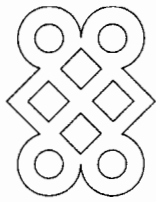


16

A HISTORY OF
ISLAMIC SOCIETIES

SECOND EDITION



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Zaydi party, called the Hizb al-Haqq, which repudiates the Imamate, and calls for a democracy and an elected ruler who is an *ajir*, a hired servant. This party revives festivals such as Ghadir Khumm, and the birthday of Zayd b. 'Ali. Islamic movements, often financed by Sa'udi Arabia, have created a parallel education system, Islamic banks, and an education and propaganda network through the distribution of videos and audio cassettes. While the military and the tribes still dominate, the country is extremely diverse and power is widely distributed.

Sa'udi Arabia

Central Arabia has become the domain of the Sa'udi kingdom and the Wahhabi movement. In 1745 'Abd al-'Aziz b. Sa'ud (Ibn Sa'ud), the chief of a small tribal principality in north central Arabia, took up the cause of a Hanbali preacher, Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab (1703-87). Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab had studied in Mecca, Medina, Damascus, and Basra, and returned to preach the reform principles. He insisted that the Quran and the Prophet were the only valid Muslim authorities, and proposed to return to the fundamental principles embodied in Muslim scripture. Wahhabi reformism took the extreme position of totally rejecting belief in and veneration of saints or of any human being as a form of *shirk*, or polytheism. It also rejected the common pantheistic types of Sufi theology and magical rituals. Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab's preaching was the first political expression of a reform tendency that had developed in Mecca and would soon manifest itself throughout Islamic India, Indonesia, and North Africa.

With the conversion of Ibn Sa'ud to the Wahhabi cause, Wahhabism became the religious ideology of tribal unification. Echoing the life of the Prophet, Ibn Sa'ud and his successors waged war against the surrounding tribes, and converted them to the reformed version of Islam. As imams of the Wahhabi movement, they became the spiritual as well as the temporal chiefs of central Arabia. In 1773 they took Riyadh and made it their capital; in 1803 they captured Mecca, but they were defeated by Muhammad 'Ali, who took control of Mecca and Medina in 1812, and destroyed the Sa'udi state in 1818. During much of the nineteenth century, the Sa'udi house survived as a small tribal principality in the interior of Arabia, but in 1902, 'Abd al-'Aziz b. Sa'ud again took control of Riyadh, proclaimed himself imam of the Wahhabis, and restored the Sa'udi kingdom. The principal instrument of his power was the Ikhwān – a non-tribal military corps, settled in agricultural villages, which fought and proselytized for the Wahhabi movement. Ibn Sa'ud succeeded in unifying the tribes of central and eastern Arabia, declared himself Sultan of the Najd (1921) and proceeded to round out the boundaries of modern Sa'udi Arabia by treaties with Iraq (1922), Jordan (1925), and Yemen (1934). In 1925 he took control of the Hijaz and the holy places.

The Sa'udi regime was based on a subtle combination of political and religious powers. The Sa'udi kings were tribal chiefs who ruled by maintaining alliances and marriage ties with the families of other chiefs. The army was made up of loyal tribes. At the same time they were religious rulers, committed to upholding the laws of

Islam and protecting the pilgrimage and the holy places. The 'ulama' of the country, largely the descendants of Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab, married into the royal family, were financially supported by the state, and had considerable influence in government circles.

The contemporary transformation of Sa'udi Arabia began with the issuing of exploration concessions to the Standard Oil Company in 1933 and 1939, and the discovery of oil. Oil production in Sa'udi Arabia began in earnest after World War II. However, only after 1973 did the price revolution in oil bring in vast riches. The Sa'udi development budget reached 40 billion dollars in 1977 and 70 billion dollars in 1980. Its programs led to the growth of cities, the construction of an industrial infrastructure, and a tremendous influx of foreign workers. In 1975, an estimated 43 percent of the population consisted of foreign workers from Yemen, Oman, Egypt, and Pakistan. Equally important was the revolution in education. By 1980 there were approximately a million children in schools, including large numbers of girls, some 40,000 students in Sa'udi colleges, and some 15,000 students abroad. By 1989 there were more than 2,500,000 students, of whom 1,160,000 were girls. There were about 100,000 students in universities. Increasing numbers of Sa'udis were trained for technical work in the petroleum industry, commerce, agriculture, finance, communications, and the military. Numerous members of the royal family have been educated in Western universities.

In the midst of these extensive educational, economic, and social changes Sa'udi society remains conservative, and the state maintains its traditional political and religious authority. The Sa'udi regime is essentially an oligarchy run by a family council, or majlis, which operates by consensus, but the regime is sensitive to the attitudes of leading bureaucrats, merchants, 'ulama', and Muslim activists. The Sa'udis maintain close family relations with important regional and tribal chieftains, and they appoint family members and loyal tribal chiefs to ministerial and administrative offices. The historical tribal societies have been restructured by sedentarization, by urbanization or the adoption of subsidized agriculture, and by the substitution of state salaries and subsidies for an independent economic life. State salaries and subsidies reach all sectors of the society. The regime has used its wealth to make clients of its own population. Reciprocally, Sa'udi subjects gain the leverage to demand subsidies and services of the government. Even in periods of declining oil revenue, as in the 1980s and 1990s, the government has been reluctant to reduce these benefits lest it lead to political unrest.

Equally important is the continuing commitment to Islam. Sa'udi society has been little affected by nationalism and secularism, and the Sa'udis cultivate their legitimacy by close attention to Islamic religious affairs and the enforcement of Islamic morals. The defining Sa'udi myth is that the ruling family is the protector of Wahhabi Islam and tribal values. The organization for "commanding the good and forbidding the evil" (the *mutawwi'in*) enforces Wahhabi concepts of morality. The successful organization of the pilgrimage is another important sign of Sa'udi legitimacy. The 'ulama' have a large voice in such matters as Islamic law and

education, and they control the Ministries of Higher Education, Information, Justice, Interior, and Waqf and Departments of Legal Research, Propaganda, and Guidance and Public Morality, but their influence may not be as substantial as it sometimes appears. The power of the 'ulama' derives from their appointment by the King, and they have little say in oil, economic, and foreign policy issues. They are part of the state bureaucracy and under the supervisory control of the government. The state does not tolerate an independent religious domain.

The position of women is critical in defining Sa'udi Arabia as an Islamic society. Sex segregation outside the home is more complete in Sa'udi Arabia than in any other Muslim country, and is sustained by state policy. Women are supposed to remain in the home, raising children and inculcating them with traditional values. Women can only be educated or work in sex-segregated places, which excludes them from many professions. In political crises such as those after the 1979 assault on the mosque in Mecca or the Gulf War these regulations are ever more intensively enforced. The control of women has become an antidote to the breakdown of the functions of the traditional family, to Westernization via the media, to the creation of a technically and administratively competent middle class, and to the breakdown of traditional village and *suaq* spaces in vast new urban constructions. Islamic identity, asceticism and puritanism in public, modernism and material prosperity, and ever more concessions to 'ulama' demands for a stricter Muslim lifestyle have shaped the Sa'udi nation.

Internationally, the Sa'udis have cultivated an Islamic rather than an Arab national identity. They oppose the Israeli occupation of Jerusalem, and defend the Palestinian cause. They support innumerable schools and colleges, publications and conferences, mosques and charities in countries with Muslim populations, including Britain and the United States. The Sa'udis propagate their own militant and puritanical version of Islam, and have helped foster a worldwide common practice and global Islamic identity. They have also supported insurgent movements in Kosovo, Palestine, Kashmir, and Chechnya, and most extensively in Afghanistan. Sa'udi support for Muslim insurgencies may directly or indirectly shade over into "protection" money for Jihadist movements. Sa'udi foreign policy has been governed throughout by the concerns of a wealthy but small and vulnerable state for protection from regional dangers. The Sa'udis fear terrorist attacks and, at various times, possible Egyptian, Iranian, and Iraqi interventions. They fought a proxy war in Yemen against Egyptian forces from 1962 to 1967, warded off the threat of Iranian influence among the Shi'i populations of northeastern Arabia after the Iranian revolution, and turned to the United States for protection from Iraq during its invasion of Kuwait.

Sa'udi oil policy has been managed with considerable attention to its political as well as its economic implications. The oil embargo of 1973 was an assertion of Sa'udi leadership in the Arab world and of resistance to Israel and to American influences in the Middle East. Since the 1970s the Sa'udis have taken a long-term and moderate

view of the political utility of oil. They see their own best interests in cooperation with the oil-consuming powers of Europe, the United States and Japan, and have favored moderate prices in the interests of global economic stability and prosperity.

Forces outside the royal family have thus far achieved little political expression. Potential political opposition exists in the new middle class of administrators, businessmen, skilled technicians, and workers who are crucial to the emerging modern economy, but who stand outside the status and political structure of the country and want a greater role in government. Religious opposition comes from groups that have been disrupted by the breakdown of tribal society and by the growth of individualism attendant upon urbanization and economic and industrial change. A bloated bureaucracy and underemployed graduates of Islamic institutions are another source of tension. Opposition has come from Shi'i workers in Aramco factories and Shi'a in the eastern province; tribal elements in the northern Najd; tribes in Asir; nationalist members of the armed forces; and, most recently, from Islamic-educated but under-employed student and graduate militants. The 1979 attack upon the Haram of Mecca was the harbinger of a new Islamic resistance, and a major trend in the 1990s was rising Islamism and the increasing influence of non-establishment 'ulama', professors of Islamic studies and graduates of Sa'udi religious universities. Al-Madina University has become a center of Sa'udi neo-fundamentalism. The radical Islamic opposition denies the Islamic credentials of the regime, and denounces it as an untribal, usurping, and corrupt government using Islam for its own purposes. It questions the morality of the rulers, and calls for a strict Shari'a state. In the 1990s the 'ulama' also became anxious about the American alliance, Western influences, and the rise of Western- and secular-educated technocrats. All the government's opponents are particularly critical of its close alliance with and dependence upon the United States, and fear this as a source of foreign cultural influences.

Nonetheless, the Sa'udi family seems to have absorbed massive economic, social, and educational changes within the political and cultural framework of tribal and Islamic legitimacy. In the 1950s and 1960s modernization of the administration and expansion of education, harsh internal security laws, control over information, repression of organized opponents, and the beginnings of a mass welfare program helped diffuse and overcome some of this resistance. Middle-class nationalists were won away from pan-Arabism, Nasserism, and Ba'thism. From the mid-1960s there was a massive expansion of education and government bureaucratic employment. The new middle classes prefer personal wealth and achievement, and do not, despite repeated promises for the granting of a *majlis al-shura* (consultative council), gain rights of political participation. The 'ulama' have been assured throughout that the Wahhabi character of the kingdom would be preserved, and the regime has steadily become religiously more conservative. In the 1990s, however, the rulers punished the 'ulama' for opposition petitions. The combination of religious identities and oil money has thus far, despite chronic latent tensions, served to maintain the regime.

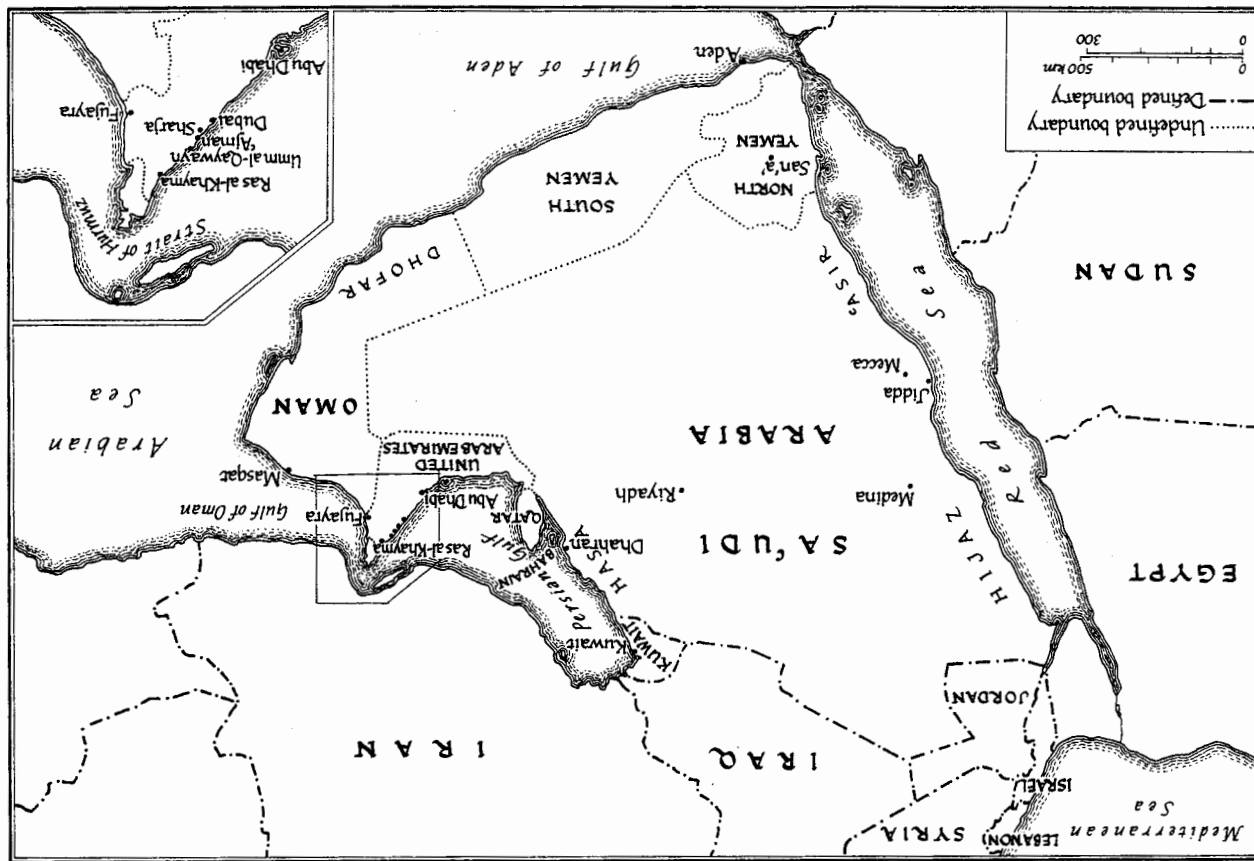
The Gulf

The history of the Persian Gulf region, like that of Yemen and central Arabia, is based upon the persisting identification of political and religious authority as the basis of tribal unification. In pre-Islamic times Oman was part of a Sasanian commercial network which reached from the Persian Gulf to India. Commercial profits were invested in an Iranian type of *qanat* irrigation, and Oman became a highly agricultural society. The Arab conquests, however, introduced a large pastoral population. In 796 Oman came under the rule of Ibadi Imams, who managed to contain tribal rivalries, defend agriculture, and integrate the nomadic and settled populations. Under Ibadi leadership, Omanis founded commercial colonies in Basra, Siraf, Aden, and India, and traded on the east coast of Africa. At the end of the ninth century the Ibadi state and Omani commerce collapsed, and Egyptian-sponsored Red Sea routes took over the bulk of the Indian Ocean traffic. Oman, however, revived in the middle of the eleventh century when a second Imamate was founded, and a social system was created that lasts to the present day. Cultivators accepted a tribal concept of social organization, and thus were integrated with pastoralists into a single society. Ibadism became a full-fledged Muslim school of law, regulating personal and family behavior and political institutions. In the Ibadi system the Imam is nominated by the elders of the community, and holds power insofar as he upholds the divine law and maintains the confidence of his electors. The Imamate was thus a tribal state integrated by religious authority. The government did little to encourage investment in land. Village communities, which did not have adequate resources or organizational capacities to care for the irrigation system, were left on their own.

Oman's prosperity was revived in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when Omanis drove the Portuguese out of East Africa and the Sultans of the Bu Sa'id dynasty established their own trading network. Oman renewed its control over Zanzibar and other East African towns. While Zanzibar became a separate regime in 1856, the dynasty continues to rule Oman (and Muscat) to the present day. In 1955 Sa'id b. Taymur (1932–70), with British help, brought the whole country under his control. His narrow and tyrannical rule prompted several opposition movements. The Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman was formed in 1965 by embittered students; the Dhofar Liberation Front organized resistance in the personal estates of the Sultan, but was defeated with Iranian help. Until 1970, however, Sa'id b. Taymur was able to maintain complete control of the country owing to his British-officered army and the complete isolation of Oman from the outside world.

In 1970 his son Qabus b. Sa'id seized power in a palace coup. However, he did not change the government. The army is made up of Baluchi regiments and northern tribes, and leading tribal shaykhs and merchants have been incorporated into the regime. The commercial elite controls oil, finance and commerce, and the country has a more *laissez faire* economy than other Gulf states. Tribal elites administer social programs. A majlis al-shura was appointed in 1990, but the Sultan remains an absolute ruler with final authority over the promulgation of laws and decrees.

Map 33 Arabia and the Persian Gulf, c. 1974



In other parts of the Persian Gulf a new political system took shape at the beginning of the eighteenth century. In a region of fragmented lineages, the Banu Khalid became the principal tribal power, and a number of local families established their preeminence. In 1752 Sabah b. Jabr of the Banu 'Utub became the first ruler of Kuwait, and established the dynasty that rules Kuwait today. Kuwait has been a tribal state, a commercial entrepôt at the head of the Persian Gulf, and an important rival of Basra and other Persian Gulf ports. The al-Sabah family also assisted in the establishment of another branch of the 'Utub, the al-Khalifa, in Bahrain. By the end of the eighteenth century Britain had become the dominant power in the Gulf region and paramount over the small tribal regimes. In 1798 the British made the first of a series of treaties to protect British shipping in the Gulf and to install British political agents. British treaties with Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, and the smaller "Trucial" states helped to strengthen the tribal rulers. British influence remained predominant until 1961, when Kuwait became fully independent. In 1970 and 1971, when Britain left the Gulf region, the Trucial states were severally reconstituted as members of the United Arab Emirates.

The modern transformation of the Persian Gulf region began with the discovery of oil in Bahrain in 1932, though production did not get underway in Bahrain, Kuwait, and Qatar until after World War II. In 1958 oil was found in Abu Dhabi and in 1973 in Sharja. The vast increase in oil revenues after 1973 has had the same effects in the Gulf as it has had in Saudi Arabia. Oil changed the distribution of power in Gulf societies. It allowed for the formation of large bureaucratic states and made the rulers independent of the merchant elites with whom they had collaborated. Rulers bought off merchant claims to political power; they assured them their money, but cultivated their own families as allies and distributed patronage benefits to the populace to wean them from client ties to the merchant elites. Shaykhs became chiefs of departments and sons of merchants the next rank in the new bureaus. The Gulf has become a highly urbanized area; the majority of the population lives in cities – including a large number of Palestinians, Jordanians, Egyptians, Yemenis, and Pakistanis, who account for as much as half, and in some places even three-quarters, of the population. The Gulf states remain small tribal principalities in which the superstructure of modern industry is carried by foreign laborers and administrators.

In each of the Gulf states the conditions of development are somewhat different. Kuwait is ruled by the al-Sabah family as a tribal state. Kinship and religious culture remain the bases of legitimacy. The secular and national aspects of Arabism are strongly present but Islam remains the basis of law and there is no pressure for secularization. A parliamentary and constitutional regime was introduced between 1962 and 1967, but was only fitfully implemented. Parliament was dissolved in 1976–81 and 1986–92. In 1992 parliament was reconvened, but the electorate was restricted to families resident from 1920 to 1959, qualifying only 80,000 voters out of a potential 600,000 Kuwaiti men. When in session the National Assembly, which includes bedouin chiefs, Islamists, progressives and Shi'a, is used by the al-Sababs

to balance the power of merchant elements. Parliament tries to enlarge scope for debate. In November 2000 it rejected a government proposal to grant women full political rights. Sunnis and tribal leaders opposed the government initiative, while Shi'a, government officials, and liberals favored it. The al-Sababs alternate periods of open discussion and assembly with police crackdowns. While journalists and academics are largely free, broadcasting, newspapers, and NGOs require government licenses. Union activity and organizing of any sort is closely controlled.

Petroleum and petrochemicals provide 90 percent of Kuwait's government revenues and exports, and 50 percent of its GDP. Foreign workers are estimated to constitute 70–85 percent of the workforce. Per capita income has dropped steadily since the 1970s due to oil-price declines and population growth, but the great wealth of the country – in 1998 the per capita income was equivalent to over \$22,000 per year – has been used to establish an extensive welfare system. The state subsidizes utilities, health care, housing, telecommunications, and education, and guarantees government employment. Islamic banking – characterized by leasing, installment sales, deferred payment sales, and equity investments – is strong in Kuwait and Bahrain. Kuwait suffered extensive damage to its oilfields in the Gulf War of 1991, but it has recuperated rapidly.

Bahrain is also a traditional chieftainship, ruled since 1782 by the al-Khalifa family. Here the ruling family represents commercial and pearl-fishing interests but not pastoral peoples. The political elite of Bahrain includes not only the ruling family but also merchants and religious leaders. Thus when Bahrain became independent in 1971 it had a historical basis for a fairly sophisticated political system. A constitutional assembly was convened in 1973, granted by the al-Khalifa family to its subjects in accord with the Muslim principle of consultation. The assembly, however, was suspended in 1975 when it threatened the dominance of the ruling Amir. The distinctive feature of Bahrain's political life is its numerous political clubs and professional societies which meet to discuss current issues. Also, owing to the early discovery of oil, Bahrain has a fairly strong union movement. As in Kuwait, the position of the ruling family is precariously balanced against the interests of a sophisticated and varied population.

Qatar has a similar political history. In pre-oil days, the ruling Shaykh depended on revenues from the merchants, but the discovery of oil enabled him to dispense with their support. Merchants were bought off by assurances of wealth, though they were not as powerful or as successful as those in Kuwait. Qatari workers, however, came from nomadic, slave, and pearl-diving backgrounds, and were factious and prone to strikes. A Qatari national consciousness has emerged, partly fostered by government patronage for historical studies and archeology. The Amir, Hamad b. Khalifa al-Thani, however, has not been able to control the bureaucracy; family members in office have created their own partially independent fiefdoms within the government apparatus. Amir Hamad, however, has become famous for his sponsorship of al-Jazira, the independent Arab television channel.

The United Arab Emirates was formed from the small Trucial states. Abu Dhabi is the principal state in the federation, along with Dubai, Sharja, Ajman, Umm al-Qaywayn, Fujayra, and Ras al-Khayma. These states were governed by local tribal chiefs who ruled a population divided between seafaring coastal residents and inland nomadic peoples. Upon the British withdrawal in 1971, Abu Dhabi and Dubai formed a federation with the smaller states. State authority rested on the military and control of oil revenues and patronage. The United Arab Emirates has built up an administrative apparatus for finance, justice, police, and public services. There is a federal council, cabinet, and defense forces. As in the rest of the Arabian region, declining oil prices since 1980 have led to a drop in the standard of living.

Throughout the Gulf region the process of modernization remains in the hands of traditional monarchs and tribal chieftains. Nationalism has had relatively little impact in this area, and there are only sporadic pressures for inclusion of larger elements of the population in the political process. In Kuwait and Bahrain the range of political consultation has been broadened. Arabism as well as Islamic identities are stressed as the basis of social cohesion and political legitimacy. Considerable technical and economic change, a high degree of urbanization, and large numbers of foreign workers have thus far been absorbed without affecting the basic political and cultural quality of the Gulf regimes. Just as the Sa'udi regime has maintained its traditional position in the face of extensive changes, the Gulf states also show a surprising continuity of political leadership and Islamic loyalty. In these Arab countries, whose institutional heritage is tribal rather than Ottoman, secular national elites and ideologies have barely taken hold.

ARAB STATES, NATIONALISM, AND ISLAM

In the Arab countries the relationships among state organizations, Arabism, and Islam are elusive. In the Arab fertile crescent the quest for national identity and the struggle for political power has for over a century been conducted in terms of Arab nationalism. Arab nationalism was born before World War I in the literary revival of the Arabic language, the revival of Arab identification with the glories of the Islamic past, and the anti-Turkish political ambitions of Arab intellectuals. Arabism rather than Islam became the dominant discourse, displacing the traditional vocabularies of political affiliation and political action.

In the colonial period Arab nationalism became the shared ideology of both the political elites and the opposition intelligentsia. The coalescence of ideologies was based on the shared desire for independence, the need to integrate non-Muslim minorities into the political system, and the awareness of the need for a modern national form of political identity corresponding to the actual state structures. After World War II, Arab identity became the basis of political goals such as anti-imperialism, struggle against Israel, and the formation of political regimes. From the 1950s to the 1970s the two crucial themes in Arab nationalist thinking were the

struggle for unity and socio-economic development. At this stage some form of socialism generally became a part of Arab nationalist ideologies.

While important in the colonial era, Islamic modernism and reformism were subsidiary currents. In Syria, the Salafi movement was interpreted in a conservative sense by Rashid Rida' (1865–1935), the foremost of Muhammad 'Abduh's disciples. Rida', like 'Abduh, held that the Quran and the teachings of Muhammad were the sole bases of Islam, but rather than stress the implications of this view for modernizing reforms, he emphasized opposition to Shi'ism and to Sufi shrines. In Rida's view the crucial goal of an Islamic restoration was a polity, headed by a Caliph, advised by the 'ulama', which would revise the law of Islam in accordance with contemporary needs. Rida' stressed the importance of jihad – moral striving for purity and self-perfection – as the basis of loyalty and sacrifice for the common good. Other disciples of 'Abduh stressed the modernist implications of his teachings. They emphasized the importance of science and the legitimacy of social change. For the modernist writers, Islam was accepted as a true religion, but not as a touchstone for the development of a scientific civilization.

The trend toward secularism and nationalism goes back to the weaknesses of the 'ulama' in the nineteenth century. In the Arab world, as in Egypt and Turkey, 'ulama' resistance to secular trends generally came from lower-ranking religious functionaries such as prayer leaders, preachers in the smaller mosques, court clerks, notaries, Quran-school teachers, and above all students in the religious colleges. In rural areas, leadership sometimes came from Sufi shaykhs or independent preachers. This opposition proved ineffective. In general secular legal and judicial institutions have replaced Muslim law. New penal and civil codes were introduced, and a dual court system of state and Islamic courts was established in Syria and Iraq. Even when Shari'a principles continued to be accepted, they were profoundly modified by new legal procedures. Eclectic combinations of Shari'a law codes with Western criteria for evidence, cross-examination, and appellate jurisdiction changed the actual administration of Shari'a law. The effect of legal reform was to accept the modernist view that the law is not eternally fixed and that it is subject to reformulation in terms of contemporary circumstances and state interests. The dilution of Muslim legal principles and the substitution of new law codes and court systems was perhaps the single most important index of the disestablishment of Islam in the public life of Arab countries.

Despite the disestablishment of religion and the dominance of Arab nationalist sentiment, Islam continued to play a substantial role. Arab national consciousness was still bound up with Islam. Arab nationalist thinkers of the 1920s and 1930s stressed the virtual identity of Arabism and Islam. The vocabulary of Arab nationalism was infused with words such as umma (community of Muslims) and milla (religious community), which have strong religious overtones but were used to express national solidarity. Even Christian writers considered Arabism and Islam to be two expressions of the same ideal. They stressed the glory of Muhammad as a heroic

leader and praised his contribution to Arab nationality, but they maintained that national ties should transcend religious ties and advocated the formation of secular states. The common people followed the nationalist thinkers in identifying the Arab nation with Islam. For them, to be an Arab was still primarily to be a Muslim. The rhetoric may have been nationalistic, but the emotional identifications were Islamic.

Islam continued to be important in ostensibly secular Arab movements. It was crucial in the mobilization of Palestinians in the 1920s and 1930s to resist British rule and Zionism; the Muslim attachment to Jerusalem remains a source of worldwide support for the Palestinian movement. Sa'udi support for the Palestinian cause does not distinguish Arab and Muslim interests. In the postwar era Arab constitutions often declared Islam the official religion of the state or required the head of state to be a Muslim.

At the end of World War II, pan-Arabism became the dominant political and cultural trend. The driving ambition in the region was to achieve the long-awaited unity of Arab peoples, dedicated to eliminating Israel and avenging the defeat of 1948. In the 1950s pan-Arabism became the banner of opposition to the elites of Syria, Iraq, and Jordan. Nasser of Egypt, the Ba'th Parties in Syria and Iraq, and Palestinian factions all proclaimed themselves custodians of the Arab dream, and fought against each other as much as they united and cooperated.

The 1967 war with Israel shattered this conflicted dream and opened a new cultural and political phase. Egypt gave up the struggle on behalf of the Palestinians. Egyptian leadership in the Arab world faded, and the initiative passed to Iraq, Iran, and the oil-producing Arabian states. The Palestinians organized to defend their own cause. Syria, though maintaining its verbal profile as a leader of the anti-Israel movement, maneuvered carefully to avoid direct conflict with Israel. Lebanon collapsed into civil war over the question of whether the Palestinians could use Lebanon as a base for their operations. Pan-Arabism receded and a new mood of national state self-assertion took hold. The more conservative Arabian peninsula and Gulf states became ever more important in Arab affairs as investors and patrons of the less wealthy Arab states. Arabism came to be identified with oil wealth. The Gulf War completed the disintegration of the pan-Arab dream. While Saddam Husayn hoped to make himself the hegemon of the fertile crescent and a dominant voice in Arab affairs, Egypt, Syria, Sa'udi Arabia, and the Gulf states allied with the United States and the United Nations to defeat him and force his evacuation from Kuwait.

As pan-Arabism declined, it became evident that despite their nationalist, socialist, and populist rhetoric, most of the fertile crescent and Arabian states are authoritarian family or military regimes. Countries such as Iraq and Syria are ruled through military, security, and party structures that are anchored in some small minority – families, clans, tribes, or sects. Others such as Egypt and the Palestinian Authority depend on military and security forces, and a dominant political party, and are not based on political coalitions within their societies. Rather, they rule by appeasing rural and traditional elites, supporting crony capitalists, and creating

extensive patronage networks. In the cases of Egypt and Jordan military rule is offset by plebiscitary popular support and quasi-parliamentary institutions, which are closely controlled by the governments.

The economies of these states reinforce their political institutions. In these countries the public sector dominates. Most of these states live on rents, oil, or strategic remittances, and therefore neither tax their citizens nor represent them. Rentier states commonly use their resources to create alliances of business and administrative and even tribal elites, and to provide welfare subsidies for the mass of their populations that win acquiescence to undemocratic regimes. Bank lending is the predominant source of capital, and banks are often government owned or regulated. In most of these states potential capitalists are tied to the public sector or to political networks. Property is not secure from patrimonial regimes, and both foreign and domestic investment are hampered. Military regimes resist the free flow of information and have repressed the middle classes, politicians, and intellectuals who might have created an independent civil society. On the United Nations Human Development Index, which includes education, literacy, life expectancy, and per capita income, the fertile crescent Arab countries fall below Latin America and Asia.

In the Arabian peninsula the dominant elements are extended families: the Sa'udis; al-Sabahs in Kuwait; and al-Khalifas in Bahrain and Qatar. These families have been in power, with some interruptions, since the middle of the eighteenth century, and are among the oldest governments in the world. These families rule with the support of tribal coalitions and merchant elites over societies in which a great proportion of the population are non-citizen foreign workers. For example, 80 percent of the population of the United Arab Emirates, 66 percent in Qatar, 50 percent in Kuwait, 33 percent in Bahrain and 20 percent of the Sa'udi population are guest workers, ranging from military, medical, engineering and administrative specialists to teachers, bureaucrats, and skilled workers, as well as masses of manual laborers. By their financial contributions to Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and the Palestinians they manipulate Arab world political currents to maintain their security. Culturally conservative, they have avoided the challenges of Arab nationalism and pan-Arabism; the Sa'udis in particular are sponsors of Islamic movements worldwide.

While the regimes are well consolidated, most of the Gulf and fertile crescent Arab states have weak civil societies. A critical problem everywhere is the fit between national identities and national states. Arab identity is transnational and not localized in any particular state, and thus conflicts with some two dozen state identities. Moreover, the so-called Arab states have profound internal divisions. Iraq has a large Kurdish minority, and the Arab population is divided among Sunni and Shi'i Muslims – a distinction at least as important as Iraqi national or pan-Arab identity. Syria is largely Arab, but this belies the sectarian and religious distinctions among Sunnis, Isma'ilis, 'Alawis, Christians, and Druzes. Lebanon may be Arabic speaking but its fifteen-year civil war makes clear how deep are the sectarian

divides among five Muslim and seven Christian sub-communities. The Gulf states are defined as Arab, but the non-citizen population is often the majority.

Moreover, there is a deep ambiguity in the meaning of ethnic and national identity. National or ethnic identity is blended with religious identity. Turks, Iranians, Kurds, Egyptians, Algerians, Palestinians, and others believe themselves to belong to the same nation because what they have in common is Islam. While Islam is universalistic and the shared religion of peoples of many different ethnicities, it is most intensely expressed in its local and national versions.

The implied Muslim identity of Arab world states also makes for grave complications in the position of the minorities. Jews and Christians in post-independence Iraq; Greeks, Armenians, and Kurds in Turkey; Copts in Egypt; Baha'is and Jews in post-revolutionary Iran; and Christians and animists in the Sudan have all suffered religious and political persecution.

The failure of these regimes to create a coherent national identity and to win legitimacy helps account for the most important trend of the post-1967 era – the movement away from secular nationalism, liberalism, and socialism toward Islam. The 1967 war with Israel and the oil embargo of the 1970s were important turning points. The defeat of Egypt and the fertile crescent Arab states exposed not only their military limits, but highlighted the corruption of the regimes, their dependence on the United States, their failure to allow political participation or to achieve economic development, and their lack of cultural authenticity. The dramatic impact of the oil embargo turned attention to Sa'udi Arabia and the conservative Arab states. These events discredited the secular, liberal, and socialist claims of the dominant elites, and started a revival of interest in the historical culture of the region – Islam. In all sectors of society, but especially among students and the lower middle classes, a new interest in the teachings and practice of Islam became evident. Young women began to wear the *hijab*, or covering garments. Books on Islam, preaching, discussion groups, and prayer became more a part of everyday culture.

Most striking was the emergence of an active political opposition based on Islamic claims. The Society of Muslim Brothers in Egypt and Jordan, the *jam'at* in Egypt, HAMAS among the Palestinians, and other small militant sects opposed the rule of the entrenched elites. These were communalist movements which espoused traditional moral and social values, including the limitation of women to household and family activities, and which organized worship, instruction in schools, cooperatives, clinics and workshops, and neighborhood and social welfare services. They called for economic fairness and the reinforcement of the family, and ultimately demanded the formation of Islamic states. Their goal was to inculcate Muslim virtues in individuals and justice in society. These movements were not anti-modern so much as a populist alternative to state capitalist societies.

In general the supporters of these movements were people excluded from social and political power: bazaaris – merchants, shopkeepers, peddlers, artisans working in the old-fashioned economy of the bazaars, without government connections

or access to international trade; maktabis – clerks, teachers, and minor bureaucrats without the educational opportunities to be integrated into the modernized sector of the economy; students; deracinated migrants from villages to shanty-towns in the big cities. Their protest was not only political, it also stemmed from moral confusion in face of the temptations of sexual liberty and consumerism offered by contemporary societies, and appealed to myriads of people fearful of the insubordination of women and children and the breakdown of families.

These movements pursued their goals on various levels attuned to the context and opportunities and problems of each different national society. In Iran they led to a revolutionary seizure of power. In Turkey they created a competitive political party advocating alternative policies; in Jordan, a parliamentary party; in Egypt a plethora of small groups pursued objectives ranging from moral education to terrorism. In Syria and Iraq political defiance led to crushing defeat. HAMAS functions as a competing social movement, a political opposition to the Arafat regime and a guerrilla operation against Israel. In Lebanon active Shi'i movements, Amal, and Hizballah have become competitors for political power.

So far the radical Islamic movements have failed to come to power in the fertile crescent countries. The national state is too solidly legitimized in the eyes of its populations, and military and other elites too well consolidated to be easily dislodged. They face violent suppression by the regimes of Iraq and Syria, cooptation and manipulation in Jordan and by the Palestinian authorities. Not only do the same regimes exist in Syria, Iraq, Jordan, and the Arabian states, but as recently as 1999 and 2000 the very same people who came to power in the 1960s – Hafiz al-Asad, King Husayn, Saddam Husayn, and Yassir Arafat – still ruled. These movements also failed to come to power for reasons inherent in their character and operations. First, the Islamists are uncertain and divided about their proper goals. Is their objective to create a truly Islamic society within existing states, or is it to overthrow existing states to pave the way for a truly Islamic society? Should they work within or against the established institutions? In the struggle for power they are uncertain; lacking charismatic leadership, and are often divided into small and sectarian factions. Their protest has not undermined the established regimes. Despite profound conflicts and upheavals, the fertile crescent and Gulf states show an astonishing political stability.