of those whose ancestors had settled in Kuwait before the 1920s were permitted to vote. Political parties were banned and the electoral boundaries were redrawn to minimize the influence of opposition groups. As a result both Shi'i and Sunni Muslim revivalists found their access to parliamentary life restricted. The Shi'i Muslims were excluded from any significant posts in the army, security forces, and the foreign policy establishment.39 It was during the late 1970s and early 1980s that the Islamic revivalism began to emerge. The potential for dissatisfaction was particularly very high.


among the young Kuwaitis who constitute some 50 percent of the population and who had become politically conscious. The Salafiyun, a Sunni group, attempted to gain much share in the political administration in 1981. However, following the Iranian revolution, Islamic revivalism among the Sunni and Shi'i Muslims grew up. Hojjatulislam Abbas Muhri, a Shi'i religious leader, began his activities in enlightening the masses against the ruling family. His call received popular response among the Islamic activists. In late November 1979, following the Mecca incident, a wider demonstration took place particularly on the day of Ashura. It led to the expulsion of 3,000 Shi'i Kuwaitis including Hojjatulislam Abbas Muhri and his family. This was followed by arrest and imprisonment of 25 more Shi'i Muslims in January 1980 and of additional expulsion. 40 Again, in 1981, there were several attempts against the regime.

In the face of government's oppressive policies the Islamic groups turned to violence and force. The multiple bombings in Kuwait on 12 December 1983 by the Islamic groups and resistance movement, directed against the US and French embassies in Kuwait, at the international airport, and the ministries of electricity and water, drew the small Arab

40. Ibid, p.44.
States much closer to Saudi Arabia as their patriarch. Following these attacks, Kuwait imprisoned a number of al-Da'wa activists and in early 1984 expelled up to 6000 Shi'i Muslims as well as the Lebanese workers. Then, in June 1985, Shaikh Jaber al-Ahmed al-Sabah, the Emir of Kuwait, was attacked by an Islamic revivalist. In 1985, 1986 and 1987 several other bomb attacks took place.

The Islamic Revolution has significantly influenced the Muslims of Kuwait. It led to popular Islamic uprising in that state. The call of the ulama and Islamic activists received appeal among the young section of this country. The Sunni Muslim activists continued to insist that the government should follow the Islamic norms otherwise they will resort to violence. Moreover, the Islamic Revolution inspired the growth of Islamic movement and revival of political Islam in this country.

**Bahrain**

It was shortly after the revolution in Iran that the people of Bahrain among whom the Shi'is are the majority began their political activities and demonstrations against the ruling family. In December 1981, the Islamic activists of Bahrain planned to overthrow the Amir's government. The government arrested nearly 60 people and claimed that this
plot was master-minded by the Islamic Front for the Libera-
tion of Bahrain which was allegedly supported by Iran.41
Again, in 1984, the same Islamic organisation planned an
armed struggle to fight against the regime but the regime
discovered the plot. In 1985, there was yet another attempt
by the Islamic revivalists to overthrow the government in
Bahrain. The Bahraini government, in anxiety, banned all
the political parties and trade unions.42 In this city
state strict censorship has been imposed on every thing
including the press, schools and university, associations
and organisations. The government brutally suppressed any
political dissent and it used torture and detention without
trial. Much concerned about its security the Bahrain gov-
ernment eventually joined the Gulf Co-operation Council
(GCC) in March 1981. It was in the midst of increasing
political unrest in this small state.43

Iraq

The Islamic Revolution in Iran influenced the Iraqi
people too. The oppressive policies of Saddam Hussein led

41. The Middle East and North Africa 1994 (Europa Publica-
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid.
to dissatisfaction of masses especially the Shi'i segment who was denied due political participation. Ayatollah Mohammad Baqir al-Sadr began to preach a revolutionary Islam with emphasis on the downtrodden masses and the necessity of establishing an Islamic Republic in Iraq. Ayatollah Sadr and Ayatollah Muhsin al-Hakim, leading clerics in Iraq, established a group of revolutionary ulama and they succeeded in developing a spirit of revolutionary movement among the ulama. This created more radicalism among the ulama. Prior to the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, the al-Da'wa confrontation with the Iraqi regime led to demonstrations in the streets of Najaf and Karbala where tens of thousands of Shi'i Muslims denounced the Ba'hist regime for its anti-Islamic policies. The government forces attacked the demonstrators and killed a number of people and hundreds of them were arrested. The Shi'i ulama condemned the regime in their Friday sermons. The regime responded by executing thirty-two Shi'i leaders in the fall of 1979. This was followed by the arrest of Ayatollah Baqir Sadr which precipitated fresh violent demonstrations in Karbala, Najaf and Kufa during January 1980.44

The Saddam regime vigorously repressed the Shi'i Muslims and a larger number of them were arrested. In June 1980 Ayatollah Mohammad Baqir al-Sadr and a few members of his family were executed by the Ba'thist regime. The execution of Ayatollah Sadr and his sister, al-Hoda, resulted in street demonstrations in al-Thawrah. These were violently suppressed and according to al-Da'wa at least 500 Iraqi Shi'i were executed by the regime. To control the Islamists the Iraqi regime expelled 70,000 Iraqi Shi'is who were of Iranian origin. The Iraqi regime blamed Iran for the export of its revolution to Iraq and in September 1980 attacked Iran. The Iraqi regime felt that the Iranian government by helping Iraqi Shi'i was trying to overthrow it. The Iraqi regime was convinced that the Islamic movement in the country was supported by Iran and decided to contain what was perceived as a threat.

In addition to its policies of repression and attack, the Iraqi Ministry for Religious indoctrination expanded its activities throughout the country in order to contain and control the activities of Islamic groups. It also played a

45. Zonis and Brumberg, n.39, p.65.
card to divide the Shi'is of Arab-Irani origin. In 1983 the regime carried out a political report of the Ba'ath party about the growing sectarianism between the Shi'i and Sunni Muslims of Iraq. Saddam Hussain's participation in prayers in Najaf and building mosques and forbidding eating in public during the month of Ramadan were the new tactics to neutralize the growing Islamic influence. In fact through the execution of the major leader's of al-Da'wa and imprisonment of several ulama and scholars, Saddam Hussain tried to isolate the influence of this Islamic organization on the masses. In response, al-Da'wa launched a number of attacks on the government. Indeed, the resistance in Iraq, like in other states of the region, implied that the message of Islamic revolution had acquired a popular appeal.

Responding to the persecution of its leaders and supporters, al-Da'wa shifted its headquarters to Tehran. In November 1982, the Supreme Assembly of the Islamic Revolution of Iraq (SAIRI) was established under the leadership of Mohammad Baqir al-Hakim, son of the late Ayatollah Mohsin al-Hakim. The organization held that any future Islamic


47. Ibid, n.49, p.66.
Republic of Iraq would constitute an independent state, autonomous of Iran and led by Mohammad Baqir al-Hakim. Other Iraqi organizations such as the Islamic Action Organization, the Soldiers of the Imam and Muslim Warriors were also significantly influenced by the Islamic Revolution of Iran.

During the early 1990s several attempts to overthrow the Ba'athist regime in Iraq were made by the Islamic revivalists but they were brutally suppressed by the army.

**Impact on Regional Security:**

The most important impact of the Revolution in Iran was the collapse of the existing security arrangement in the Persian Gulf region. With the overthrow of the Pahlavi regime in Iran reliance on the "twin pillars" of Iran and Saudi Arabia to guarantee regional security came to an end. The countries of the region began their search for new security arrangements and they looked to the "outside powers" mainly the United States for assuring their regimes and regional security.

After the success of the Islamic Revolution, the diplomatic relations between Iran and her neighbouring countries such as Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and other small Shaikhdom of the Persian Gulf region deteriorated drastical-
ly. This was due to the perception of an acute threat to their security arising from the growing Islamic revolutionary revivalism. The Saudi regime was the first to enter into a security pact with other Shaikhdoms in the region. Iran strongly opposed this idea and declared that it would not tolerate a partial security arrangement which could be a source of irritation in the region.48

With the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq war in 1980, the Saudi regime once again revived the regional security pact proposal. It was primarily motivated at containing the Islamic Revolution on the one hand and ensuring domination of Saudi Arabia on the smaller states of region on the other. In a meeting of the Foreign Ministers of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in February 1981 they agreed to establish the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) of the Arab states. The Council decided to provide a framework for the co-ordination of all government policies among the member states with a view to safeguarding security and stability in the region.49

48. Pirouz Mojtahed Zadeh, *Political Geography of the Strait of Hormuz* (Department of Geography and the Middle East Centre of SOAS University of London), 1990, p.46.

In fact, the GCC was established as a "third pillar to contain the Islamic Revolution... and the Islamic revivalism in the Persian Gulf region at large." 50

From the time of its establishment (26 May 1981) the GCC states considered Iran as a chief threat to the political status quo in the region. They believed that various Islamic organisations received moral support from the Islamic Republic of Iran for destabilizing and even overthrowing the existing governments of the region. They accused Iran of supporting Islamic resurgence in the GCC states and other Arab countries. They also believed that Iran is permanently hostile to their interest.

Iran supported the dissidents and their coup attempts in Bahrain, The Saudi Minister of Interior, Prince Nayef Ibn Abdul Aziz, paid a visit to Bahrain on December 20, 1981 and stated that, the sabotage plot was engineered by the Iranian government and was directed against Saudi Arabia as well. 51 On the same day, the two governments concluded a security agreement. Bahraini Interior Minister, Sheikh Mohammad bin Khalifah Al-Khalifah, underlined the need of a


"rapid deployment force" in the Persian Gulf that would be capable of quickly providing assistance when needed. Subsequently, a "Peninsular Defence Force" was created in Saudi Arabia and it was to be the military arm of the GCC.

The two Persian Gulf Wars in 1980s and 1991, the first war between Iraq and Iran and the second against Iraq, compelled the rulers of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia to call upon the Western powers, especially the US, to protect their territorial integrity and state sovereignty. The presence of foreign powers in the region and signing of security pacts by the Gulf states with external powers, particularly the United States, heralded a new security system in the Persian Gulf region. The deployment of Western military forces was not only accompanied by induction of additional stocks of arms but it also created fresh inter-state tensions.

In recent times the GCC states, along with Egypt and Syria, agreed to work together if any of them were attacked by an Arab or foreign state. Bahrain's Foreign Minister, Shaikh Mohammad Bin Mubarak Al-Khalifa, said that the Damascus Declaration states agreed on a document obliging members to work together against any aggression by an Arab or for-

eign country on any of these states. The GCC and Egypt and Syria which led the Arab anti-Baghdad camp during the 1990-91 crisis signed the Damascus Declaration. Days after Iraqi troops were forced out of Kuwait by the US and its allies. In the two-day meeting of Foreign Ministers of these eight states in Bahrain they called for greater and comprehensive Arab cooperation in all fields, particularly security.

Damascus Declaration

After the Iraqi attack and invasion of Kuwait in 1990, the Arab Cooperation Council which came into existence in Baghdad and included the four countries, of Egypt, Jordan, Iraq and North Yemen quickly disintegrated. Egypt pursued coalition with the U.S.. The GCC consisting of six Arab States in the region had displayed its inefficiency. Excessive fear and inability to act as a shield had in essence sapped its raison de'etre. In the new situation of insecurity the United States encouraged close ties between the

GCC and Egypt and Syria. On 5 March 1991, GCC Foreign Ministers held a joint meeting in Damascus with Egyptian and Syrian Foreign Ministers. A statement was issued at the conclusion of the meeting which talked of a plan to include Egypt and Syria in the Persian Gulf Security arrangement.

The proposal was supported by the GCC members. It came to be known as the 6+2 (Six GCC states plus Egypt and Syria) plan for establishing new form of security system. Iran and Iraq, major actors in the region, were excluded from this new arrangement. In this new arrangement Egypt and Syria were involved and they sent their forces to Saudi 'Arabia' to guarantee the security of the Persian Gulf. The declaration was signed in March 1991. In effect this plan was mainly aimed at evolving an exclusively Arab security and defence order in the Persian Gulf region. The contents of the Damascus Declaration which was more of an imitation of the Arab League Collective Defence Agreement, also emphasized on collective support for Arab countries on the security and formation of an Arab security system by Arab countries as well as the establishment of a common Arab defence pact. One of the most important clauses in this declaration was the connection between security and economy and the need

56. Ibid.
for economic cooperation among the eight nations and the establishment of a common fund. "The Damascus Declaration" was mainly directed towards the forming of a new security arrangement in the Persian Gulf through the establishment of a land and sea link with the world. However, its planners faced many obstacles in achieving this cause. For instance, when the Egyptian government withdrew its forces from Saudi Arabia this decision indicated the differences of opinion among the Arab countries about the security arrangement and their future plans and relations.\(^57\) This indicated that there was lack of mutual trust. The presence of the Western countries headed by the U.S., the principal patron of the Damascus Summit, in the region clearly suggested that the U.S., in practice, was involved and participated in this security arrangement and the Arab Sheikhs relied on the Western powers for the regional security.

As a matter of fact this security system, with the participation of Western countries particularly the U.S., was non-Arab oriented. Furthermore, the signing of military and security pacts between the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf and the U.S. and the Western countries undermined the fundamental basis of the Damascus Declaration. Another

\(^{57}\) Ibid, p.689.
important factor which caused serious split and differences among the Arab countries was that Egypt and Syria which have no tangible political and security interests in the Persian Gulf region were considered as outside powers. Exclusion of Iran which has a longest coast in the Persian Gulf not only seriously affected this security arrangement but it also created grounds for future insecurity. The exclusion of Iran and Iraq which are the two major actors seriously affected this security system. Iran's exclusion from future security arrangement will lead to tension and instability in the region. The Western support for GCC plus Egypt and Syria for security or any type of arrangement would once again lead to the old rivalries and hostilities in the region.

Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)

The outbreak of the Iran - Iraq war in September 1980 provided an opportunity to the six Sheikhdoms of the Persian Gulf region namely, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates and Oman to come out with more concerted response. In May 1981, the six states announced

the formation of a Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). The aim of the grouping was clearly self defence. Security issues and internal and external threats especially perceived from the Islamic revolution were a priority in the coordination of policies. The formation of this organisation and its full support to Iraq in its war against the Islamic Republic of Iran was clearly a response to the perceived threat from Iran. This security arrangement excluded Iran and Iraq. The Gulf Cooperation Council was much concerned about its vulnerabilities and of the potential dangers posed by its opponents at home. In addition to improved intelligence and cooperation on internal security affairs, these states embarked on a policy of defensive re-traditionalisation to weaken the Islamic case against their regimes and reduce their exposure to threats from this side.\(^5^9\)

In order to prevent the threat of Islamic revolution the GCC states ploughed a lot of money into Iraq's war effort. The Saudi Arabian regime proposed a series of bilateral security agreements among the member states. Oman, on the other hand, proposed the immediate creation of a Persian Gulf Defence Force to be financed and equipped by

\(^5^9\). Chubin, n.28, pp. 168-69.
the members.60 The planning of defence strategies of the GCC members against foreign threats was a difficult task because of some differences centered on the source and severity of threats and varying opinions about the degree and manner of connection with the Western powers particularly the U.S. in the region. Another important factor was the military affairs and armed forces of these states. Structural differences in the armed forces of the six counties namely personnel, chain of command, composition of forces, weapon types, procurement sources and ability to utilize complex weapons systems were some of the problems facing collective defence plan.61

Another factor which led to ineffectiveness of GCC and distrust as well as suspicion among the state members was the increasing tension within the GCC and the Arabian Peninsula states themselves. There are several border disputes among these states. Almost all these states have boundary disputes with each other which until today have not been resolved. However, in November 1984, the GCC common defence


force was formed in Kuwait and it was stationed at "Hafr Al-Batin" located in northern Saudi Arabia in order to rush aid to a member when necessary.62

By 1986 the policies and intentions of the GCC members regarding the involvement of outside powers especially the U.S. in respect of security of the Persian Gulf region became clear. In a 1986 meeting, the GCC members emphasized the international community's responsibility in protecting shipping traffic in international waters. This, in fact, justified Kuwait's request for the protection of its oil tankers by the US forces. In regard to the Iran-Iraq war, the GCC members' defence and security strategy in the 1980s favoured the continuation of war. They felt that the continuation of this war will offer ample opportunity for the GCC member states to fortify their common defence structure. The GCC countries' intention was to provide regional security on behalf of the U.S. The objective was to create the necessary atmosphere in which the region and the countries therein could swiftly establish a united political and military front to safeguard their interests against anti-American forces during a crisis.63

62. Ibid., p. 693.
63. Ibid., p. 693.
The incapability of GCC was proved when it failed to prevent Iraqi invasion on Kuwait and Saudi attack on Qatar. An effective security arrangement for the Persian Gulf region by these six countries excluding Iran and Iraq could not be achieved.

**Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) - Iran**

The Arab rulers of the Persian Gulf region who were divided in their political approaches till 1979, after the victory of Islamic Revolution of Iran, which was branded by them as a Shi'i revolution as well as a threat, became united in their concern to contain its wave. In this respect the six states of the region formed the GCC on 26 May 1981 with the aim of containing Islamic revolution and, if possible, by supporting Iraq in its imposed war against Iran, bring down the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The Arab rulers feared that the revolution in Iran would encourage republican and Islamic forces in their own countries. They were ill-equipped to tackle such a threat since they had all along sought legitimacy of their rule within Islamic precepts which were now challenged by Iranian leaders. Ayatollah Khomeini's view based on an interpretation that hereditary monarchical power was unIslamic was the
most serious ideological challenge they faced so far. Ayatollah Khomeini's interpretation was not only accepted by the ulama it was also supported by the masses in large scale in the region. Bahrain was the first Arab State to feel the winds of Islamic revolution and its was followed by Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

In late 1979 the Information Ministers of the Persian Gulf states met in Riyadh and agreed on guidelines for the state-controlled and state-guided media regarding the Islamic revolution of Iran. These guidelines stressed playing down the news from Tehran and demoting the Iranian revolution from the status of an all-Islamic one to a purely Shi'i one, and then to downgrade it to a purely Iranian Shi'i phenomenon. It was significant that Saudi Arabia was the main force behind this conference and shaping its outcome.

In the third summit of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) in late January 1981 in Taif, Saudi Arabia, provided chance to the Arab rulers of the Persian Gulf to meet without undue publicity. They decided to form the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). It was formally established ten days before the Iraqi aggression on Iran. Saudi Arabia and

Kuwait signed a secret agreement with Iraq and agreed to raise their respective oil outputs by 1,000,000 b/d and 800,000 b/d, and contribute the sale revenue to Iraqi's war effort. The GCC members, by engaging Iraq and Iran in a war, felt confident to neutralize the ideological threat of Islamic revolution of Iran.

Following a coup attempt, the Bahraini government arrested a group of sixty people in early January 1981 and alleged that they had been trained in sabotage by the Iranian government and its agents in Bahrain. The Saudi prince, Nayif, went to Manama to meet his Bahraini counterpart, Shaikh Mohammad Iban Khaliffa, and during his talks he offered to send Saudi troops to safeguard the Bahrain government. He further said that the sabotage plot was engineered by the Iranian regime and it was directed against Saudi Arabia as well. The two Ministers signed a security cooperation agreement and hoped that a unified agreement would be adopted by all GCC members. "The external danger to the states of region is Iran and the present regime in Tehran," said Bahrainian premier, Shaikh Khalifa Ibn Salman al-Khalifa. He further said that the Iranian regime was

66. Hiro, n.64, p.337.
instigating the Shi'is in Bahrain and other countries of the region under the slogans of the Islamic revolution. 68 The Iranian Foreign Officer, officially denied the allegations and rejected any type of involvement in this development.

Debates regarding Iran and security in the Persian Gulf by Gulf Cooperation Council members were being conducted within the limits set by Kuwait on the one hand and Oman on the other. Kuwait advocated the formation of a joint military command which was self-reliant, whereas Oman proposed a joint Arab Gulf force for the purpose of defending the Hormuz Strait under a Western umbrella. This idea led to strengthening of Kuwait's and Oman's relations with the United States. These individual relations of the GCC members with the external powers forced Iran to be much attentive towards developments in its Arab neighbourhood.

From 1982 onwards while Iran began scoring victory in the battle field against Iraq, the GCC members paid close attention to Tehran. Afraid of their future and stability the rulers of the Arab states of the region adopted a peace plan which favoured Tehran. But their efforts were swept aside by the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in June. 69 The GCC members, having failed to get Iran interested in a ceasefire

68. Hiro, n.64, p.338.
through conciliatory moves, issued a communique in November 1982 stating that Iran's trespassing its border with Iraq endangered the safety of the Arab nation and also threatened its security and sovereignty.70

The continuation of the Persian Gulf war helped the GCC countries to become a cohesive body particularly in military matters. Taken together, the GCC members had 190,000 military personnel and 300 aircraft, a substantial force. The Iranian government and media not only criticized the GCC plans, it also warned the Arab regimes for their anti-Iranian government policies.

Following the entry of the Iran - Iraq war into its fourth years, Riyadh Radio announced that a three-week long joint military exercise by GCC forces would be conducted in the UAE desert in early October. The commander of the UAE armed forces explained that the exercise, code named Jazira Shield, had been necessitated by the worrying and complex events as a result of the Iran-Iraq war and the situation in Lebanon. It was reported that the forces participating in the exercise would form the nucleus of the Rapid Deployment Force of the GCC.

Iran's response to these developments surfaced when it extended its support to the national liberation movements in GCC states. There were periodic reports of coup attempts against the Bahrain and Kuwait governments by the revolutionary organizations. However, Iran's seizure of the Majnoon Island in its offensive of February 1984 made the GCC members realize that time was running against Iraq. The GCC foreign ministers, meeting in Riyadh in mid-March 1984, made an attempt to mediate in the War. As before it was in vain.

During the 1980s Iran increasingly became the focus of regional attention. The reason for the GCC member's perception of Iran (Islamic revolution) as a threat was mainly due to increasing Islamic revivalism and increasing Iranian involvement in the Arab politics. The Iranians and people of the GCC share significant commonalities, for instance, a common religion-Islam, geographic contiguity, centuries of social interaction, economic relations and population movements across the region as well as they shared views on homeland for the Palestinians. But inter-governmental relations determined by changing nature of rivalries, interests, border disputes, and above all the Islamic revolution in Iran affected the Iran - GCC relations. The question of ethnicity, political and ideological differences, Shi'i-
Sunni divide as well as dispute over the Hajj ritual in Mecca, became the arenas of politico-religious contest between the Saudis and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The reduction of oil prices by Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirate (UAE) in 1986 from $ 28 p/b to below $ 10 p/b seriously affected the economy of Iran. the territorial dispute over the three Persian Gulf islands of Abu Musa, the Greater Tunb and the Lesser Tunb also clouded the Irano-GCC relation.

The increasing arms purchases by the GCC members and their bilateral defence pacts with the Western countries particularly U.S. was another irritant. It forced Iran to concentrate on its defence.71 The Persian Gulf war introduced new elements of risk and uncertainty in the region for example increased U.S. involvement and a series of defence pacts between the GCC members and the U.S. While Iran saw itself excluded from several proposed security arrangements by the U.S. and the states of the region especially the GCC + 2 (Egypt and Syria), it attempted to involved itself in the Arab State's political affairs as well as increasing its domestic arms production.

Despite all these developments Iran tried to join the GCC as a member, but it was rebuffed by the organisation. Iran's efforts to maintain good relations with the GCC state members were affected due to Iran-Saudi difference over Islam, struggle for OPEC leadership, quest for leadership in the region, and the U.S. - Saudi alliance, as well as the GCC state's close ties with the West specially the U.S. and their tilt in the war on the side of Iraq.\footnote{Ibid, p.395.}

At the time of Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990, Iran not only criticised the Iraqi invasion and annexation of Kuwait, it also called upon Iraq to withdraw its forces from Kuwait. This act of Iran resulted into improving its relations with the GCC members. Significantly, Iran reaffirmed its respect for the sovereignty of its neighbours in a National Security Council resolution. This led to re-establishment of diplomatic relations between Tehran and Riyadh in March 1991. After the Kuwaiti crisis negotiation for a new regional order in the region with the GCC members became Iran's post-Persian Gulf war priority.\footnote{James, A. Bill, "The Resurrection of Iran in the Persian Gulf", Middle East Insight, 1992, pp. 29-35.} To bring an end to the GCC's foreign dependency Iran emphasized on self-reliance and also creating loose interlocking relation
between the GCC and the ECO (Economic Cooperation Organisation).

In the post-Persian Gulf war greater attention was paid to Iran as one powerful actor that could play an important role in establishing security and stability in the area. Despite temporary instability due to the imposed war, as well as the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, and Western alliance war against Iraq, Islamic Republic of Iran's effective role in securing peace and security in the Persian Gulf region in particular and Middle East in general was acknowledged not only by the littoral Arab countries but also by the Western countries, Russia, China and Japan. The Arabs officially acknowledged that it would be impossible to provide security for international shipping in the Persian Gulf without Iran's cooperation. The Secretary General of the GCC said that the normalization of the Council's relations with Iran would be possible provided Iran observed such conditions as non-intervention in domestic affairs, respect for sovereignty, borders and political and social systems of respective countries, discontinuation of hostile propaganda through mass media, and no support for terrorism.

74. Emami, n.55, pp. 672-97.
75. Ibid; p.691.
Iran's main aim and concern was to establish a regional "balance of power" among various parties in the region. But the GCC-sponsored "GCC plus two formula" (Damascus Declaration) in March 1991 as well as the U.S. offer of its own terms for regional security, especially President George Bush's statement that the U.S. wished "to create shared security arrangements in the region" created major obstacles and problems. American participation in the joint exercises involving both air and ground forces, seriously affected the Iran-GCC dialogue. However Iran focussed its policies on enhancing its bilateral economic and communication relations with the GCC members.

Despite Iranian dialogue with the GCC members to join this organisation, the GCC's perception of politics of suspicion toward Iran has not been eliminated till now due to Iran's potentiality to emerge as a dominant power in the region. The question of U.S. involvement in the security affairs of the region has emerged as a significant gulf between Iran and GCC members. President Hashemi Rafsanjani, in response to the Western involvement in the security affairs of the region, said; "If there is one country that

76. Bill; n.73, pp.29-35.

can provide peace and stability, and can serve as guardian in the Persian Gulf, it is Iran... there is only one power that can provide the peace and stability of the Persian Gulf and that is Iran's power.\textsuperscript{78}

Iran's plan for the security of the Persian Gulf envisages mainly the departure and withdrawal of extra-regional forces from the Persian Gulf region and the preservation of the regional security by the regional states. This attitude of Tehran towards the Persian Gulf security revived old fears and tension in the region.

The GCC states fear that the withdrawal of extra-regional forces from the region as well as Iran's emphasis on the preservation of regional security by the Persian Gulf countries will lead to the hegemony of Iran over the region. From the GCC perspective, such a prospect provided the rational for the presence of outside powers and the Council members did not wish that Iran should dominate the region.

The revival of the dispute over Abu Musa and lesser Tunb and greater Tunb, and the resumption of the United Arab Emirates' claims against the islands in August 1992 was instigated by Western powers and Saudi Arabia and Egypt. They assessed that a situation of low intensity conflict

\textsuperscript{78}. Tehran Times, 19 December 1990.
would ensure their continued involvement and influence in the region.

Regional instability and security crisis would justify their military presence as well as enhancing their arms sale to the GCC state members. Egypt which is facing economic troubles and the Islamic movement exaggerated the Iranian threat. Thus, it managed to receive economic aid from the various governments in the region and also to avenge on Iran which is considered as a supporter of the Islamic movements in Egypt. In this context President Hosni Mubarak paid visits to the countries of the Persian Gulf in May 1993 to achieve his goals. Following the resumption of the United Arab Emirates' claims against the islands, Saudi Arabia also stood to gain from the ensuing tension. Saudi Arabia occupied parts of the western U.A.E. under the pretext of having wider access to the Persian Gulf. It also attacked Qatar and occupied parts of that country.

However, Iran's assertion of its legitimacy and natural sovereignty over the islands created tension among the GCC state members. Iraq and Egypt led the anti-Iranian line. They perceived some material benefit in their support to the Emirates. The US and other Western countries, by exaggerat-

ing the Islamic Republic of Iran's threat, also took advantage of this opportunity by increasing their military presence and also sale of arms to the countries of the Persian Gulf region.

Thus the US and Saudi Arabia's stand against Iran and their fear of its dominance over the GCC resulted in exclusion of Iran from the security arrangement in the region. The small Shaikhdoms who are afraid of Iran's power signed bilateral defence pacts with the U.S. for their protection. Even though Iran has maintained low level bilateral relations with some of the GCC states the tension between them will remain alive unless they arrive at a general mutual understanding and limitation of extra-regional countries' involvement in the security affairs of the region. The exclusionist approach of the GCC states to the security of the region may lead to continuance of disputes and tension in the Persian Gulf region.

Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) - West

The oil-rich Persian Gulf and its security has been of great concern to the West particularly the United States ever since the end of World War II.

After the 1978-79 events in Iran, the Arab regimes of the region opted for a policy of close cooperation with the
West particularly the U.S., hoping thereby to seek security under the Western umbrella. Among the GCC states Oman established more close defence cooperation with the United States. Saudi Arabia also extended its military and defence ties with the U.S. by allowing it to station the AWACS on its soil. It was during the first meeting of the GCC Supreme Council at Abu Dhabi on May 25, 1981 that Oman gave a call for joint action to guard the Strait of Hormuz. Sultan Qaboos had already reached an understanding with the United States on this project. Oman signed an agreement with Washington giving American military forces open access to its naval and air bases. Saudi Arabia also which maintained visible military relationship with the U.S. after the imposed war of 1980s on Iran invited four American Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) aircraft together with 500 support personnel to protect the Kingdom's air space.

Since the declaration of the Carter Doctrine in January 1980, America has remained unilaterally committed to the defence of the Persian Gulf region against attack by any outside force. Reagan went a step ahead by saying that it

80. Agwani, n.60, pp. 11-14.
would not permit Saudi Arabia "to be an other Iran". Despite U.S. failure to extend Pax Americana to the Persian Gulf, Washington continues to maintain considerable influence in the region. Soviet Union's involvement and credibility in the region reached its lowest level after its occupation of Afghanistan. The West European countries, for their self interests, advanced the view that in order to counter any threat from outside, the Persian Gulf countries should develop their defence capabilities. They opposed the dependency of the Arab States of the region on the US and they also did not want to see the end of the arms race in the region. In his message of 1980 Carter had stated:

"An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force - improving our capability to deploy U.S. military force rapidly to distant areas."  

The American intention was to establish a strong military presence in the Persian Gulf to protect oil supplies and to minimise the political threats and Islamic revivalism

83. Agwani, n.80, p.13.

after the 1979 events in Iran. The Pentagon began trying to use Saudi Arabia to fill part of the vacuum left by the Shah's government. Thus the House of Sa'ud assumed greater importance than ever before in the eyes of American policy makers. At this stage, the questions of Human Rights, democratic considerations and civilisational decencies were forgotten to forge a new relationship with the ruling family of Saudi Arabia.

In pursuit of its policy the U.S. sold huge military hardware worth $ US 20.7 billion in 1980 to Saudi Arabia. The sale of five AWACS aircraft, seven tanker aircraft and armaments for 60 previously purchased F-15 aircraft led to more presence of Americans in the region. The Saudis needed the Americans to maintain and operate many of the U.S. military systems which resulted in closest military cooperation between the two afterwards. The West, especially the U.S., went on supporting and protecting the GCC states and established close ties with them. Saudi Arabia, as a leading member of the GCC, became the main supporter of the U.S. interests in the region even in the face of the unabashed declaration of the West that it reserved the right to occupy the oil belt if it felt that its interests were being threatened.85

85. Singh, n.82, p.9.
Through its military activities by task force in the Persian Gulf and the Straits of Hormus the US coordinated its activities with the defence activities of the GCC member states. The Western powers, mainly the U.K. and U.S., were largely interested in developing the idea of regional arrangements by their allies (GCC) who had close military, economic and commercial ties in the region. To achieve this objective the US and its Western allies began to sell important military equipment to the GCC member states. However, contrary to the principle stated by the GCC states that the security of the region is the responsibility of the peoples and countries of the region, the US and its Western allies attempted to directly involve themselves in the Persian Gulf region. During the 1980s the weaker GCC states looked for external support to counter their vulnerability and they became allies of the U.S. Some of the GCC member states (Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and UAE) signed defence pacts with the U.S.

The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and its annexation gave an opportunity to the US and its allies to not only wage war on Iraq but also treat the Middle East as one of the areas to


be protected within the American sphere of influence. George Bush, in his address to the Congress, reiterated the interests of the United States. He stated: "Let it be clear, our vital national interests depend on a stable and secure Persian Gulf."\(^8^8\) The Desert Storm by US and its allies and other Arab friends against Iraq not only destroyed Iraqi economy but it also caused serious division among the Arabs. It also undermined the security apparatus of the GCC states leading eventually to their seeking greater cooperation with the Western countries.

The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait created a new situation of crisis and anxiety. With the help of GCC member states the Bush administration set out not only to alter the regional status quo, but also to dominate the Persian Gulf region militarily and politically.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s the GCC member states intended to provide regional security on behalf of the West especially the U.S. and to establish a political and military front against the anti-West forces. Western powers consistently viewed the Persian Gulf as a great concern due to its abundant oil reserves and strategic location. The

GCC states' anxiety for the protection of their security and close cooperation with the West and the US, resulted in increasing involvement of U.S. in the region. The liberation of Kuwait and the establishment of new security system excluding Iran and Iraq by the US and Western allies had far more to do with ensuring Western access to oil than it did with the interests of Kuwait and other GCC member states. The US emerged with unprecedented eminence in the Persian Gulf in the wake of the favorable regional and international situation created by the ending of the Cold War, the demise of the Soviet Union and the Kuwait war of 1991. The US aimed to secure a permanent security structure not just to safeguard America's friends in the region, but also to ensure the expansion of US control in the Middle East as a whole. 89

After the Persian Gulf War of 1991 the policies of the GCC and Western powers especially the U.S. aimed at the dual containment of Iran and Iraq. The US built up a massive force in the region and sold $72.5 billion worth of arms to the Persian Gulf states. The Five members of the GCC - Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and the Emirates-signed elaborate defence cooperation agreements with the US. Qatar gave the

US. "unimpeded access" to its international airport, sea ports, army bases and other military facilities, and stationing of the US troops in Doha. The agreement envisaged that the US may, if necessary, preposition non-lethal equipment and supplies, oil, fuel, bombs and ammunition. It gave the US military personnel access without passports.90 However, such agreements and military buildup of the US had grave implications which were compounded by the American announcement that: "We are the security managers of the area".91

Under the defence agreements the US has stationed 9,000 troops on land in the Persian Gulf region, most of them in Saudi Arabia. Headquartered in Bahrain since 1994, the US 5th fleet ships carry up to 100 war planes and more than 100 Tomahawk Cruise Missiles. Nearby are one sometimes two, nuclear submarines.92

President Bush of the United States tried to set up what might be called a "Unipolar Security System" in the region. The American aim was to secure a permanent security arrangement not just to safeguard America's friends there

91. Ibid.
92. Ibid.
but also to ensure the expansion of US control in the Middle East as a whole in the post-Cold War and the post-Soviet Union era.\textsuperscript{93} The objectives of the US in the region were mainly to protect US allies and their interests, ensure free flow of oil at reasonable price from the Persian Gulf region, contain the Islamic revolution, prevent Iran and Iraq from becoming major powers in the Persian Gulf, promote an Arab- Israeli peace, stop the development and flow of weapons of mass destruction to the states of the region, and promote vision of a more democratic region acceptable to the West.\textsuperscript{94}

This type of system essentially rests on the premise of one major power taking responsibility for the security of a number of small and vulnerable allies. In return, these allies were required to provide effective political, financial and infrastructural support to the major power so as to enable it to act as the external guarantor of their security with the highest degree of unity whenever a threat arose.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{93} Saikal, n. 89, p. 640.
\item \textsuperscript{94} Statement delivered by President Clinton's Senior Policy Advisor on the Middle East, Martin Indyk, to the Washington Institute for Near East Policy on 19 May 1993. In Saikal, n. 89, p.641.
\end{itemize}
In fact this system aimed at bilateral security pacts between each regional member and the major world power. 95

The US negotiated with the Gulf Cooperation Council states and one of the most important outcome of the move was the ten-year security pact signed on September 19, 1991 between the United States and Kuwait. Under this pact, Kuwait sought long-term guarantee of its security by agreeing to full defence cooperation, including allowing the US to stockpile and station military hardware in Kuwait and have full access to the country's infrastructural facilities for military operations. 96 It was also reported that Saudi Arabia agreed to the use of its territory and infrastructural facilities for US military operations whenever needed. The US also continued to assist Saudi Arabia in modernizing and expanding its infrastructural facilities, most importantly, airfields, ports, roads and storage centers and to sell the country as much conventional and up-to-date arms as considered necessary to enable it to provide back-up support for American operations whenever need arose. Such a Unipolar System put the US and her allies in a position to


counter the perceived security threat from the Islamic Republic of Iran. This system was designed to avoid a repetition of what happened in Iran in 1979 and also to guarantee the safety of American interests in the Persian Gulf.

This security system was directed against the growth of anti-Western and anti-Israel sentiments as well as the spread of radical political Islam which made its impact felt throughout the region after the revolution in Iran.

In order to counter this security system the Islamic Republic of Iran endeavoured to mend its relations with the Persian Gulf states, mainly those of the GCC after the 1990-91 Persian Gulf War. Shortly after the War it restored diplomatic relations with Saudi Arabia. Ali Akbar Velayeti, the Iranian Foreign Minister, visited Saudi Arabia with an expression of strong interests in the formation of a regional security system which placed the security of the region in the hands of the regional countries.

Whatever be the nature of this new security arrangement, its adverse impact was the arms race between the major and lesser states of the region. Iran, as one of the most powerful states of region, began a process of modernizing its military system with increasing arms purchases, especially from Russia. Iran repeatedly denied the American
allegation that it actively sought to acquire nuclear arms. However, it could be said that Iran showed keenness in acquiring nuclear capability. Its reason for the move was to develop its deterrence in the face of increasing military potential of its regional adversaries and tightening noose by the United States. As a matter of fact, Iran's nuclear search and potential were much exaggerated. The arms purchases of Iran have so far been modest which fall very much short of what is really required for its adequate defence. It is also much less than what the Saudis spent on arms purchases. During 1987-88 Iran imported $1.5 billion worth of arms. The comparative figures and arms purchases by Iraq and Saudi Arabia were $8.2 billion and $5 billion respectively. In the following three years till 1991 Iran's total arms imports bill was $2.8 billion while those for Iraq and Saudi Arabia jumped to $10.3 billion and $10.6 billion.

The second Persian Gulf War resulted in escalated arms build-up by Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and other states in the region. For example, in 1992 Saudi arms purchases were much higher. In one shot it purchased 75 Units of F.15 Jets from US worth $9 billion. During the same year, in a single

deal, Kuwait purchased 236 American M1-A2 advanced battle tanks which, along with spare parts and training involved, eventually cost Kuwaitis some $4 billion.

After the second Persian Gulf War Iran began to reconsider its defence strategy and replenish its military hardware. The new strategy focussed on both domestic production and imports. Yet, its arms bill was less than that of Iraq or Saudi Arabia.

It is noteworthy to add that according to the Congressional Research Service Report the arms transfers to the Persian Gulf region increased much than before. This report showed that Saudi Arabia was the top arms purchaser in 1994 accounting for as much as $9.5 billion in contrast to the preceding year and Qatar imported arms worth $1.3 billion during the same year.98

Apart from this Saudi Arabia received full support from the US and it has been engaged in large-scale military modernization. This co-operation was aimed at containing Iran's perceived revolution as well as military threat. The US defensive measures include strengthening the defence

capabilities of the GCC, monitoring Iran's military build-up, and actively discouraging third countries from selling weapons and advance technology to Iran. The GCC states, on their part, supported a permanent US military presence in the Persian Gulf through a continuous rotation of ships, frequent joint exercises with the GCC states' military forces, and positioning of military equipment in the GCC states and training missions.\textsuperscript{99}

\textsuperscript{99} Ibid, pp. 2-3.