CHAPTER - IV

Policies and Reactions of the Regimes
The Islamic movements appear as the most visible phenomenon in the Muslim countries particularly after the Islamic revolution in Iran. They are in conflict with the existing regimes and alienated Muslims who are keen to preserve their identities and positions. The leaders of the Islamic movements refuse to be mere imitators of alien cultures.¹ The situation creates a situation of civil strife.

The Islamic movement, tendentiously dubbed as "fundamentalism", is no new phenomenon although some of its aspects may give that impression. It advocates a complete new way of life.² It presents Islam as the only way for the solution of Muslims from their present morals. It aims at setting right the deviations to which the Muslim society has generally succumbed in the course of history. It also seeks to eliminate the apparent conflict between tradition and modernity which has distorted the intellectual evolution of Muslims in modern times. The Islamic movements thus tend to be rejectionist and, therefore, pose a threat to the existing regimes. They may ultimately sweep away the corrupt regimes and replace them with Islamic governments.

The new outlook of the Islamic movements in different Muslim countries suggests a desire to ensure a place of its own in the Muslim world. At present, the trend seems to be in favor of a place within a natural fraternity in the ranks of those who share a common heritage. This trend may disappoint those who want Muslim regimes to be the bastion of modernism and un-Islamic traits. It must be remembered that at present the Islamic movement is on the defensive. Its objective is not to disturb the non-believers but to defend Islamic values in the Muslim societies from the alien waves. It judges the Muslim governments with the yardstick of conformity with Islam. The movement is essentially inward looking and as long as the Muslim regimes remain puppets in the hands of Western masters and support Western values at the cost of indigenous Islamic values, the movement will gain strength. The renewed role of Islam since 1970s refers to the process of political revivalism of Islam and its reemergence as a political ideology legitimizing political action. Islam has become the ideology of political opposition in its struggle against the existing political order. Islam offers an indigenous ideology and an


alternative to all foreign ideas. The call for a return to the indigenous cultural heritage was closely linked to a militant and comprehensive rejection of all foreign political ideologies and value systems. In socio-psychological terms, the return to Islam may be interpreted as a search for cultural identity.\(^5\) The Muslim ruling elites adopted norms, values and structures which were quite alien to Islamic principles and Muslim societies. The Westernization of education led to the growth of an elite whose norms and values are no longer primarily Islamic. Islam which is a religion and an essential component of culture has been relegated to secondary position in its own land.\(^6\) The Muslim elites no longer treat Islam as an ideological guide, although Islamic symbols are used by them to legitimise their rule.

The existence of Islamic movements in the Middle East shows the disillusionment of the youths with the existing socio-political order. In the 50s and 60s, the hopes of the people in the Arab world hinged upon socialism or pan-Arabism. But when these concepts eventually failed, the

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6. Panikkar, n.4.
youths tended to turn to Islam. Islamic consciousness and religious resurrection are, therefore, a sequel of the eclipse of Arab nationalism and other developmental experiments in the Middle East. It was natural to seek refuge in older and more familiar concepts. In Egypt, for instance, the urge took the form of discovering indigenous identity based on patriotism and religion whereas in Saudi Arabia it emerged through Arab ethnicity and Islamic guardianship.

The main intellectual inspiration for Islamic movements came from Ibn Taimiya (1236-1338) who lived in Syria during the eclipse of Abbasid dynasty. In his book, Al-Siyasa al Shariyya, he gave strong justifications for disobeying corrupt rulers. Ibn Taimiya's teachings have always had an impact on puritanical and militant movements that aspired for a kind of Islam which was more oriented towards the past. Among his disciples, in one way or the other, were Mohammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab in Arabia in the 19th century and to some extent Rashid Rida, the Syrian Islamic thinker of conservative inclination, who lived in Egypt during the earlier part of the present century. The Islamic movement believes that Islam lost its pre-eminent position because the Arab regimes absorbed too many foreign elements which

corrupted it. If these corrupting elements are removed and Islam restored to its pristine state then a perfect society can be created. It is not necessarily opposed to modernization.

It would be wrong to say that the Islamic movement wants to take back the Muslim society to the early days of Islam. What it wants is a society based on the Holy Qur'an, the Hadiths, and the Sharia. It is true that these sources of law, conduct and behaviour lay down basic Islamic values which can also incorporate elements of modern thought provided they do not transgress Islamic law.

The Islamic movements are reformist in character. Their aim is to change society by changing the governments. According to the Islamists it is the governments which have undermined Islam and introduced un-Islamic ways and, therefore, in almost every country they are fighting with their own governments.

The Islamic revolution in Iran turned into a movement for indigenous self-assertion. Islam played similar role in the Algerian war of independence against the French rule. The two models demonstrated that Islam can be a powerful

8. Ibid, p. 11.
force in resisting alien and unpopular native dominance. Political Islam can, therefore, serve as an effective weapon against dependency that often results from Westernizing processes which various Middle East rulers project as developmental policies. The anti-Western tinge of the Islamic revolution in Iran should not come as a surprise. Nor should one find it strange that after decades of Kemalist cultural disfiguration in Turkey an Islamic organization called the National Salvation Party should emerge in that country. The Islamic movements have their anti-Western shades in The Persian Gulf countries as well. These should be seen as a reaction to various alienating policies that were enforced by the ruling elites in the name of modernization but from which the majority of the people never benefited.\textsuperscript{10}

The rulers have deprived the vast majority of the youths from sharing power. In varying degrees the Pahlavi regime in Iran, the House of Sa'ud in Saudi Arabia and Sadat and Husni Mubarak in Egypt blunted genuine political participation in those countries.\textsuperscript{11}


In view of the complexity and unpredictability of Islamic movements in the Arab states in the region, any prognostication must necessarily be tentative. At present, most governments of the Arab countries appear to possess sufficient coercive and cooperative capability to forestall revolutionary take-over patterned after the Iranian revolution.12 This should not be taken to mean that leaders and regimes are invulnerable to Islamic threats which may include attempts at assassination, coups d'etat and civil disorder. In the long term, however, it is not unlikely that some of the Arab states will experience Islamic take-over or atleast gradual Islamization under great social and political pressure from Islamic movements. This may happen due to the continued intensification of crisis conditions in the Arab-Islamic orbit, the inability of Arab regimes to confront the ideological challenges posed by the Islamic movements, the absence of any indigenous ideological alternative and framework for social protest and revolutionary action.13 Consequently, it is difficult not to conclude that Islamic movement will persist as a powerful force


because it provides many Muslims with an indigenous and authentic identity, an ideology of protest, and a medium of revolutionary mobilization. While many Islamic organisations might well be suppressed by the ruling Arab regimes radicalism is likely to persist in the foreseeable future. However, should Islamists manage to seize power in one or more Arab countries, it is evident that they will be more successful than their predecessors in establishing a viable political community.\footnote{K.R. Malkani, "Prospects: A Non-Muslim View" World Focus (New Delhi), Vol. 1. No. 5. May 1980, p. 36.} The Iranian case illustrates the model of translating Islamic ideology into the reality of an Islamic political system.

The implications of growing Islamic radicalism are substantial not only for the indigenous ruling Arab elites but also for other Muslim states. An Islamic takeover in a major Arab country will surely have consequences on other small Arab states. The manifestation of Islamic radicalism in Algeria and Sudan has already demonstrated clearly the zeal and potential of the Islamic movement. With respect to many other Arab regimes Islamic radicalism poses a more formidable challenge to Arab nationalism. The Islamic radicals justify their struggle against their rulers in
terms of a commitment that transcends the mundane ideals of political independence and nationalism. They focus on the imperative of salvation through martyrdom for the realization of God's rule on earth.

If the foregoing depiction of Islamic radicalism bears any reasonableness then it could be more prudent for puppet Arab regimes to make compromise with Islamic values than to wait for the uncertain circumstances of the future.\textsuperscript{15} This proposition should receive urgent consideration in view of the unprecedented increase in the number of Muslims joining the Islamic organisations and the potential radicalization of Arab societies. An early compromise or adjustment with Islamic values and ideals would remove prime catalysts of Islamic radicalism and maximize the capability of the ruling Arab regimes to arrest the drift towards radicalization of Arab masses.

The Arab regimes have responded to the Islamic organizations by resorting to a variety of measures ranging from cooperation to repression, not all of which are successful. Some regimes have coopted Islam while others have reduced their secularist orientation.\textsuperscript{16} In spite of its Islamic

\textsuperscript{15} Agwani, n.12, p. 18.

nature, Saudi Arabia has chosen a strategy of reemphasizing and deepening its religious commitment. Other Arab states have chosen to respond to Islamic radicalism by strengthening the Islamic establishments by appointing leading jurists, scholars and preachers in these institutions. Such establishments seek to support and legitimize the ruling order.

The Islamic revolution in Iran demolished the socio-political status quo based on tacit subservience. It emboldened the opponents of the governments everywhere to resort to mass appeals. It tended to spread the contagion of revolution throughout the Persian Gulf region. The Islamic revolution which was anti-Western and purely Islamic in content was bound to affect Iran's neighbors directly. 17 The Arab regimes started considering Iran as a disrupter of the Persian Gulf region. Islam came to be recognised as a major political force sidelining secular formulations such as Arab or Persian nationalism or even individual state nationalism.

The leaders of the Islamic organisations who became restive in late 1978 were stirred by the example of Islamic Revolution in Iran. At the mass level, political Islam for

17. Dawisha, n.13, p.45.
the first time became a force to be reckoned with in the Arab world and the Persian Gulf region. The Islamic revolution did inspire many Islamic groups in Arab countries to defy the governments. Indeed, this aspect of the Islamic revolution, more than anything, become the sanguine challenge to the Arab regimes.\(^\text{18}\)

The Islamic Revolution in Iran is the institutional expression of the massive transformation through Islam which has been redefined from a universal religion to a political ideology with universal applications. The radical redefinition of Islam from a religion promising other worldly salvation to an ideology harboring this worldly programmes and actions is perhaps the single most important feature of Muslim collective consciousness in modern times.\(^\text{19}\) The term Islamic ideology represents a revolution in both Islamic thought and action. This term has been widely circulated and popularised by Islamic revolutionaries in Iran. It has become the ideological foundation of the revolution in Iran. The Islamic movement wherever it may operate refers to a set of interrelated concepts and notions of political commitment and mobilizations that seek to provide an interpretation of

\(^{18}\) Ibid.

the existing relations of power and chart a course of action to alter the existing corrupt conditions. The Islamic movements and other struggles in the region are in fact an Islamic response to the corrupt and un-Islamic regimes, alien ideas and Western values in the Muslim societies. These movements, based on Islamic ideology, are deep and pervasive aggregation of Islamic ethics and politics.

After the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979 Iran began to play a central role in Islamic politics in the Muslim World as well as in the Third World. The revolution not only marked a change in the domestic political pattern, ideological orientation and socio-economic-political management of the state but it also initiated a marked shift in the foreign policy of Iran particularly towards the Islamic world. The Islamic revolution in Iran introduced a set of new elements the intra-Islamic politics under the banner of ummah, to which its leadership was committed. Islamic Iran's involvement and influences in the Arab world were by and large facilitated by the anti-Islamic revolution attitudes of the regimes. Significantly, its revolutionary appeal increased when Iran established close ties with the PLO and called for the liberation of Al-Quds.

(Jerusalem) as well as unity among the Muslims. Through such a posture Ayatollah Khomeini emerged as an indispensable leader of the Islamic revolution and embodiment of Islamic ideology which had a "Neither East nor West" edge. The position of Iran on Islamic movements and unity, combined with Ayatollah Khomeini's growing influence on the Muslim masses in the world and in the region in particular, was taken as a threat by the West as well as the autocratic regimes in Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Kuwait, Bahrain and the UAE. In order to check the increasing influence of Islamic revolution the governments of the six Persian Gulf states (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman and UAE) formed a collective cooperation council. Responding to this move the Iranian leader, Ayatollah Khomeini called upon the Muslims to establish Hasteh'hye-Hizbullah (Hizbullah Nucleus) all over the region, and the Iranian government officially and non-officially encouraged the Muslims to rise against the despotic and un-Islamic rulers. In response to this call several Islamic organizations (Hizbullah groups) were established in Iraq, Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Lebanon. These organisations maintained close links with each other.21

Following the Iranian model they adopted the Iranian pattern of revolutionary movement and objective under the supreme doctrine of Towhid (oneness) and laid down a broad framework for their envisioned government.

Revolutionary organizations in the Persian Gulf such as the Islamic Revolution Movement of the Arabian Peninsula, Islamic Revolution in Iraq, Islamic Liberation Movement of Bahrain, Al-Amal organization of Iraq, Hizb al-Tahrir al-Jazirah, Ansar al-Dawa and several other Islamic organizations established close links with the government as well as the Islamic organizations of Iran.

After 1982, thousands of young people especially the students and those from the lower middle class in the Arab/Muslim World flocked to Iran to join the Islamic institution and also to participate in a defensive war with Iraq. Imam Khomeini's call to the Muslim that "it is our duty now to implement and put into practice the plan of government established by Islam... we will create a strong trend of thought and a powerful popular movement that will result in the establishment of an Islamic government"^22, attracted more Muslims towards Iran. Other factors which made Iran the nucleus of Islamic revolutionary movement were its pro-

ounced stand against the despotic regimes, Israel as well as the United States of America.

To bring all the Islamic organizations, groups and associations together the Iranian government, since the beginning of 1980s, organized several Islamic conferences and symposia in which either the leaders or members of Islamic organizations from all over the world were invited. These organizations considered Iran as the only non-aligned Islamic country which could fight for the Islamic cause and Muslims' interests.

The most active revolutionary groups which have close links with Iran are the Supreme Assembly of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SAIRI), the Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain, the Islamic Revolution Organization of the Peninsula, and the Hizbullah nuclei all over the region. Besides, other organizations in Oman, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Sharjah, Kuwait, Egypt, Pakistan, India, Afghanistan, and North African and Central Asian countries also established a network all over the world with its centre at Tehran. Tehran thus emerged as a centre of encouragement and aspiration for the Islamic groups and they looked to it with a great hope.

The Arab States of the Persian Gulf region felt threatened after the Iranian revolution. They feared that the
revolutionary ideology may influence the minds and thinking of the youths. They suffered legitimacy crisis. They were not averse to the Iraqi initiative of invading Iran which was latenly aimed at overthrowing the government of Iran and thereby containing the wind of revolution in the region. They liked to restore the balance which prevailed in the Persian Gulf prior to the Islamic revolution. The Arab countries surreptitiously supported Iraq in its war against Iran. However, that war could not stop the Islamic revolutionary message from reaching the Islamic countries. This forced some of the Arab countries to reconsider their policies vis-a-vis the Islamic upsurge.

The Islamic Revolution in Iran had its spill-over effect on the Arab world, particularly on the Arab states of the Persian Gulf region. The events in Iran generated an incredible euphoria among the Arab masses although the Arab media underplayed the phenomenon. Ahmad Baha el-Din, an influential Arab political commentator, wrote that for the Arab and Islamic peoples the Islamic revolution was the most important happening of the 20th century. It brought to the Muslims, all over the world much of the trust in themselves which they had lost in recent decades. It was a human and social revolution against repression and dictatorship on the one hand and against social abuse and corruption on the
There was thunderous jubilation in the wake of the Islamic revolution in the PLO camp too because the PLO got additional support from the Islamic regime of Iran. Ayatollah Khomeini, by toppling the Shah, had smashed a vital prop of Israel in the West Asian region.

**Saudi Arabia**: The armed takeover in November 1979 of the most sacred mosque at Mecca (Ka'aba) by the Ikhwan group proved beyond doubt that even the outwardly Islamic Saudi Arabia is not completely immune from Islamic dissenting movement trying to bring about a change of regime.  

At first, the Saudis stubbornly blamed it on some religious fundamentalists seeking the recognition of their leader as Mehdi. When this story failed to convince the outside world they conceded that the Mecca takeover was politically motivated by elements who were trying to destabilize the Saudi regime. Since then the Arab monarchs and

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rulers have publicly admitted the need to mend their political systems and styles.25

The existence of dissident Islamic groupings indicates that Saudi Arabia also seems to witness political revival of Islam which now spreads through most of the Middle East region.26 Such organisations although clad in religious garb, are often vehicles of socio-political protest and related to socio-economic contradictions. The people who launched the Mecca takeover were a neo-puritannical group invoking strict radicalism. It expressed social resentment and political protest against what the group regarded as the false and opportunistic utilization of Islam to hide corruption, decadence and oppression as well as subservience to the foreigners.

The choice of the Mecca Mosque and no other place was to emphasise the religious rather than the political nature of the act. It is also important to note that it took several days for the government to secure the fatwa from the leading clerics in storming the mosque because some of the clerics were either sympathetic to the objectives of Ikwan or were against the use of force in the Mosque.


The Mecca takeover was put down with an iron hand in the name of Islam. The rebels were dubbed as Kharijite deviants and a fatwa was obtained from the ulama to justify the storming of the Ka'aba in their pursuit. The Mecca events had a wider significance beyond their immediate alarming impact. They revived the controversy about the legitimacy of the monarchical form of the government in Islam. It also highlighted the problem of corruption in Saudi Arabia. The official strict posture of Islam does not blend smoothly with stories of huge 'commissions' and 'bribes', overseas gambling adventures and other forms of corruption not to mention less secretive but equally profligate expenditures on royal palaces, private aircraft, wedding ceremonies etc.

The main outcome of the Mecca events was the reinforcement of the moral and social authority of the ulama in Saudi politics subject to the provisions that they would not interfere in the day-to-day administration. The conduct of power has become stricter since then. The political actions of the government have increasingly been couched in religious terms. The Ka'aba incident was only the tip of the iceberg in which simmers a potential socio-political movement born out of decades of discontent and suppression. Although the incident occurred after the revolution in Iran
the seeds of revolutionary upsurge are indigenous in Saudi Arabia as in other Arab neighbouring states.

The Islamic movement has its base of activities in mosques which are guided by the activist ulama. To prevent the increasing anti-government sentiments and to protect the state ulama the security forces attacked the mosques and arrested about 20 ulama in December and January 1991-92. Meanwhile, other theologians also extended their support to the struggle of Islamic activists and criticised what they termed the government's subservient attitude towards the U.S. and Zionist imperialism.

The opposition to the government manifested itself clandestinely through sermons on cassettes recorded by the ulama in mosques or in strongly-worded anti-state ulama and government leaflets. The Saudi authorities denounced the orthodox ulama for manipulating religion for political purposes. The traditional ulama publicly expressed their opposition, attacking reformist notions and triggering, for the first time, "a shock of paradoxical ideas. The tension led King Fahd to introduce political innovations which allowed a relatively better represented base at the higher state level but reaffirmed the Islamic framework of the
regime and laws.\textsuperscript{27} Responding to the concerns of underprivileged Saudis, the group most likely to be swayed by religious opponents activities, the government ordered a significant cut in telephone, water, electricity and petrol rates.

Early in 1995, several prominent ulama, university professors engineers, scholars and social activists of Saudi Arabia handed over an open letter of protest to King Fahd and demanded the establishment of a Majlis al-Showra (Consultative Assembly) for making decision on internal and external issues. They insisted that its members must be elected without any pressure and influence of the regime. They also demanded the establishment of a high-powered legal committee with special competence and power to study the laws in the political, economic and administrative spheres to nullify those laws and plans which were inconsistent with the Sharia' (Islamic law), and to apply those laws and plans which were in harmony with Islam. Justice and equality must be enforced among the people so that extortion and injustice could be eliminated from society. The petition further demanded that all people, without any exception, must be accountable before the law of state, wealth of state should

\textsuperscript{27} Keyhan Havai (Tehran), 28 May 1992.
be equitably distributed among the people of all groups and classes, all taxes should be abolished, the propagation system be based on Islamic Shari'a, and foreign policy of the state should aim at promoting peace, protecting interests of Muslims and avoiding any un-Islamic pact with non-Islamic states which might harm the interests of the Islamic ummah. 28

Responding to the petition King Fahd denounced Islamic extremists warning the religious "hard liners" against the distribution of anti-government tape cassettes and literature and also the use of mosques as pulpits to incite people against the ruling family. 29

The opposition by the ulama had increased during 1994, particularly in the month of October, when several activists were arrested for leading the campaign for political reforms and highlighting the intensified bickering and rivalry in the royal Saudi family. The crackdown in Buraydah, capital of the northern province of al-Qasem, resulted in the arrest of Salman al-Odeh and several other ulama after they refused to sign pledges to conform to a ban on their activities. The banned London-based Committee for the Defence of Legiti-

mate Rights (CDLR), in its press release, claimed that the Saudi forces had arrested some 1,500 opposition activists.\textsuperscript{30}

The arrest of the ulama, university professors, Tulaba (students of Islamic institutions) did not daunt upsurge against the regime and its subservient ulama. On the contrary, it strengthened the roots of the opposition. In anguish, the forces arrested 42 other Islamic intellectuals, ulama, University teachers and social activists in November 1994 when they called on King Fahd to move towards democratic reforms and pave the way for a multiparty system.

\textbf{Kuwait}

Like that in Saudi Arabia, there exists a trend of thought in Kuwait religious circles and Islamic organizations which opposes the subservient role of the clerics to the establishment and they are critical of the regime and U.S. dominance. The Islamic movement of \textit{Salafiyun} of Kuwait which is obviously sympathetic to the \textit{Ikhwan} rebellion has been led by Abdullah Fahd al-Nafissi, a Cambridge-educated person who was elected as a member of Kuwaiti Parliament in 1985. In \textit{Indama Yahkum al-Islam} (when Islam governs),\textsuperscript{31} al-

\textsuperscript{30} Keyhan Havai (Tehran), 12 October 1994, p.30.

\textsuperscript{31} For details see, R.K. Ramazani, "Iran's Islamic Revolution and the Persian Gulf" \textit{Current History} (Philadelphia), Vol. 84, no.498, January 1985, pp.6-7.
Nafissi tries to translate into modern political vocabulary the Salafi ideas prevalent in the states of the region particularly in Kuwait. He frequently uses quotations from Ibn Taymiyya and Abul A'la Mawdudi which confirm his fundamentalist ideas. He believes that the Muslims have the right to control their rulers and to this end God gave Muslims the right to form political parties. Such parties can exist without any prior authorization from the rulers. Hence, the basic right to participate in politics, to elect the ruler and to depose him. According to him the Islamic state system is the only one which requires every individual citizen including the ruler to be accountable to law. Al-Nafissi's main objective is to emphasize that dynastic rule is originally non-Islamic.32

Ahmad al-Qattan is another well known personality among the Kuwaitis who stands against the regime. He is a leftist turned Islamic activist and began preaching Jihad and attacking the un-Islamic regime of Kuwait.

An Islamic group which opposes the regime is Jamiat al-Islah al Ijtima'î (The Association for Reform of Society) which attempts to revive Islam on traditional Salafi lines.

This organization, through its weekly organ al-Mujtama, preaches a strong tendency of rebellious political Islam. It did not go beyond ideological expressions and remained controllable. However, this organization is a supporter of Islamic revolution in Kuwait and has close links with Islamic activists of Syria and Ikhwan of Egypt.

The opinion of the Muslim elite and opponent ulama about the regime and its rule is that today's rulers of Kuwait did not come to power through legal means but through the support of anti-Islamic Kafir colonialists as well as those ulama who, for their own ends, through issuing decrees legalized the Sabahi rule. The opposition groups insist that it is their duty not only to fight the Western Kafirs, colonialist powers, and US dominance but also the existing regime as well as those ulama who sold their faith to the government. These Islamic organizations, irrespective of their sectarian differences (Shi'i and Sunni), vehemently rejected the dynastic rule and establishment. They insisted that government should adopt and implement true Islam. Enjoying the blessings of the radical ulama, the activities of the opponents have become a matter of serious concern to the ruling family of Kuwait.

The Ad Dawa al Islamiya (the Voice of Islam) organization attempted to assassinate the Amir of Kuwait, Sheikh
Jaber al Ahmad al-Sabah, by planting a bomb into a royal palace. The incident occurred ten days after the Islamic Jihad which has close connection with Al Dawa al-Islamiya had demanded the release of 17 of its members who were being held prisoners in Kuwait, in exchange for six American and French prisoners. Kuwait was involved in negotiations with Iran concerning the release of prisoners. It insisted on conditions restricting the activities of the Islamic Jihad which were unacceptable to Iran. The Kuwaiti Government believed that Iran had instigated the assassination attempts but Iran denied the allegation. The attack resulted in greater security measures. The Kuwaiti Government enacted laws and temporarily suspended visas and residence permits to Iranians. In July 1985, the National Assembly unanimously approved legislation to impose death penalty for terrorist acts. The Government announced plans to establish security committees in all districts. These measures followed an incident in June 1985 when two bombs exploded in Kuwait city killing 11 people. The authorities again suspected the Islamic Jihad although no one claimed responsibility. Dozens of Shi'i Muslims were detained. In June 1986 four simultaneous explosions occurred at Kuwait's main oil export refinery at Mina-al-Ahmadi. A hitherto unknown
organization calling itself the "Arab Revolutionary Group" later claimed responsibility for the attacks.

In 1985-86 almost 27,000 expatriates, many of whom were Iranians, were deported.  During this period the Ministry of Interior established a department to provide greater security for vital installations such as airports. In January 1987 three explosions caused serious damages to Kuwaiti oil installations. A group called "Revolutionary Organization - Forces of the Prophet Mohammad in Kuwait" claimed responsibility for the attacks. In June 1987, six Kuwaiti Shi'i Muslims were sentenced to death for their part in sabotaging oil installations and plotting against the government.

Bahrain

The situation in Bahrain and the development of the trend of thought in religious circles is much similar to that in Saudi Arabia or Kuwait. Islamic opposition to the established regimes in the Persian Gulf Sheikhdoms preceded the revolution in Iran. Islamic organizations who received the support of anti-status-quist ulama since their estab-

33. Ibid.

lishment actively opposed the subservient ulama and the ruling family which attempted to use Islam as a means to gain legitimacy. *Al-Montada al-Islami* is one of the organizations in Bahrain which was established in the later part of fifties and since its establishment is struggling against the regime and Western dominance particularly of the United States of America. This organization has had close links with *Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimoon* of Egypt and all Ikhwan publications were published by this group. Their objective is to establish an Islamic government in Bahrain, forge unity among ummah and bring an end to the Western dominance over the Persian Gulf States.35

*Jami'at Al-Taweyat* is another organization which began its activities for promoting Islamic ideology by teaching in schools and through the media of audio-cassettes, books leaflets and sermons in the mosques. The *Jamiat* was critical of the state ulama as well as un-Islamic policies of the ruling family regime. It is dubbed as extremist by the ruling elite as it insists on a return to Islam and establishment of an Islamic government in place of the rule of tribes. As a defensive and suppressive measure the govern-

ment arrested leaders of the organization and banned its activities.

A third dissident religious group, Al-Sanduq al-Husaini al-Ijtemaei, was founded in the beginning of the seventies with the aim of bringing justice and equality in the Bahraini society based on the God given direction. To achieve its goals it organized different types of activities, such as sermons, religious classes, and providing financial support to those students who were needy. Its main objective was political. The area of the group's influence crossed beyond Manama especially to the rural areas. The well-established business group of Muslims was the bedrock of this organization. Due to the increasing role of radical ulama in this organization and its significant impact on the common people the government banned its activities and its leading members were arrested.

Another organization, Al-Jibhat al-Islamira le Tehrir al-Bahrain (Islamic Organization for the Liberation of Bahrain) was an active group which was established during the 1980s. This organization was significantly influenced by the Islamic revolution of Iran and its stand against the regime was very harsh. It called the masses to revolt against the tribal rule and to sacrifice their lives for the sake of God. This organization began its activities in the
mosques. It started to organize and coordinate the activities of all the mosques and Husainiyehs in Bahrain. Through these religious centres they directed their attacks against the subservient ulama and the regime.

*Junbish Islamiyya* (Islamic Movement) is another Islamic group which stands for bringing about political, social, economic and cultural changes based on Islamic values in Bahrain. Syed Hadi Modarresi, a well known cleric, is the leader of this organization. In his interview to the *Bagie*, monthly organ of the Islamic Revolution Organization of the Peninsula, he said: "Our movement's aim and objective is mainly based on two things, first to establish an Islamic government in Bahrain and second to cut the hand and influence of West, particularly the U.S. For achieving our goal we have to resort to armed struggle".  

The Islamic Liberation Front of Bahrain is another organization which began its struggle against the existing regime prior to the Islamic revolution in Iran. This organization was formally established in 1976. It has had cultural genuineness as well as flexibility to accept the modern phenomenon. Isa Marhoon, the leader of propagation of this organizations, in his interview to the *Al-Thura al-

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Resalia" said: "We are an ideological organization, and have begun our movement based on the rule of divine. Our objectives are to overthrow the Al-Khalifa regime, establish an independent Islamic government, free our economy and culture from the Western imperialism, fight against illiteracy, and develop technical and scientific institutions in our country. We have attempted to overthrow the regime several times especially in 1981." Shaikh Ali Salman, one of the most radical ulama of Bahrain, wrote an open protest letter to the Amir of Bahrain demanding the immediate restoration of parliament. He also emphasized that the government must follow Islamic principles and allow political exiles to return home and freely participate in the political processes and administration of the country. Refusing to heed his demands, the Bahrain authorities arrested him. His arrest caused unrest and the masses came to streets. That led to clashes between the protectors and security forces. Subsequently, some 25,000 Sunni Muslims signed a petition calling for the restoration of parliament, withdrawal of all Western forces, particularly the American and British, from Bahrain and the region, return to the right path and establishment of an independent Islamic state. This public initiative brought forth severe oppressive measures by the
government which had the overt and covert support of Saudi Arabia and Western powers.

The Islamic Revolution in Iran gave fresh impetus to the Islamic movement in Bahrain. It witnessed several clashes between the people and the security forces. The autocratic ruler Shaikh Isa bin Salman Al-Khalifa and the family's complete disregard to the Islamic values in governing the country is one of the major reasons of the country's unrest. The ruler suppressed the Islamic movement with cruelty which consequently brought further clashes with the state. The people found no channel to convey their grievances to the government except through violent means.37

It is interesting to note that Bahrain had a national parliament (Majlis) but that did not last long. The ruling Khalifa dissolved the parliament. When Shaikh Ali Salman, one of the famous religious leaders protested to the Amir of Bahrain he was arrested and harassed. This resulted in riots and clashes between his supporters and the police.

The Shi'is in Bahrain are vocal in their protest against the regime. They want Islamic values to be established immediately. They resent the propagation of un-

Islamic culture and values and imposition of alien values in the Islamic society of Bahrain.

In September 1979, the Shi'i segment of Bahrain who are in majority and many of whom are of Iranian descent demonstrated against the Sunni regime of Bahrain. The Shi'is are not treated fairly though they, constitute the majority of the population. Their movement was suppressed ruthlessly. Bahrain accused Iran for the uprising and blamed it for reviving old Iranian policy of laying claim to Bahrain which was not renounced until 1970 by the Shah of Iran.38 In December 1981, trouble flared up when between fifty and sixty Shi'is were arrested on the charge of supporting an Iranian-backed plot to overthrow the Bahrain Government. Bahrain's Minister of Interior alleged that the plot was the work of Hojjatoleslam Hadi al-Mudarrasi, an Iranian clergyman, who was operating in the name of the Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain. In 1984, the discovery of a cache of weapons in a village led to renewed fears of Iranian attempts to disrupts the island's stability. In 1985, a fresh plot to overthrow the Bahrain government was discovered.39 Despite subsequent assurances from

38.Ibid.

President Rafsanjani of Iran, Bahrain remained vigilant and watchful of the resistance groups. It imposed strict censorship and political parties and trade unions were banned. The Bahrain government was severely criticised by human rights organisations for its alleged use of torture and detention without trial.\textsuperscript{40}

In a recent development, Mohammed Ali Mahfuz, the General Secretary of the Islamic Liberation Front, pledged to continue the struggle against the regime unless the demands of the people were accepted by the regime. The Islamic Liberation Front is one of the most powerful and well organized groups fighting against the Al-Khalifa regime for the democratic rights of the people of Bahrain. In January 1995, several violent clashes took place in Diraz, Beni Jamrah, Abu Siban, Babar, Jid Haps etc. The Islamic Liberation Front alleged that the Bahrain government used helicopters to suppress the movement.\textsuperscript{41}

As a result of increasing oppressive policy of the Al-Khalifa regime the intellectuals and intelligentsia of the country protested against the policies of the ruler and

\textsuperscript{40}. The Middle East & North Africa, 1993, p. 590.

\textsuperscript{41}. Kayhan Havai, weekly, 18 January 1995.
demanded the restoration of the Parliament. But the government responded by arresting a large number of people.\footnote{Ibid.}

**Oman**

Apart from the Shi'i revivalism and organizations which were activized after the Islamic revolution of 1979 in Iran the Al-Abadiya (Abadi) movement increasingly became active in Oman in the recent past;\footnote{Keyhan Havai, 28 December 1994, p.30.} It tried to correct what it considered as historical wrong done to them. The group asserted that the Abadis as much a part of Islamic mainstream ideologically as were the various other schools of the Sunnis.\footnote{Ali Yahya Muamma, *Al-Abadiya Bayn-al-Firq al-Islamiya* (The Abadism between the Islamic Sects), (Oman, 1972), 2 Vols.} The Abadi ulama also tried to return to the puritan Abadi traditions but they did not raise their voice against the ruling family and the influence of Western powers. However, the ideological thrust of Ibadism emphasized that it has common features with the present reformist trend among the Sunnis. The Ibadis advocated reform and change in the political approaches of the regime in a peaceful way. In Qatar, Sharjah and other member states of the UAE there also exists a trend of thought among the religious

\footnote{Ibid.}
groups against the ruling families. The trend though slow is most perceptible in Sharjah. The Qataris take Saudi Arabia as their model and observe strict Islamic rules. Saudi Arabia also provides Qatar with teachers and Islamic Judges. Islamic organizations are banned and the opposition to the ruling elite is not permitted to flourish.

**Iraq**

Since the victory of the Islamic revolution in Iran the Iraqi government became apprehensive of the activities of the Islamic organizations particularly of the Shi'is. The Government dealt with these organizations with an iron hand.

The various governments of Iraq since the 1958 coup remained wary and hostile vis-a-vis the Dawa. Various means such as arrests, deportation, execution, confiscation of property and purge were applied to counter and eradicate this religio-political group. However all measures proved counter-productive as the ideas of the Da'wa still persist in Iraq. The situation became complex and tense in the wake of the Islamic revolution in Iran. The dissidents in either country sought, and were given shelter by the other. Thereafter, two contending and incongruent regimes in the neighbouring countries confronted each other. Either government attempted an assault on the other by calling on the people.
to revolt. The tussle ranged between propaganda warfare, abetment, cross order incursians and finally the war.

Any chance of cooperation between the Islamists and the Ba'athist government in Iraq disappeared in July 1979 when Saddam Hussein started the crackdown on the Da'wa. Under the fear psychosis, he purged some of the top shi'i members of the R.C.C. after he assumed presidency of Iraq. The Iraq regime arrested Dr. Hussein Shahrastani Director of Research at the Iraqi Atomic Energy Authority as well as other scientists and engineers. To add fuel to the fire, in August 1979 a Da'wa activists, Dr. Ghazi at-Hariri, attempted to assassinate President Saddam Hussein at Karameh Hospital in Baghdad. The attempt was foiled but it drew the full wrath of the regime on the Da'wa. In March 1980, the government forces arrested 96 members of the Da'wa party and executed them without trial. Going a step further, on 31 March, the RCC Resolution 46 made membership of Hizb al-Da'wa al-Islamiya a capital offence. A very next day, a Mujahid of the Islamic Task Organisation attempted to kill the Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz at Mustansariya Univeristy in Baghdad, Responding to it, the Iraqi authorities summarily executed the ideologue of al-Da'wa Ayatallah Sayyid Baqir al-Sadar and his sister, Bint al-Huda, on 8 April. During the month,
over 30,000 Shi'is were expelled to Iran.\textsuperscript{45} On 2 May, Ayatallah Hasan Shirazi was assassinated at his place of exile in the Lebanon by Iraqi agents. By the Saddam regime's own account, the Iraqi government executed 500 Shi'i activists between 1974 and 1980.\textsuperscript{46}

Estimates of the total number of Islamic activists killed by the government vary but taking the 500 Da'wa members executed as acknowledged by the Saddam regime and adding those confirmed by the Amnesty International gives the figure of 1000 executions as reported in the Western Press. Chibli Mallat refers to the Iraqi source which indicate that between 5,000 and 10,000 Islamists had been killed by the mid 1980s in Iraq.\textsuperscript{47} Mallat's figures are based on Islamic sources and not the popular press. The opposition groups themselves do not know how many of their members have been executed. Their publications put it that "only God knows how many believing Muslims the Ba'ath government has executed". In 1986 Al-Tayar al-Jadeed, not a radicalise publication, put the number of Iraqi's of all

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{45} Jayee, N. Wiley, \textit{The Islamic Movement of Iraqi Shi'is} (Boulder, London, 1992), p.55.
\item \textsuperscript{46} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{47} Chibli Mallat, 'Iraq" (No place) 1986, p.79
\end{itemize}
political persuasions who either disappeared or were executed at 30,000.\textsuperscript{48}

The Da'wa succeeded in penetrating the Iraqi military ranks. The measure of this success was the fact that some senior officers made five attempts to kill president Saddam Hussein during 1981. Reacting furiously, the government arrested 12 officers and 200 other ranks and executed them in July. Forty civilians met a similar fate as they were accused of supplying weapons to the military men in Kadhimiyah, Madinat al-Hurriya and Miriya.

In the wake of the armed attack on Saddam in July 1982 at Diyala by the Da'wa mujahidin nearly 150 Da'wa members were killed and the government virtually razed the town. Next when the chairman of the Supreme Assembly of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, Hujjatalisalm Saiyyed Mahammad Baqir al Hakim, gave a call to the Iraqi people, the Iraqi government, in Mary 1983, arrested over 100 male members of the al-Hakim family and executed six of them immediately.\textsuperscript{49} With the aim of bringing an end to the activities of al-Dawa and the SAIRI the Iraqi government took recourse to the brutal measure of using chemical weapons in November 1987.

\textsuperscript{48} Wiley, n.45, p.63.

against the people of Hajj Umran in northern Iraq. Abu Thar al-Hasan, Executive Director of the Supreme Assembly, was one of those who received severe burns and wounds in the government's attack. 50

In pursuit of its repressive policies to uproot the resistance movement of al-Dawa, the Iraqi regime, adopted a clever strategy. On 27 November 1988, it announced its permission for formation of political parties. The latent hope was that through such a strategem the opponents and activists would come to the surface. Thus, they could be effectively liquidated. However, Islamic groups were excluded from the move on political parties.

After the Second Persian Gulf War (1990-91) the Iraqi regime, through its Revolutionary Guards, attacked the Islamists in South of Iraq by dropping napalm and phosphorus bombs and at the same time it also resorted to mass arrests and execution of the Shi'is and member of al-Dawa. 51

The Iraqi regime still continues the same repressive policy by embarking on further mass arrests and mass execution of Islamists all over the country. In the recent

50. Wiley, n.45.

incident several thousand people detained by the security agencies (10,000 women) are facing the extreme brutality of the Ba'thist security apparatus. The government has not changed its suspicious and hostile stance towards the Dawa party so far.