

# Guide to Islamist Movements

Edited by Barry Rubin



# **Guide to Islamist Movements**

**Volume 1**

**Edited by Barry Rubin**

*M.E. Sharpe*  
Armonk, New York  
London, England

Copyright © 2010 by M.E. Sharpe, Inc.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form  
without written permission from the publisher, M.E. Sharpe, Inc.,  
80 Business Park Drive, Armonk, New York 10504.

Cover photos (left to right) provided by Getty and the following:  
Bay Ismoyo/Stringer/AFP; Robert Nickelsberg; Salah Omar/Stringer/AFP.

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Guide to Islamist movements / Barry Rubin, editor.

2 v. p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-7656-1747-7 (hardcover : alk. paper)

1. Islam—Handbooks, manuals, etc. 2. Islamic fundamentalism—Handbooks, manuals, etc.  
3. Political parties—Islamic countries—Handbooks, manuals, etc. 4. Islamic countries—  
Handbooks, manuals, etc. I. Rubin, Barry M.

BP40.G85 2010

322'.1091767—dc22

2009010524

Printed in the United States of America

The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of  
American National Standard for Information Sciences  
Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials,  
ANSI Z 39.48-1984.



MV (c) 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

# Contents

## VOLUME 1

List of Maps .....ix

Preface .....xi

An Introduction to Assessing  
Contemporary Islamism  
Barry Rubin .....xiii

Global Jihad  
Reuven Paz .....xxxiii

## SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Africa  
David McCormack .....5

Somalia  
Moshe Terdman .....21

Sudan  
Harvey Glickman and Emma Rodman .....37

## ASIA

Bangladesh  
Maneeza Hossain .....57

China  
Dru C. Gladney .....67

Malaysia  
Joseph Chinyong Liow .....89

Thailand  
Tiffany Kay Hacker and  
Linda Michaud-Emin .....101

## AUSTRALIA AND THE PACIFIC

Australia  
Leanne Piggott .....111

Indonesia  
Greg Barton .....133

The Philippines  
S.P. Harish and Joseph Chinyong Liow .....149

## CENTRAL ASIA

Central Asia  
Zeyno Baran .....161

Afghanistan  
Antonio Giustozzi .....181

**The Caucasus**

Zeyno Baran and Svante E. Cornell ..... 197

**NORTH AFRICA AND  
THE MIDDLE EAST****Algeria**

Luis Martinez ..... 211

**Egypt**

Israel Elad Altman ..... 229

**Iran**

Abbas William (Bill) Samii ..... 251

**Iraq**

Ibrahim Al-Marashi ..... 263

**Israel**

Mordechai Kedar ..... 283

**Jordan**

Curtis R. Ryan ..... 293

**Kuwait, Qatar, the UAE, Bahrain,  
and Oman**

Sean Foley ..... 305

**VOLUME 2****Lebanon**

Robert G. Rabil ..... 319

**Morocco**

Aziz Enhaili ..... 335

**Pakistan**

Ajai Sahni ..... 347

**Palestinians**

Hillel Frisch ..... 361

**Saudi Arabia**

Hassan Mneimneh ..... 371

**Syria**

Barry Rubin ..... 385

**Tunisia**

Aziz Enhaili ..... 391

**Turkey**

Ali Çarkoğlu and Nazlı Çağın Bilgili ..... 407

**Yemen**

Laurent Bonnefoy ..... 417

**EUROPE****Belgium**

Brigitte Maréchal ..... 433

**France**

Farhad Khosrokhavar ..... 445

**Germany**

Guido Steinberg ..... 459

**Italy**

Kathryn Haahr-Escolano ..... 469

**Netherlands**Edwin Bakker and  
Michael Andrew Berger ..... 479**The Russian Federation**

Gordon M. Hahn ..... 493

**Scandinavia**

Magnus Norell and Karl Sörenson ..... 519

**Spain**Juan José Escobar Stemmann  
(Hansi Escobar) ..... 533

- . *Islam, Charity, and Activism: Middle-Class Networks and Social Welfare in Egypt, Jordan, and Yemen*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003.
- Dalil al-hayat al-hizbiyya fi al-Urdun: Hizb Jabha al-Amal al-Islami (Guide to Party Life in Jordan: The Islamic Action Front Party). Amman: al-Urdun al-Jadid Research Center, 1993.
- International Crisis Group. "Jordan's 9/11: Dealing with Jihadist Islamism." *Middle East Report* no. 47 (November 2005).
- Robinson, Glenn. "Defensive Democratization in Jordan." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 30:3 (1998): 387-410.
- Ryan, Curtis R. "Elections and Parliamentary Democratization in Jordan." *Democratization* 5:4 (1998): 194-214.
- . "Jordan: Islamic Action Front Presses for Role in Governing." *Arab Reform Bulletin*, February 2006.
- . *Jordan in Transition: From Hussein to Abdullah*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Press, 2002.
- . "Peace, Bread, and Riots: Jordan and the International Monetary Fund." *Middle East Policy* 6:2 (Fall 1998): 54-66.
- Ryan, Curtis R., and Jillian Schwedler. "Return to Democratization or New Hybrid Regime? The 2003 Elections in Jordan." *Middle East Policy* 11:2 (2004): 138-51.
- Scham, Paul L., and Russell E. Lucas. "'Normalization' and 'Anti-Normalization' in Jordan: The Public Debate." *Israel Affairs* 9:3 (2003): 141-64.
- Schwedler, Jillian. *Faith in Moderation: Islamist Parties in Jordan and Yemen*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Taraki, Lisa. "Islam Is the Solution: Jordanian Islamists and the Dilemma of the Modern Woman." *British Journal of Sociology* 46:4 (1995): 643-61.
- Wiktorowicz, Quintan. "Islamists, the State, and Cooperation in Jordan." *Arab Studies Quarterly* 21:4 (1999): 4-12.
- . *The Management of Islamic Activism: Salafis, the Muslim Brotherhood, and State Power in Jordan*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000.
- . "The Salafi Movement in Jordan." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 32:2 (2000): 219-26.
- Williams, Daniel. "Political Islam's Opportunity in Jordan." *Washington Post*, April 13, 2006.

## Kuwait, Qatar, the UAE, Bahrain, and Oman

Sean Foley

Sunni Muslims in the Persian Gulf states (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, or UAE) have greatly facilitated the expansion of Islamism beyond the Persian Gulf in two ways. First, they have provided significant financial support to Islamist groups and nongovernmental organizations promoting Islamist values and public objectives. Second, Gulf states have granted asylum to Islamists and allegedly permitted Islamists—including those accused of committing terrorist attacks—to transit their territories and use their financial institutions.

For example, the Muslim Brotherhood's leading ideologist, Yusuf al-Qaradawi, and other leading Islamist figures have lived and taught in this region for years. Gulf nationals have played important roles in Islamist causes: the wars in Afghanistan and Chechnya, the insurgency in Iraq, and al-Qa'ida terrorist attacks. Two of the September 11 hijackers were UAE nationals, and even members of the Bahraini royal family have been detained at the U.S. naval base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, for allegedly fighting alongside Taliban fighters in Afghanistan. There have also been a few terrorist attacks in Qatar and the UAE. Islamist conspiracies have been

uncovered in Oman, the UAE, Qatar, and Bahrain.

In addition, Islamists participate in the cultural life of the Gulf states and regularly run candidates in elections. Qaradawi is a household name in the Gulf and the wider Arab world because of his weekly phone-in program, *Shar'ia wal-Hayyat* (Islamic Law and Life), on the Qatar-based al-Jazeera satellite network.

While the five smaller Gulf states—Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, and the UAE—share conservative Sunni Muslim and tribal cultural norms, have large expatriate populations, and benefit from hydrocarbon exports, they also host a variety of peoples, cultural traditions, and socioeconomic structures. Four factors in particular have shaped the emergence of Islamists in these states: the diversity of the Muslim population, the influence of Wahhabi-Hanbali ideas and those of the Saudis in general, consultative political institutions, and the relative historical power of governments vis-à-vis their peoples.

Often, Islamist groups have benefited from the implicit support of government officials, who wished to balance out the influence of merchants, leftists, Shi'a, secularists, Nasserists, and Arab nationalist groups. The

presence of these groups is testimony to the fact that these states were not immune to the many shockwaves emanating from events elsewhere in the region. Finally, it is important to remember that Gulf Islamists are part of a tradition of Islamic-inspired political activism in the area that goes back decades and is linked to the Muslim Brotherhood, an organization that became active in Kuwait and in other Gulf states in the 1950s.

## Kuwait

Situated at the intersection of Iraq, Iran, and Saudi Arabia, Kuwait has long served as a crossroads of various peoples and traditions. The peoples living in what is today Kuwait were among the earliest converts to Islam in the seventh century, and it is estimated that 85 percent of the population today is Muslim. Seventy percent of Kuwaiti Muslims are Sunni and adhere to the Maliki school of Sunni Islamic jurisprudence; the rest are Shi'a Muslims. The modern state of Kuwait traces its origins to the eighteenth century and was nominally tied to the Ottoman Empire until the late nineteenth century. From that time until independence in 1961, Kuwait was a protectorate of Great Britain.

A key turning point in Kuwaiti history occurred in 1938, when petroleum was discovered there. Not only did proceeds from the export of oil fabulously enrich a previously destitute society, but they also empowered Kuwait's monarchy, historically an extremely weak political institution. For decades, Kuwaiti rulers had relied on the financial and political support of Kuwaiti merchants to govern and maintain power. With the advent of massive proceeds from oil, the rulers of Kuwait freed themselves of their financial and political dependence on Kuwait's merchants.

At the same time, Kuwait's rulers sought to co-opt the merchants and win supporters—Bedouins, Shi'a, poor Kuwaitis, and progressives—through government largesse and by forging alliances in Kuwait's National Assembly. These measures were also meant to contain Arab nationalism, popular among the large expatriate population, from spreading to Kuwaitis. While the Kuwaiti government succeeded in this effort, it discovered that its new supporters, once politicized, were difficult to control. By 1976 there was vocal opposition in the parliament that challenged government positions on a wide variety of sensitive domestic and foreign policy issues. Particularly unnerving was the fact that the assembly was tied to opposition groups outside of Kuwait, including leftist groups participating in Lebanon's civil war. Given Kuwait's large expatriate Palestinian population, government leaders feared that an alliance between leftist Palestinians and Kuwait's opposition might threaten the monarchy's hold on power. In response, the Kuwaiti government officially dissolved the parliament in 1976 and sought to assist groups that did not oppose the decision.

One segment of Kuwaiti society that benefited greatly from the government's new policy constituted the then passive and largely apolitical Islamic societies of Kuwait. Since the emergence of Arab nationalism and Nasserism in the 1950s, Islamic institutions had been marginalized politically and socially. Few Kuwaiti women wore the *hijab* (headscarf) in the 1970s, restrictions on the mixing of sexes were rarely enforced, and limitations on women's employment and other public activities were receding. Female students studied alongside their male colleagues at Kuwait University. However, as Shafeeq Ghabra writes, after the government appointed the head of the Islam or Social Reform Society (al-Islam al-Ijtama'i),

Yusuf al-Hajj, to be minister of pious endowments, Islamist groups in Kuwait worked to Islamicize their society and gain power.

As Islamists embarked on their political program, they benefited from the surge in religious fervor in Kuwait and throughout the Arab world following Israel's victory over secular Arab regimes in the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. They also benefited from the events of the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran, where the shah's secular government could not check a mass popular movement headed by a Muslim cleric, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. In the eyes of Kuwait's Islamists, the Iranian Revolution revealed Islam's relevance to the modern world and further reinforced Arab doubts about the promise of secular ideologies. Equally important, Islamists received informal support from the Kuwaiti government, which hoped to capitalize on Kuwaitis' renewed interest in Islam.

Within this new milieu, Islamists swept elections to lead teacher, student, and other nongovernmental organizations in Kuwait in the late 1970s. They infiltrated various levels of the government bureaucracy, especially the Ministry of Education. Islamists also forged close ties with the Bedouins. Bedouin demands for social justice and equality, along with their conservative values, dovetailed well with Islamist goals. Furthermore, several leading Islamists have emerged from Kuwait's Bedouin community. Islamists also created extensive social-economic networks that reached into every neighborhood and mosque. Those networks included the second-largest bank in the country, Bayt al-Tamwil, and a host of other large businesses. By 1980 Islamists were the only mass-based political force in the country, and they defeated secular candidates in the 1981 parliamentary elections, the first that had been held since 1976. They

have polled well in subsequent elections, including the parliamentary elections in July 2006, the first in which Kuwaiti women participated.

At the same time, it is important to bear in mind that the Islamist movement has been far from uniform or limited to Sunni Muslims. Most Sunni Islamists are part of the Muslim Brotherhood, a mainstream organization tied to the Social Reform Society. Kuwaiti Salafists, who wish Muslims to return to the values of the first generation of Muslims, associated instead with the Heritage Group, a far more marginal organization. The ideas of its members in many ways correspond to Hanbali-Wahhabism, the dominant school of Islamic theology in Saudi Arabia. Shi'a Islamists also have their own organization, the Cultural Society. It fights to promote the interests of Kuwait's Shi'a population and seeks to emulate the example of the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran.

Using their base in the parliament and the government bureaucracy, Kuwait's Islamists sought to Islamicize Kuwaiti society gradually. Starting in 1981, school curricula, television programs, and poetry increasingly promoted a narrow interpretation of Islam and a worldview consistent with Islamist ideals. Kuwaiti government officials either censored or blocked the distribution of works critical of the Islamist interpretation of Islam. Islamists also successfully segregated Kuwait University in 1996 and intimidated professors there who did not share their views. In addition, they convinced Kuwaitis to be more religiously observant and to support generously the Islamic resistance to the Soviet occupation in Afghanistan and other Muslim causes worldwide. Finally, Islamists framed Iraq's invasion and occupation of Kuwait in 1990 to fit their agenda. They contended that the

events signaled God's displeasure with the Kuwaitis' lavish lifestyle. Only by returning to Islam, they argued, could Kuwaitis guard against further divine retribution.

Islamists, however, discovered over time that their influence had significant limits, especially when secular and liberal deputies of the parliament or the government opposed Islamist proposals. While Islamists and liberal and secular groups often found common ground to oppose repeated government efforts to check parliamentary power, the two groups parted ways on other social and political issues. The Kuwaiti government, seeking to divide the opposition, forged an alliance with secularists at some times and at other times reaffirmed the old alliances with Islamists. This process was clearly taking place in 1986 when Islamists sought to establish a public authority to enforce Islamic law; in the 1990s, when several university professors were accused of blasphemy; and in the next decade, when Islamists opposed proposals to permit Kuwaiti women to vote. In all three cases, the government indirectly hindered—or simply ignored—the views of Islamists, even dissolving a cabinet rather than face the prying questions of Islamist members of parliament.

That said, Islamists remain a powerful political force in Kuwait and have proven able to adapt to changing circumstances. While Islamists actively opposed extending the franchise to women, Islamist candidates courted female voters during the July 2006 Kuwaiti elections. They provided materials geared especially toward women, including cassette tapes of candidates' speeches for women unwilling to travel to public rallies or other campaign events. These materials and strategies were critical, given that more than 50 percent of eligible voters were women. The fact that Islamists polled well in the 2006 elections and won the firm sup-

port of many Kuwaiti women bodes well for their continued political success in future years.

### **Qatar, Exiles, and Satellite Television**

In contrast, Islamists in Qatar have not had the broad political success or wide influence that their colleagues have had in Kuwait. The lack of success reflects the differing religious traditions, political structures, and demographics of the two states. Though both states fell under the influence of the Ottoman Empire and later Great Britain, Kuwait and Qatar adhere to different traditions of Islamic jurisprudence (Maliki and Hanbali-Wahhabism, respectively). Their demographics are also different. There is a sizable Shi'a population in Kuwait, but the population of Qatar is overwhelmingly Sunni Muslim (93 percent), with Christians (5 percent) composing the next largest religious community. The population is highly conservative—much more so than their fellow Sunni Arabs in Bahrain, the UAE, or Kuwait. In addition, Qatar had no institution of representative government similar to that of Kuwait's parliament until the late 1990s. Since the nineteenth century, the al-Thani family has ruled Qatar and benefited from the steadfast support of Saudi Arabia, the only country in the world other than Qatar where Hanbali-Wahhabism is the official state religion. The al-Thanis' position was further strengthened after the discovery of large oil deposits in Qatar in the 1940s, since proceeds from oil sales went directly to the government, as they still do.

While there have been few Qatari Islamists akin to those in Kuwait, there are scores of individuals in Qatar's bureaucracy and royal family sympathetic to the goals and ideas of Islamists. Among the most promi-

nent Islamist supporters are the interior minister, Shaykh Abdallah bin Khalifa al-Thani, as well as Shaykh Fahd bin Hamad al-Thani, the second-eldest son of the Qatari emir. Shaykh Fahd surrounds himself with a number of former mujahidin (resistance fighters) from Afghanistan, while Shaykh Abdallah has permitted expatriate Islamists to remain in Qatar for extended periods. Shaykh Abdallah has also appointed a number of these Islamists to leading positions in Qatar.

Among those who found refuge in Qatar is Shaykh Abdallah bin Zayd al-Mahmud, a Hanbali-Wahhabi scholar from central Saudi Arabia. He and several other radical Muslim clerics were exiled from Saudi Arabia after the seizure of Mecca's Grand Mosque in 1979. Shaykh Abdallah now serves as Qatar's most senior Muslim scholar. The Chechen leader Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev, who was killed in Doha in 2004, also found refuge for several years in Qatar. Leading al-Qa'ida figures Khalid Shaykh Muhammad and Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi are believed to have traveled through Qatar in the 1990s. Qatar's role in providing a safe haven for Islamist groups may explain why there have been only two reported incidents of anti-Western terrorism on Qatari soil since 2000.

In November 2001 two U.S. contractors were shot at the al-Udeid airbase, and in March 2005 a longtime expatriate Egyptian blew himself up outside of a theater in Doha. While the latter attack was the first suicide bombing in Qatar, it is worth noting there were few casualties and that no Qatari group accepted responsibility for the blast. The little-known Jund al-Sham (the Organization of Soldiers of the Levant) subsequently claimed to have carried out the attack. Qatari officials, however, believe that al-Qa'ida may have been involved.

The morality of suicide bombing is a key issue for the most important expatriate Islamist scholar in Qatar, Shaykh Yusuf al-Qaradawi. His weekly call-in program on the Qatar-based al-Jazeera satellite network has made the Egyptian-born Sunni Muslim cleric well known throughout the Arab world. He carries strong scholarly and political credentials as an Islamist. He has authored several influential books on Islam as well as attended al-Azhar, the most important Sunni seminary in the world. During his youth, Qaradawi joined the Muslim Brotherhood and was imprisoned several times after writing *The Scholar and the Tyrant* and other works that promoted the Brotherhood's ideals. Today, video and cassette tapes of Qaradawi can be found in Muslim communities from Morocco to Indonesia. His fatwas (religious edicts) guide the lives of millions of Muslims around the globe, many of whom frequently visit his Web site, IslamOnline.com. In addition, Qaradawi is a noted poet.

Qaradawi's popularity reflects his ability to stake out an intermediate position within the broader debate among Muslims about their place in the modern world. While Qaradawi supports suicide bombings against Israel and U.S. forces in Iraq, he was one of the earliest senior Muslim figures to publicly condemn the September 11 terrorist attacks. He has also supported free elections, because he believes Islamists are likely to win them. According to Barbara Stowasser, Qaradawi is very conscious of women's education—his daughters hold doctorates in the natural sciences—and of Muslims who live in predominantly non-Muslim societies. In 2002 he issued a fatwa laying out guidelines for American Muslims participating in U.S. military operations in Afghanistan.

A great deal of criticism has been directed

at Qaradawi from secular and moderate voices for his statements on terrorism and other issues, such as offering legitimacy to extremist acts. Conservative scholars, by contrast, reject his interpretation of Islamic practices, labeling it as lax and too far removed from traditional Islam. Saudi scholars have been among his harshest critics and have offered rebuttals to his positions on issues as diverse as Islamic views of women's political rights, the lawfulness of music, and supporting the Shi'a Hizballah in Lebanon. Qaradawi's books have been banned in Saudi Arabia for years. Nonetheless, he is one of the leading Islamist figures in the Muslim world.

### The United Arab Emirates

The UAE-based Shaykh Ahmad al-Qubaysi has come to rival Qaradawi on Arabic satellite television. Qubaysi appears regularly on Dubai Satellite Television, one of al-Jazeera's chief competitors in the Arab world. Much like Qaradawi, Qubaysi is an expatriate—he is an Arab Sunni Iraqi. While well known for his passionate defense of the Sunni insurgency in Iraq, he is also known for his progressive interpretation of Islamic teachings, especially concerning family status and personal affairs. At times, his views straddle a middle ground and have drawn criticism from conservative and liberal voices in UAE society. A good example was the reaction to his role in drafting a new UAE personal status law in 2005. Conservatives charged that he sought to use the law to change traditional ways of interpreting Islam and encourage a new school of Islamic thought. By contrast, liberal groups faulted him for seeking to use the law to impose a universal norm of justice rather than defending the rights of individuals to define themselves socially.

The diverse responses to Qubaysi's pro-

posals reflect the fact that, while the UAE maintains a conservative Sunni social system, the federation's political structures and population are more diverse than those of Qatar. Most important, the UAE is a federation comprising seven emirates, each with its own royal family and government. During Great Britain's presence in the region from the 1820s until the 1970s, each emirate had a separate political relationship with the British government. While the UAE is rich in petroleum, only three emirates—Abu Dhabi, Dubai, and Sharjah—have significant petroleum reserves. Shi'a compose 16 percent of the UAE population, and Ibadism, a sect that dates back to the very early Islamic period and that predates the Sunni-Shi'a split, retains influence. What's more, the Sunni population is divided. The emirates of Abu Dhabi and Dubai adhere to the Maliki school of Sunni Islamic jurisprudence, while Fujairah adheres to the Shafi'i school of Islamic jurisprudence and the other emirates recognize the Hanbali school of Islamic jurisprudence. Hanbali Sunni Muslims in the UAE are generally less austere than their fellow Hanbalis in Saudi Arabia. The divisions between Maliki and Hanbali Emiratis more often than not reflected differences between two tribal confederations, the Hinawi and Ghfiri. In addition, the emirate of Dubai maintains a highly tolerant sociocultural climate that welcomes thousands of non-Muslim expatriate workers.

Despite the diversity and relatively tolerant milieu of the UAE, the federation has been far from immune to domestic and foreign Islamists. As early as the 1970s, a group of Emirati intellectuals formed the Jam'iyyat al-Islah (the Reform Association). The organization was an Islamic party in all but name, but it pretended to be apolitical. Though it represented no threat as yet to

the UAE government, government officials banned the organization soon after they began to fear it might eventually be a focal point for religious opposition to the government's policies. Far more successful have been Islamist groups that have targeted the country's large student population. In the mid-1980s, these groups took over the UAE National Student Union and its branch in the UAE University.

Islamists have also targeted institutions and businesses they believe are not sufficiently Islamic. A bomb allegedly planted by Emirati Islamists killed two people in 1981 at a Hyatt Regency Hotel. Reportedly, the Islamists placed the bomb because they were unhappy with the hotel's sale of liquor to locals dressed in traditional clothes, thereby violating a local "unwritten" rule. Subsequently, explosives were discovered in Dubai City Center, a popular upscale shopping center. In 2006 Islamists threatened in a series of Internet postings to attack the UAE if the federation continued to cooperate with the United States and other Western governments in the war on terrorism. Other postings threatened unspecified consequences if foreigners were not expelled in 10 days. The group claimed to have infiltrated the UAE's "security, censorship and monetary agencies, along with other agencies," as quoted by the Associated Press.

In general, the UAE government has been able to check these threats and the spread of Islamist ideas among UAE nationals through an intense and self-conscious assertion of Islamic values. The UAE's longtime ruler, Shaykh Zayid, displayed his piety openly and won a reputation for upholding Islamic values. He also surrounded himself with officials equally committed to government policies that uphold Islamic principles. These policies have included funding Islamic causes around the world and constructing

hundreds of mosques in a country the size of the U.S. state of Maine. Consequently, the federation has among the highest rates of mosques per capita in the world. The UAE has also hosted international conferences of Islamic scholars designed to counter the arguments of radical Islamic thinkers. Far less clear has been the effect of these policies on the UAE's large expatriate population, many of whom are Sunni Muslims from South Asia. From time to time there have been expatriate protests. While many of these protests involved economic issues, expatriate Muslims led anti-American demonstrations in Dubai during the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003.

Even more important have been the alleged long-term ties between the UAE and al-Qaida. These ties stretch back many years. The mastermind of the bombing of the USS *Cole* in Yemen, Abd al-Nashri, reportedly resided in the UAE and was arrested in Abu Dhabi in December 2002. Nashri headed al-Qa'ida's operations in the Gulf and was thought to have been preparing to unleash a series of devastating terrorist attacks in the UAE when he was arrested. Two of the September 11 hijackers were UAE nationals, and a number of the conspirators received funding for flight training, airplane tickets, and other logistics in that country. Muhammad Atta, the leading figure in the conspiracy, had \$100,000 placed in his bank account via moneychangers in the emirate of Sharjah. In addition, there have been repeated allegations of links between prominent Emiratis, the royal family of one of the UAE emirates, and Osama bin Ladin. Reportedly, the U.S. military chose to forgo an opportunity to assassinate bin Ladin in 1999 out of fear that it would also kill members of this UAE royal family who were present at the same location in Afghanistan at the time.

Although the UAE government has implemented a number of measures since 2001 to clamp down on Islamist terrorists and their financial transactions in the federation, it is still widely believed that Islamists continue to use the UAE as a logistical and financial hub. Dubai has received the most intense criticism for its seemingly laissez-faire attitude toward Islamic terrorists. In spring 2006 these allegations were sufficiently credible that the U.S. Congress overwhelmingly refused to provide a company owned by the government of Dubai permission to manage several large U.S. ports—despite the fact that Dubai serves as the largest port of call for the U.S. Navy in the world.

## Bahrain

Although Bahrain has few known contacts with Islamist terrorist organizations, it can nearly match Dubai's commercial and financial linkages to the United States. The island kingdom has maintained a long relationship with the U.S. Navy. Thousands of U.S. personnel reside in Bahrain, which houses the headquarters of the Fifth Fleet. At the same time, Bahrain's socioeconomic balances are drastically different from those of the other Gulf states. While there are Shafi'i and Maliki Sunni Arab populations, about 70 percent of Bahrainis are Shi'a, many of whom have ethnic and cultural ties to Iran. Since the 1780s the Khalifas and their descendants, Sunni Arabs from the Arabian Peninsula, have ruled Bahrain and maintained close ties to the rulers of Saudi Arabia.

From the 1860s until the early 1970s, Bahrain was a protectorate of Great Britain, which administered its foreign affairs. Companies chartered in the British Empire developed Bahrain's oil industry, and Bahrain was among the first in the

region to export petroleum in large quantities. Although Bahrain and the Khalifas benefited greatly from the proceeds of the early oil exports, the island is also the first Gulf state to face the possibility of running out of oil. To guarantee the ongoing stability of the Sunni royal family, Saudi Arabia and several other Sunni Gulf states have provided the Khalifas with financial and energy subsidies for many years. They have also allowed their Sunni Arab populations with tribal ties to Bahrain to adopt Bahraini nationality to alter the island's demographic balances in favor of Sunni Arab Muslims.

Despite Bahrain's relationship to socially conservative Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf states, it upholds a firm tradition of cultural tolerance and openness. Unlike Saudi Arabia, Bahrain permits the sale of alcohol and has legalized a host of Western social and cultural institutions such as movie theaters and labor unions. Bahrain's political tradition also differs from its neighbors' in two ways. When Bahrain formally became independent in 1971, it adopted a constitution (the second in the region after Kuwait) and held elections for a new national assembly, which included elected and appointed members. Though the Bahraini emir dissolved the assembly in 1975, the constitutional experience provided a firm foundation for representative governance in Bahrain when the Khalifas revived the national assembly in 2002. An important factor motivating the ruling family's decision was the intense political crisis in Bahrain after 1994. The crisis included street riots, terrorist attacks, and other forms of civil strife unknown in the other states in the region until the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003.

While Bahrain's crisis had a clear sectarian tone (that is, the Shi'a majority versus the Sunni minority), an important part of the crisis revolved around Sunni and

Shi'a economic, social, and constitutional demands. Not only were both secular and Islamist opposition groups calling for the restoration of parliamentary governance, but they were also demanding the improvement of economic conditions in Shi'a and rural regions of the country. Islamists thrived in these conditions and found a social base among the impoverished masses neglected by the Sunni central government. Mirroring the actions of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Hizballah in Lebanon, Bahraini Islamists provided health care, education, and other basic services through charities and civic organizations to disadvantaged Sunni and Shi'a Bahrainis.

Among the Shi'a Islamist organizations, al-Wifaq is the most important. It claims to have at least 65,000 members and has largely replaced the Bahraini Freedom Movement, the chief opposition group in Bahrain during the 1990s. The organization includes several other political groups as well, such as Bahraini supporters of Hizb al-Da'wa, an important Shi'a Iraqi political party. Hizb al-Da'wa's presence in Bahrain points to a larger socioreligious reality on the island: There are no senior *mujtahids* (Shi'a scholars qualified to give independent legal judgments) in Bahrain, nor *marjas*. Marjas are Shi'a clerics deemed worthy of emulation and qualified to issue interpretations of Islamic law and jurisprudence. Within al-Wifaq, one finds adherents to five marjas from Iran, Iraq, and Lebanon. This diversity of views explains the limited authority of al-Wifaq's elected leader, Shaykh Ali Salman, who studied in the 1990s in Qom, the center of Iranian Shi'a religious studies. He reportedly opposed al-Wifaq's decision to boycott the 2002 Bahraini elections to protest the government's decision to draw electoral districts favoring Sunni Arab Muslims.

Al-Wifaq's decision to boycott those

elections provided a strategic opening for Bahrain's Sunni Islamists to enter the government. During the elections, in which a little over 50 percent of eligible Bahraini voters took part, Sunni Islamists won 19 of 40 elected seats. Bahrain's emir appoints 40 seats in the Bahraini bicameral legislature. Islamists also did well in local council elections, winning two-thirds of the 30 seats contested in the first round, and half of the 20 seats contested in the second round of voting. These victories gave Sunni Islamists a powerful position in the assembly and in society in general. Importantly, Islamist electoral gains reflected a sense of disenfranchisement among Sunni merchants and among both traditionalist and Salafi currents of Bahraini Sunnis. A.A. Mohamoud explains that these currents extend to the highest echelons of the Bahraini royal family: Shaykh Khalifa, the prime minister and uncle of the emir, believes that Islamists are crucial allies in the government's battle against Shi'a Islamist political parties. In his eyes, the threat from Shi'a and their allies overseas to the Bahraini government outweighs the threat from Islamists.

Upon taking power, Bahrain's Sunni Islamists portrayed themselves as moderates. They argued that they believe that Shari'a applies to family law and personal status issues. Other issues—economic development, trade, and international relations—fell under the purview of secular law and should be determined by Bahrain's national legislature. However, their record since taking office has been anything but moderate. Under the leadership of Shaykh Adil al-Muawda, the second deputy speaker of the Bahraini parliament and one of seven Salafists in the chamber, Islamists have sought to transform Bahraini society and to reverse decades-old traditions of social and religious toleration.

This process began as early as October 2003. At that time, Muawda sought to prevent Lebanese singer Nancy Ajram from performing in Bahrain: When the parliament and government officials refused to back the resolution, Islamists staged a violent riot at Ajram's show. In subsequent years, Islamist lawmakers repeatedly proposed legislation prohibiting the import and sale of alcohol. When these proposals failed to become law, hundreds of Islamists brandishing knives raided Bahraini restaurants that served alcohol. They also threw Molotov cocktails at the cars parked outside of the restaurants. Furthermore, Bahraini Islamists sought to block a proposed loan to build a Formula One automobile racetrack, labeling both the loan and the track as un-Islamic. In addition, Islamist legislators refused to participate in a nighttime vigil commemorating those killed in a major boating accident; they argued that the tradition was based on Western norms and was forbidden in Islam. In April 2006 Muawda labeled as similarly "un-Islamic" the concept that there is a separation of church and state.

Islamist initiatives and statements took on greater significance in July 2004, following the arrest of seven terrorist suspects accused of planning a series of attacks on economic and political targets in the kingdom. All those arrested were Sunni Arabs and Salafists who had received training in Saudi Arabia. Though there have been no known Islamist terrorist attacks on Bahraini soil or ties between the island's Sunnis and Islamist terrorist groups, several Bahraini Sunnis, including members of the royal family, were imprisoned at the U.S. naval base at Guantanamo Bay for allegedly fighting alongside the Taliban regime in Afghanistan.

Still, it is important not to overemphasize the power or influence of Islamists

in Bahrain. Their 2002 electoral triumph reflected the decision of al-Wifaq and other Shi'a groups to boycott the polls. In the November 2006 elections, Sunni and Shi'a Islamists, including al-Wifaq, won a majority. Yet there are also many people in Bahrain along with the U.S.-educated emir, Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa, who wish to block the Islamists from gaining power, transforming the country's society, and expelling the U.S. presence.

### Oman

The Sultanate of Oman and its longtime ruler, Sultan Qabus, have sought to maintain a vigorous relationship with Western nations and a commitment to social and religious tolerance. Oman derives much of its income from petroleum exports and became independent in 1971 after a long period as a British protectorate. The Omani government does not collect religious census data on Oman's population, but the population is thought to be overwhelmingly Muslim. While there are significant Sunni and Shi'a populations, the largest single religious group is composed of Ibadi Muslims. Ibadis, whose dogma is similar to that of the Maliki theological school of Sunni Islam, emerged as a separate sect of Islam in the seventh century. Ibadis assert that the leadership of the Muslim world community should go to an imam who is both capable and elected by the people.

Since many Muslims view Ibadism as unorthodox, and Oman is the only country where Ibadism prevails, Omanis have sought to play down differences, have sanctioned marriage between Ibadis and non-Ibadis, and have allowed Muslims to pray in any mosque in the country. Oman's Ministry of Religious Affairs (there is no specific ministry of Islamic affairs) publishes a journal

entitled *Tasamuh* (Tolerance). The journal discusses theology as well as sensitive issues such as the role of Christians in the Arab world, Muslim-Christian exchanges, and the larger dialogue of civilizations.

No Omanis are thought to have fought in Afghanistan or are being held at the U.S. naval base in Guantanamo Bay. It is believed that a handful of Omanis may have participated in some al-Qa'ida meetings and that Islamist terrorists periodically sojourned in the sultanate. Still, there is no evidence of al-Qa'ida cells in Oman, and the country's authorities have arrested individuals, including those just traveling through the country, who were believed to have ties to the organization.

The dearth of clear ties to Islamic terrorists and al-Qa'ida, however, does not mean that the sultanate, even in the highest levels of government, is free of Islamists who would seek to challenge those in power. In May 1994 the government raided the homes of Islamists, interrogated 430 individuals, and won convictions against 200 of them in Omani courts for belonging to a secret, violent group. Sentences ranged from the death penalty to jail sentences. Included in the alleged group of conspirators were a designated ambassador to the United States, an undersecretary at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, businessmen, members of the Omani Chamber of Commerce, school principals, and engineers. The group's one pamphlet did not call for the overthrow of Qabus's regime. Instead, it aimed to mobilize public opinion to address rampant corruption, abuses of power, and foreign policies inconsistent with the views of most Arab governments. In particular, Omani Islamists criticized Qabus's relations with Israel, arguing that this was proof that the sultanate's foreign policy was determined by Great Britain or the United States.

Why Omani Islamists chose to challenge Qabus's government in 1994 is not fully clear. However, there is some evidence that they may have misunderstood government proposals for political liberalization and increased participation following the Gulf War in 1991. In particular, they may have misunderstood Qabus's pronouncements that Omanis should shoulder greater accountability and participate more fully in the politics of the sultanate. There is also some evidence that Omani Islamists may have been inspired by Islamists in Saudi Arabia and that Saudis provided direct funding for Islamists in Oman.

Qabus reacted to the Islamist challenge with fury. He publicly rejected the formation of political parties and argued that the Islamists represented a political group akin to a large opposition party dedicated to overthrowing governments. Though Qabus pardoned most Islamists involved in the 1994 plot, he launched a three-part strategy to address Islamists and their challenge to his power. First, Omani officials carefully monitored the Omani intelligentsia for any signs of further Islamic tendencies. Second, the government initiated a process of secularization in various parts of Omani society. As part of this process, the government sought to include Omanis in the new political structures as well as to isolate, retire, and give harmless executive jobs to potential Islamist figures. Omani tribal leaders were also invited to participate in government councils and to pledge allegiance to Qabus again.

At the same time—and this was the third part of his strategy—Qabus sought to placate public opinion (including among the Islamists) by building new mosques and by opening a school of religious jurisprudence and law in Muscat. In 2003 he inaugurated the enormous Qabus Mosque

in Muscat, a project that took six years to build. Following a series of protests against the United States, including one in 2000 during a celebration of the 30-year anniversary of his accession to the throne, Qabus brought Omani foreign policy in line with that of other Arab states. Contacts with Israel were gradually limited and plans for direct relations shelved.

Despite this multifaceted response to the Islamist challenge, Qabus and his government could not eradicate Islamists from Oman. Largely driven underground and marginalized, Omani Islamists have recently turned to much more radical forms of protest than their predecessors. In late 2004 Omani officials discovered a large cache of arms in a truck involved in an accident and, subsequently, a new network of Islamists. Reportedly, the group included anywhere between 31 and 600 people. There were people of stature in this group: university lecturers, employees in the ministries of Health and Education, petroleum engineers, consultants to the Ministry of Religious Affairs, officials at the royal court, and military officers. A number of them publicly admitted guilt and pleaded for forgiveness. The government won quick convictions against the 30 who were charged—accusing them of seeking to replace the government with a religious state and plotting terrorist attacks. The government also charged that they conducted military training, armed members, and held recruitment meetings in Oman.

Yet a few months after they were convicted, Qabus commuted the sentences against the 30 Islamists following a demonstration by a few hundred Omanis demanding that the state release them. Qabus reportedly feared that imprisoning the men, especially after they had shown remorse, would be perceived as making them martyrs and political

prisoners. He also recognized that the individuals involved in the plot were too few to pose a real threat. Qabus then traveled to the region where the defendants were from and held a series of meetings with ordinary Omanis and community leaders.

Qabus's confidence and magnanimity following the 2005–2006 events is indicative of the place of Islamists in Oman, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates. While Islamists have gained enormous socioeconomic and cultural influence since the mid-1970s, they are in no position to seize power or impose their program on the rest of society. Despite impressive performances in national and local elections, Islamists have failed to check the authority of Gulf monarchies or to build viable, lasting coalitions with secular opposition groups. Time after time, Islamist legislatures find that their governments ignore, reject, or undermine Islamist initiatives on issues such as extending the franchise to women or banning alcohol sales. Even in states where there is a long history of cooperation between Islamists and local royal families and common anti-Shi'a objectives, Islamists have not forced governments to alter their foreign or domestic policies very much. More often, it has been Islamists who have been forced to adopt new positions to meet government needs. Though some Islamists have adapted well to these circumstances, others have responded to government pressure with increasingly extreme positions and public acts.

Nor has violence proven to be any more of an effective strategy for the achievement of Islamists' domestic ends. There have been few terrorist attacks in Oman, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates, even though those states have highly porous borders and close relations with the United States and have

been visited by leading Islamist terrorists. Remarkably, the authorities in Dubai, a country that hosts thousands of U.S. sailors and employs thousands of Western nationals, were able to ignore Islamist groups that had threatened to attack the emirate if it did not expel foreigners. The attacks that have occurred have been minor.

Still, the seemingly limited political and military power of Islamists by no means undercuts their influence either at home or abroad. Islamist groups provide significant funds to Muslim causes globally, and Qaradawi and other Islamist intellectuals in the Gulf states are among the most influential figures in the Muslim world. Domestically, Islamists retain important supporters in every level of business, academia, the military, and government ministries, including senior members of royal families. Not only are they in a position to win national elections, but they are also fully capable of generating violent demonstrations and other forms of social protest. They have been especially effective when their demands dovetail with wider criticisms of government policy. In Kuwait, for example, Islamists have successfully altered the school curriculum, Islamized daily life, and segregated Kuwait University by gender. It is in this sociocultural power that the long-term future of Islamists may reside as much or more than in direct politics.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abdulla, Abdul Khaleq. "Political Dependency: The Case of the United Arab Emirates." Unpublished PhD dissertation, Georgetown University, 1984.
- Al-Bak, Duraid. "Divorce a Raging Controversy." *Gulf News*, December 31, 2005. <http://archive.gulfnews.com/articles/05/12/31/10008443.html>.
- Buzbe, Sally. "Documents Show Dubai Received Threats from Extremists When It Cooperated

with West." Associated Press, March 16, 2006.

- Cordeiro, Anthony, and Khalid R. al-Rodhan. *Gulf Military Forces in an Era of Asymmetric Wars*. Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies and Praeger Security International, 2007.
- Crystal, Jill. *Oil and Politics in the Gulf: Rulers and Merchants in Qatar*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Davidson, Christopher M. *The United Arab Emirates: A Study in Survival*. London and Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2005.
- . *Dubai: The Vulnerability of Success*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2008.
- Economic Intelligence Unit. *Country Report Bahrain September 2009*. <http://store.eiu.com/product/5000205BH-toc.html>.
- . *Country Report Qatar October 2009*. [http://store.eiu.com/product/5000205QA.html?ref=product\\_detail\\_list\\_cover](http://store.eiu.com/product/5000205QA.html?ref=product_detail_list_cover).
- Gause, Greg. *Oil Monarchies: Domestic and Security Challenges in the Arab Gulf States*. New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1994.
- Ghabra, Shafeeq N. "Balancing State and Society: The Islamic Movement in Kuwait." In *Revolutionaries and Reformers: Contemporary Islamist Movements in the Middle East*, ed. Barry Rubin, 105–23. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003.
- Keckichian, Joseph A. *Political Participation and Stability in the Sultanate of Oman*. Abu Dhabi: Gulf Research Center, 2005.
- Knight, Michael, and Anna Solomon-Schwartz. "The Broader Threat from Sunni Islamists in the Gulf." *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy: Policy Watch #882*, July 19, 2004. [www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=1761](http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=1761).
- Legrenzi, Matteo. *The Gulf Cooperation Council: Diplomacy, Security and Economy in a Changing Region*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2008.
- Mohamoud, A.A. *The Role of Constitution-Building Processes in Democratization: Case Study of Bahrain*. Stockholm: International Democracy Building and Conflict Management, 2005.
- Peck, Malcolm. *The United Arab Emirates: A Venture in Unity*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1986.

- Sick, Gary, and Lawrence Potter, eds. *The Persian Gulf at the Millennium: Essays in Politics, Economy, Security, and Religion*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997.
- Stowasser, Barbara. "Old Shaykhs, Young Women, and the Internet." *Muslim World* 91 (2001): 99-120.

- Tétreault, Mary Ann. *Stories of Democracy: Politics and Society in Contemporary Kuwait*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000.
- Toumi, Habib. "MP Rejects Separation of Religion and Politics." *Gulf News*, April 5, 2006. <http://archive.gulfnews.com/articles/06/04/05/10030689.html>.