

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

TRADITIONS OF PROTEST, INSTITUTIONAL
SECTARIANISM, AND OIL RENTIERISM IN
AUTHORITARIAN BAHRAIN

by
TROY MICHAEL CARTER

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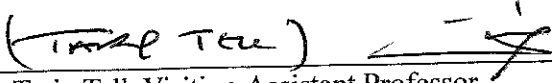
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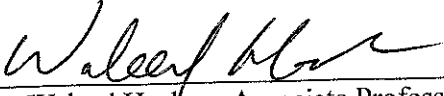
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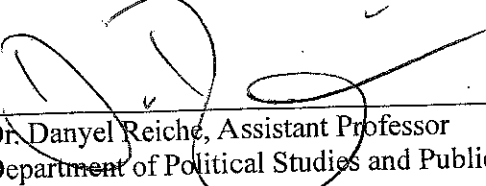
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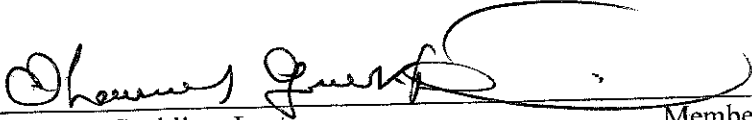
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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Troy Carter for Master of Arts
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Title: Traditions of Protest, Institutional Sectarianism, and Oil Rentierism in Authoritarian Bahrain

Bahrain stands apart from neighboring Arab monarchs who have used oil resources to build patronage systems to a wide, cross-cutting coalition of social actors that prevent mass opposition movements from forming. This paper explains why Bahrain has a narrow social base and provides a theoretically guided explanation for Bahrain's exceptional tradition of protest, leading from the 19th century to the Arab Spring. During the state building process Bahrain's Al Khalifa regime is constrained by pre-oil institutional sectarianism, populist politics, but the absence of a economically significant opposition movement at the moment when foreign oil revenues begin to accrue directly to the regime means it is free to choose authoritarianism. Through a series of critical junctures in Bahrain's history, protests and repression put Bahrain on the path of despotic repression, and a theoretically unexpected outcome. Yet the regime survives owing to both foreign economic and defense relationships which make the regime highly durable.

Keywords: Bahrain, Democratization, Oil, Geopolitics, Repression, Protest, Monarchy, Authoritarianism

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CHAPTER I

THEORIES OF MONARCHICAL RESILIENCE

"We are only asking for political reforms, right of political participation, respect for human rights, stopping of systematic discrimination against Shias."
" - Nabeel Rajab, Bahrain Center for Human Rights, 14 February, 2011¹

A day after his father died in 1999, Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa ascended to Bahrain's throne after serving as crown prince and defense minister during his father's 38 year reign. During that time Hamad had overseen several cycles of repression, attacking political opposition groups and street protesters, which continue to be a thorn in the side of his family's dynastic, authoritarian monarchy. Breaking with the past Hamad's first order was to promise democratic reforms and to pardon 400 political prisoners.² The prisoners were almost all Shiites, which presents a puzzle with an interesting answer. Why have the Shia Baharna, the indigenous Arabs of the island, not become loyal rent-seekers in a rentier economy? Why have they instead chosen to voice their dissent publicly, in large protests? Why not exit the country? Why do they instead choose to bear the high costs of protest in a despotic regime?

The honeymoon ended too quickly. Hamad's reform agenda, the National Action Charter (NAC), created a bicameral legislature while the opposition demanded a return to the abrogated 1973 constitution with a single house parliament. To prevent a boycott of the NAC's 2001 plebiscite Hamad promised the newly appointed upper house would have an advisory role only. Following the NAC's 98% approval, Hamad reneged on that promise,

1 "Clashes Mark Bahrain Protests Amid Heightened Security -- Al-Jazeera," *BBC Monitoring Middle East*, 14 Feb. 2011.

2 Robin Allen, "Democratic Reform Set for Approval in Bahrain," *Financial Times*, 15 Feb. 2001.

decreed an authoritarian constitution and continued his dynasty's long history of despotism.³

On February 14, 2011, the 10-year anniversary of the NAC referendum, hundreds of thousands of Bahrainis marched in the streets.⁴ Uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt reignited hope for constitutional law, judicial independence, freedom of speech, religious equality, property rights and equal employment opportunities. After a month of continuous protesting Bahraini troops, supported by Saudi and UAE forces, crushed the opposition. This thesis is not a story about the February 14 Uprising in Bahrain but was inspired by its connection with the wave of protests in 2011 which caused regime change in several Arab republics.

That the nine Arab monarchs were left unscathed, most having had no protests at all, indicates that they have some exceptional characteristic that prevents mass protests. And while Bahrain did have hundreds of thousands of protesters in the streets for weeks on end, Bahrain shows that Arab monarchs are also highly resilient. Yet Bahrain is in many ways an unexceptional authoritarian state: civil and political rights are nonexistent, the judiciary is corrupt, the police force large, and political power and wealth highly centralized. And yet Bahrain strongly contrasts with the other Arab monarchs who have co-opted the social groups they govern. Kuwait for example has chosen to make side payments to its large Shia minority (25% of the pop.) and allows all groups formal participation in the political system. Not so in Bahrain. Despite large and mobilized opposition groups forming in 1938, 1954, 1965, 1994 and 2011, Bahrain's Al Khalifa regime has, more so than any other Arab

3 Robin Allen, "Bahrain to Hold First Elections in 27 Years," *Financial Times*, 15 Feb. 2002.

4 Michael Slackman and Nadim Audi, "Police in Bahrain Clear Protest Site in Early Morning Raid," *New York Times*, 17 Feb. 2011.

monarch, forgone co-optive strategies involving side-payments and allocative patronage, and has chosen repression to overcome opposition movements, brazenly assuming its foreign patrons will ensure its survival, and has chosen to exclude the large Shia majority from the economy and the political system.

A. Research Questions

The purpose of the study was to analyze the development of pre-oil institutions on the development of the authoritarian regime in Bahrain between 1900 and 2011. The following research questions guided the thesis:

1. Why did Bahrain experience such large protests in 2011?
2. Why does Bahrain's regime lack a cross-cutting coalition of support?
3. What is the Bahraini regime's survival strategy?
4. How did oil affect state building?
5. What factors attest to monarchical resilience in Bahrain?
6. How is Bahrain's society unique?

1. Scope of the Study

The backbone of the research was conducted using primary documents from the 19th and 20th century British government archives, between September 2013 and April 2014. In addition, a thorough search of English language newspapers 19th and 20th century, scholarly secondary sources, informal and anonymous interviews with Bahraini activists, and a collection of information from online databases, led to a chronological, qualitative narrative

of popular protest, authoritarian state building, and regime survival in Bahrain.

2. Significance of the Study

Although there is a growing literature on the resilience of Middle Eastern monarchies in the recent years, there have been no studies conducted in Bahrain that investigate why Bahrain experiences large and frequent mass political protests. Furthermore, no study has incorporated mass protests into an argument which leads to a resilient and despotic, authoritarian regime, using a 'historical institutionalism' approach to a path dependency. Lastly, the thesis creates a case study for state building comparisons using historical evidence.

B. Literature Review

Beginning in December 2010, dictators in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, and Libya have been removed from power by populist driven events. The fall of these “Arab presidents for life”⁵ and the contrasting continuation of Arab monarchs offers political scientists a fresh opportunity to address democratization and monarchical resilience.⁶ The analytical question is, why does Bahrain have an authoritarian, non-pluralistic political system? The second area of study which this thesis addresses is the resilience of monarchs. Since the 1950s, scholars who subscribed to modernization theory have sought to understand how

5 Roger Owen, *The Rise and Fall of Arab Presidents for Life* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012).

6 Russell E. Lucas, “Is the King's Dilemma only for Presidents,” *Sada, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, April 6, 2011, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2011/04/06/is-king-s-dilemma-only-for-presidents/6bpf>.

authoritarian regimes survived. The modernization approach saw the monarchs as a traditional form of governance unlikely to fulfill the desires of an increasingly educated and sophisticated population.⁷ Studies assumed that monarchical regimes had little capacity to meet demands for civil and political rights of new socio-economic classes, especially an urban middle class. Samuel Huntington outlined this argument and coined the term “king’s dilemma” to describe the choice monarch’s face, democratic reform or revolution.⁸ Modernization theory can claim only partial success in explaining the 1950s collapse of Egyptian and Iraqi monarchies but has been revived, by Charles Davidson, for speculative analysis that widespread use of communication technologies, i.e. mobile phones and online social media, will allow an urban middle-class to mobilize and overthrow the Gulf monarchs.⁹

A subfield has been developed that approaches the Arab monarchs through unique characteristics: Islamic and Arab cultures, geopolitical environment, and natural resources. The key analytical question in this field is, what prevents opposition movements from toppling the current regime? The two questions, democratization and resilience, are intimately connected and many observers assume that a meaningful liberalizing process cannot take place under the current dynasty and that the dynasties see political power as a zero-sum game. Therefore, any significant pluralization would mean an end to the dynasty’s

7 Daniel Lerner, *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing The Middle East* (Glencoe IL: Free Press, 1958); and, Halpern, Manfred. *The Politics of Social Change In The Middle East and North Africa* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1963).

8 Samuel Huntington, *Political Order In Changing Societies* (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 1968), 177-91.

9 Christopher M. Davidson, *After The Sheikhs, The Coming Collapse of the Gulf Monarchies* (London: Hurst, 2012).

rule and reign, negatively affecting the wealth and social status of the self-interested members of those regimes.

Bernard Lewis believe that the remaining monarchs' religious heritage gives them special cultural legitimacy. "The dynastic principle and the practice of hereditary succession remained powerful, deep-rooted, and virtually universal throughout the Islamic Middle East," Lewis writes.¹⁰ Like Lewis, Owen Kirby, a former American policy-maker, sees Middle East monarchs acting as a link between Arabs and their "valued traditions."¹¹ But like Lewis' argument, this fails to explain how the majority of Arab monarchs survive without religious credentials or why several Arab monarch's have already fallen. Gregory Gause discredits these theories by pointing out, "Monarchical institutions in Yemen, a country as tribal, traditional, and Islamic as its neighbors, were swept away during the 1960s."¹² Four other Arab monarchs have also fallen in during the 20th century: Egypt (1952), Tunisia (1957), Iraq (1958), and Libya (1969). Another unconvincing argument fixes on the monarchs' role as a national father figure and the citizen's role as the children.¹³ More interesting is Ben-Dor's argument that it is the Arab Monarch's weak state that does not provide much to protest against.¹⁴ Yet neither of these qualities is particular to Arab monarchs and so fails to provide a convincing explanation of continuing monarchical

10 Bernard Lewis, *From Babel To Dragomans: Interpreting The Middle East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 96. Lewis explains that the ruling dynasties in Jordan, Morocco, and Saudi Arabia make overt use of religious claims.

11 Owen H. Kirby, "Want Democracy? Get A King," *Middle East Quarterly* 7, No. 4 (2000): 3-12.

12 Gregory Gause in Kostiner, Joseph, *Middle East Monarchies: The Challenge of Modernity* (Boulder, Colo: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000), 167.

13 Hisham Sharabi, *Neopatriarchy: A Theory of Distorted Change In Arab Society* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1988).

14 Gabriel Ben-Dor, *State and Conflict In The Middle East: Emergence of The Postcolonial State* (New York: Praeger, 1983).

resilience in the Middle East.

Another approach to monarchical resilience by Michael Herb stresses the importance of dynastic rule. The ruling family prevents revolutions by occupying posts throughout government where they “watch for signs of disloyalty in the military” acting as an internal spy network.¹⁵ Furthermore, ruling families hold *majalis*, informal councils where they hear public grievances and receive feedback on policies which allows them to respond before grievance snowball into a crisis. Lastly, Herb's theory argues that dynasties avoid destabilizing in-fighting by bandwagoning, the formation of a dominant inter-family faction before conflicts can threaten family rule.¹⁶ Historically, dynastic rule in Bahrain has not been so easy. This thesis details three crown princes who have began their rule with support from minority factions that favor reforms as a way to collect foreign support and the opposition's approval. Yet for over 90 years a faction of the Al Khalifa family known as the Khawalids (named after their patriarch) have opposed the very concept of concessions.¹⁷ Though providing insight into dynastic tactics in the Gulf, Herb's argument fails to account for “linchpin monarchies” Jordan and Morocco, where the ruler's family serves in a limited number of governmental posts.¹⁸

On the question of democratization in the Middle East monarchies Charles Tilly's comparative history of Euro-centric war-makes-states approach provides and interesting,

15 Michael Herb, *All In The Family: Absolutism, Revolution, and Democracy In The Middle Eastern Monarchies* (Amherst, N.Y: State University of New York Press, 1999).

16 Ibid, p. 50.

17 “Bahraini political scene part II: Royal Family,” *US Embassy Manama*, 25 May 2006, Wikileaks. <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2006/05/06manama907.html>.

18 Russell E. Lucas, "Monarchical Authoritarianism: Survival and Political Liberalization In A Middle Eastern Regime Type," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 36, No. 1 (2004): 103-119.

yet unconvincing approach. Tilly's model led him to believe that democratic bargains between state and society were created out of the state's growing power to monitor and enforce its will directly on the people. As the size and power of states grew, wars between states became evermore expensive. The mercenary armies that had dominated European warfare between the 15th and 17th centuries became too costly and were replaced by larger bodies of local, national conscripts which raised the burden of taxation. The complimentary process was the creation of treasuries, tax offices, and other bureaucratic operations which, at the local level had to negotiate with the people in order to operate. This meant the state had to make concessions, either by rewarding non-elites with goods and services or rights they had not had in the past.¹⁹ Rolf Schwarz directly applied Tilly's model to the Middle East states including the monarchies in Jordan and the United Arab Emirates. Schwarz found that the lack of the war-making by the remaining Middle East monarchs, and the accompanying lack of state penetration of society, accounts for the democratic-deficit, but leaves them vulnerable and dependent on external rents, ex. oil exports, foreign aid. Schwarz says, "The states are small and in need of great-power support, but they have managed their survival."²⁰

Schwarz, like most scholars who work in democratization and resilience studies in the Middle East, draws upon the work of Giacomo Luciani who characterized the the oil-rich monarchs in the Middle East as allocative, rentier states, states in which more than 40 percent of government revenue is derived from exporting natural resources. Luciani

19 Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990–1990* (Oxford, 1990), 12.

20 Rolf Schwarz, *War and State Building in the Middle East* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2011), 75.

reasoned that oil wealth precluded any need to tax the population, for war or otherwise, and effectively reversed the “no taxation without representation” principle.²¹ Luciani also argued that because oil production in the monarchies requires little domestic labor while accruing large profits directly to the regime people are unable to make demands on the state for benefits, since their contribution to the system is “generally dispensable.” Luciani believes that the high costs of immigrating to another country, and the danger of being beaten and imprisoned during public protests, makes most people in an allocative, rentier state choose to be loyal to the system.²² Thus Luciani concludes, “Democracy is not a problem for allocation states.”²³ This offers much for discussion but the deterministic, euro-centric portrayal relegates colonialism, society, and the regime as bystanders in a historical process, a view I find untenable.

While scholarship has been framed by the rentier state theory of democratization regional specialists have preferred to use empirical evidence to work out the state-society relations and processes. Laurie Brand has been a leader in showing how the rentier state in Jordan has used foreign aid to pay for large army and security forces, jobs which co-opt key social groups, and in effect provide regime stability and resilience.²⁴ Brand's argument that geopolitical considerations provide Jordan the foreign aid to fuel its security establishment is helpful in understanding Bahrain. Building on this, Yom and Al-Momani convincingly show that Jordan's political liberalization process halted after the US increased foreign aid

21 Giacomo Luciani, ed. *The Arab State* (Univ. of California Press, 1990), 87.

22 Albert O. Hirschman, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty* (Harvard University Press, 1970).

23 Luciani, *The Arab State*, 76.

24 Laurie A. Brand, *Jordan's Inter-Arab Relations: The Political Economy of Alliance Making* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1994).

and security cooperation.²⁵ Likewise, Gregory Gause shows how oil-rich monarchs receive steady streams of diplomatic and military support from foreign powers who desire advantageous access to oil and fear disruptions in the global oil supply, an important point.²⁶ Because Bahrain's population is mostly Shia, other Sunni monarchs, primarily Saudi Arabia, fear that regime change in Bahrain would allow their regional rival, Iran, to increase its influence over large groups of Shias living in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait. This geopolitical view fuels the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states to grant large amounts of foreign aid, in the form of oil grants, infrastructure projects and cash, to Bahrain. The United States is also a source of GCC/Iran tension. It has had an antagonistic relationship with Iran since 1979, and has committed military forces to the region to ensure the Gulf's shipping lanes, through which so much oil and gas is transported to allied nations in Europe and Asia, remain open and safe. Furthermore, the US has used Bahrain as a major base for its "War on Terror" and invasion of Iraq in 2003. By integrating the rentier state and geopolitical approach to international relations we arrive at a compelling explanation of how the Al Khalifa regime can ignore sustained internal opposition.

C. Approach

Using archival research and historical analysis, I use the case of Bahrain to show that pre-oil social conflict and institutional sectarian discrimination constrained the regime into a narrowly supported regime which frequently relies on despotic repression and foreign support to survive. This historical institutional approach reveals a path dependency, helping

25 Sean L. Yom and Mohammad al-Momani, "The International Dimensions of Authoritarian Regime Stability: Jordan In The Post-Cold War Era," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 30, No. 1 (2008): 39.

26 Gregory Gause, *Oil Monarchies: Domestic and Security Challenges In The Arab Gulf States* (New York: Council On Foreign Relations Press, 1994), 10.

us understand why the regime still has a narrow base today.

D. The Argument

What most of the literature has in common is a narrow focus on elite-actors and a lack of empirical historical evidence collected from Bahrain itself. By using a “Historical Institutionalism” approach to democratization and monarchical resilience this thesis focuses on the path dependencies created by pre-oil conjunctures and critical episodes of popular protest. The historical institutionalism approach has been used by Sean Yom to describe Kuwait’s “popular rentierism” which rewards elite merchant families and makes side-payments to non-elite regime supporters.²⁷ This system developed because the elite merchant community’s 1938 uprising, a critical juncture when the ruling family did not yet benefit from oil rents and was still dependent on merchant taxes, which limited the depth of repression that the regime could use for fear of driving the merchant community to immigrate or worse, ally with Iraqi nationalists. Instead the regime decided to bargain with the rebellious merchant families, and gave them lucrative business monopolies and financial incentives in a bid to buy their loyalty. Furthermore, the regime consciously sought the support of non-elite groups as a counterbalancing force, tribal farmers and the urban Shia, by institutionalizing patronage networks to them via parliament.

Like Yom, this thesis uses Benjamin Smith’s remarkably simple observation that understanding the development of oil-rich states requires us to ask not if they have oil, but when they have oil.²⁸ But unlike Yom, this thesis does not focus on a single event nor a

²⁷ Sean L. Yom, “Oil, Coalitions, and Regime Durability: The Origins and Persistence of Popular Rentierism in Kuwait.” *Studies in Comparative International Development* 46.2 (2011): 217-41.

²⁸ Benjamin B. Smith, *Hard times in the lands of plenty: Oil politics in Iran and Indonesia* (Cornell

single group of elite actors challenging the regime, but rather provides a chronological narrative of interconnected events marked by sustained mass protest, often violent, which together show that Bahrain's indigenous people have a tradition of struggle and a repertoire of collective action. These confrontations and the actions of the non-elite Shia underclass and later the cross-sectarian trade union movement, were unable to force the regime to negotiate a populist system of rentier patronage. Furthermore, the tradition of struggle between the Shia Baharna and the regime, which predates oil, and their communal resources, allows the largest social group in Bahrain's society, the Baharna, to refuse to accept Luciani's theoretical rentier state outcome, loyalty to the system.

To understand the development of this tradition of popular protest we need to examine Bahrain's early economy which was bifurcated along sectarian lines. The Sunni tribal community controlled, and became very rich from, Bahrain's world renowned off-shore pearl beds. These tribesmen worked with the mercantile networks in Bahrain, dominated by Huwala Sunnis, who were unusually powerful in the region because of their ability to connect Gulf trade from Muscat and Basra to India. Furthermore, the Sunni Arabian tribes, notably the Al Dowasir, who came to Bahrain in the 19th century to engage in pearling, had powerful connections to Ibn Saud's mainland empire. This led the Al Khalifa dynasty to rely on taxing the relatively powerless and economically weak Shia agricultural community whose primary activity was exporting palm dates to Muslim pilgrims. This political economy was thrown into turmoil in the 1930s when pearling prices collapsed. Luckily for the Al Khalifa regime, the British presence in Bahrain, and

University Press, 2007).

geopolitical factors, led to Bahrain becoming an early recipient of oil rents – the when in Smith's theory – at the same time the pearling economy went into sharp decline. This is in stark contrast to Kuwait where merchants held financial sway over the regime in the years immediately preceding oil rents. In Bahrain the merchant community's debt crisis pushed them to become loyal rent-seekers instead of a voice of dissent.

However, what happens next is unexpected and shows how the non-elite approach to Bahrain adds significant understanding to the political sphere. Bahrain's Shia Baharna, do not become loyal rent-seekers, nor do they exit, but choose to continue voicing dissent in spite of the high-costs. In essence, the Shia refuse to be treated as second class citizens in their own country, yet have never mustered the resources to overcome a minority regime which has benefited from geopolitically motivated foreign support and oil rents. In the final analysis, foreign support becomes crucial for regime survival, as we will see, in some instances foreign troops directly engage in suppressing protesters, in others foreign state patrons give financial and diplomatic support which significantly lowers the international de-legitimation effects of repression.

This view from below challenges what has become a dominant narrative in scholarship on Bahrain. First, it provides compelling evidence that the current crisis has less to do with the Iranian revolution and more to do with the long tradition of protest. Second, the thesis roots American involvement in Bahrain as a continuation of British colonialism. And perhaps most importantly, it improves our understanding of how sectarian conflict has developed over two centuries, relieving political scientists who develop policy

prescriptions from the burden of explaining sectarian conflict. This paper argues that Bahrain's contemporary lack of an inclusive coalition originated in part from the sectarian, pre-oil sectarian political economy and further assisted by British geopolitical interests. By demonstrating an outcome of monarchical resilience, this thesis intends to use Bahrain's history to show that the rentier state's potential mass political acquiescence (in exchange for little or no taxation) are negated by violations of the indigenous Shiites "moral economy"²⁹ produced by this overarching institutionalization of sectarian discrimination. This historical institutional approach shows how Bahrain's political struggles "are mediated by the institutional setting in which they take place."³⁰ As John Ikenberry explains, institutions "range from specific characteristics of government institutions, to the more overarching structures of the state, to the nation's normative social order."³¹ The key institution here is Bahrain's sectarian discrimination, developed as an early method of the colonizing Sunni tribes' social control over the larger body of native Shiites. This sectarianism was further institutionalized by proto-state activities, ex. the 1920s cadastral survey of land ownership and sectarian judicial systems, supporting its persistence into future political battles and in doing so influencing their outcomes. Persistence of the sectarian regime base, a product of the pre-oil political economy and oil era rent-seeking, is further supported by Bahrain's

29 *Moral Economy* is a concept first developed by historian E.P. Thompson which explains how peasant communities develop normative attitudes about social relations that surround the local economy: bread prices, acceptable taxation, use of communal lands, and administration of charities. Peasant communities become rebellious when they believe that some actor e.g. other peasants, local elites, or state authorities, have violated what the community believes is morally acceptable. See: James C. Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976).

30 John G. Ikenberry, "Conclusion: An Institutional Approach to American Foreign Economic Policy," *The State and American Foreign Economic Policy* (Cornell University Press, 1988), 222-23.

31 *Ibid.*, 226.

system of dynastic succession which requires the blessing of the ruling family and passes on political arrangements with that blessing. Yom points out that: "Individual rulers are thus influenced by the coalitional precedents set by previous incumbents, with whom they share both blood and collective memory, more so than in other autocracies."³²

After detailing these historical decision points for Bahrain's regime, the thesis proceeds into the post-colonial era. Initially, the prospect of confronting the opposition with repressive measures, without the backing of the British troops, pushes the Al Khalifa regime into voluntarily experimenting with a semi-constitutional monarchy with a broader regime coalition, by allowing the election of Bahrain's first national parliament. Yet at the moment when the Shiite opposition begins to address their grievances through this democratically elected, constitutionally mandated parliament, a surge in oil prices and a cooperative United States facilitate the regime's return to despotic, narrow-base authoritarianism. The parliament is abolished and the constitution abrogated. From here the thesis builds on a recent hypothesis that monarchical resilience rests on three variables: foreign support, oil rents, and a cross-cutting regime coalition.³³ Understanding why Bahrain does not have a large cross-cutting coalition of support, because the opposition refuses to become loyal rent-seekers, helps explain why the protests occurred in 2011 and has implications for theories of demonstration effect sweeping the "Arab Spring."³⁴

Through the theses' historical approach, we can place the Gulf Cooperation Council's 2011

32 Sean L. Yom, "Oil, Coalitions, and Regime Durability: The Origins and Persistence of Popular Rentierism in Kuwait," *Studies in Comparative International Development* 46.2 (2011): 217-41.

33 Sean L. Yom, and F. Gregory Gause III, "Resilient Royals: How Arab Monarchies Hang On," *Journal of Democracy* 23, no. 4 (2012): 74-88.

34 Roger Owen, "The Arab 'demonstration' effect and the revival of Arab unity in the Arab Spring." *Contemporary Arab Affairs* 5, no. 3 (2012): 372-381.

deployment of troops to Bahrain, which ensured regime survival, into a historical-geopolitical context which explains the lack of major concessions.

E. Plan of the Thesis

1. Chapter II. Development of a Sectarian Society

The rest of the chapters of this thesis are concerned with historical analysis and comparisons with Kuwait which answer the research questions which I identified earlier. After describing Bahrain's contemporary demographics Chapter II explains the formation of Bahrain's sectarian society in the 19th century. To do so I begin by noting how Bahrain's indigenous population became Shia and established a tradition of dissent in the 10th century. The religious and social institutions of both the indigenous Shia and the colonizing Sunnis preclude integration and form a sectarian divide which is imprinted onto the country's economic activities. Furthermore, the sectarian division strengthens and expands the ruling family's tribal *'assabiyya* to include outsiders of the same religious sect. The second component of the chapter is the British empire's intervention into the ruling family's internecine conflict which establishes a foreign succession model and the birth of Bahrain's semi-colonial status.

2. Chapter III. Economic Changes and Administrative Reforms

An increasingly large and belligerent ruling family comes into conflict with British interests. These interests included keeping the Shia Baharna from breaking into open revolt.

In chapter III I detail how the social system leads to a break in the Baharna's moral economy and their collective action against the regime. Under the guidance of a progressive British political agent, who began building a central administration, including a police force, the regime enacts land and administrative reforms. This caused a divide in the ruling family and for the Sunni tribal community to attack Shiites who supported reform. The conflict allows the British backed ruler to space to win, but then reconcile with the rebellious faction, consolidating his rule on the eve of an important event, the domination of Japan's cultured pearls in the market and a global depression. These economic changes had a great impact on Bahrain's income and political economy, generally freeing the regime from any threat from the Sunni pearling tribes and merchants on the eve of oil.

3. Chapter IV. Oil and Unrest

Chapter IV is my most important chapter. The transition from pearling to an oil economy happened earlier than in any other Arab Gulf country and happened when other social groups were very weak. It created a situation in which Bahrain's lower classes shifted to the oil field where they competed with expatriate workers for jobs. By comparing Bahrain, with its British presence and rapidly growing treasury with Kuwait, where a modestly powerful opposition challenged the regime's authority before oil royalties were accruing, it becomes evident that pre-oil conflicts and the regime's strength vis-a-vis society, affects the institutional preferences of rentier autocrats. Wherein Kuwait's regime was compelled by self-preservation to be relatively more benevolent and populist, Bahrain's

oil rents allowed the regime to maintain narrow, despotic authoritarianism it had recently consolidated. After Bahrain sets off down this narrow path the road becomes rocky. The Shia majority continues their unique tradition of dissent in alliance with an underclass of Sunni workers and a small group of urban radical nationalists. Facing major opposition movements the regime resorts to increasingly harsh tactics.

4. Chapter V. Parliament and Petitions

As the British empire began to retract, Bahrain's regime, scared by the possibility of having no foreign patron insuring its survival, briefly attempts to break from the despotic path by attempting to replicate the institutionalization of patronage via electoral politics using Kuwait's 1962 constitution as a model. Furthermore, the regime begins to make side-payments to key merchant families from the Huwala and tribal communities by granting them positions as directors of parastatals and other positions of interest in the growing bureaucracy. The parliament experiment fails while the side-payments succeeds in drawing off the Sunni opposition, especially after the 1979 Iranian revolution stokes fears of an Islamic revolution in Bahrain.

5. Chapter VI. Broken Promises

Locked into the despotic, sectarian path, the regime buys time while it engineers a demographic solution by naturalizing non-Bahraini Sunnis. Chapter VI begins with a promise for a democratic transition using the abrogated 1973 constitution. After a roadmap

is overwhelmingly approved in a plebiscite the regime removed almost all of the parliaments powers but kept up the pretenses, holding rigged elections that channel much of the opposition into a controlled environment. The elections favor Sunnis but gives just enough power to the Shia to make it attractive. But the Shia did not nurse their grievances quietly. As an extra precaution against revolution Saudi Arabia and the US provide support, financial, security, and diplomatic.

6. Chapter VII. Conclusion

In the final analysis the path that historical institutionalism provides a compelling narrative using historical analysis which explains why Bahrain's regime rules despotically with such a narrow regime base. This explains why Bahrain experienced such large protests in 2011. The Bahraini case shows how an autocratic regime can survive without the benefit of a cross-cutting coalition of support and large oil rents, variables that have recently been ascribed to monarchical resilience.

CHAPTER II

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SECTARIAN SOCIETY

The chapter shows that not long after, an important shift occurs in the ruling group's social structure which lays the groundwork for the institutionalization of sectarian discrimination. It briefs the reader on British imperial interests and activities along with the island's traditional economic activities: date farming and pearl diving. It is also where we begin to understand Bahrain's long history of dissent, both inside its own territory but also in the region. What the reader may be surprised to learn is that Bahrain has been a troublesome state for hundreds of years. During the research of this early period in Bahrain's history it becomes quickly apparent how much room for historical scholarship there is.

A. Bahrain's Social Groups

Bahrain is an independent Arab state made up of a group of islands located in the Persian Gulf. The main island, also known as Bahrain (historically as *Awal*) is 15 miles east of Saudi Arabia's coast and 21 miles west of Qatar.³⁵ It is ruled by a dynastic monarchy currently headed by King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, the twelfth in his line. The main island is about 30 miles long and 8 miles wide. It contains at its center a small oil field and the capital city Manama in its northeast corner. Bahrain is connected by causeway to the second largest island Muharraq, where a shipyard and international airport are located. Nearby, Sitra Island is also connected via causeway and is where the main oil storage and

³⁵ Bahrain was commonly transliterated by the British as "Bahrein" before 1970. That spelling is still in use by the French. In Arabic the name means "two seas."

loading facility is located. Bahrain is also connected to the Arabian mainland via the 15 mile long King Fahd Causeway. Another causeway connecting the main island to Qatar is in the proposal, planning phase [See appendix for map].

The population of Bahrain in 2013 was estimated at 1.28 million people.³⁶ 54% of the population are foreigners. Tens of thousands of the citizens are newly naturalized immigrants from neighboring states and Pakistan.³⁷ Demographic information is highly politicized so detailed census data is unavailable. Many observers estimate the population to be 60% - 80% Shia and 40%-20% Sunni with a minor Christian and Jewish population.³⁸ 88% of the population lives in an urban setting. Manama is the major population center at 262,000 inhabitants.³⁹ The second largest city is Muharraq with a population over 110,000.⁴⁰ The land itself is mostly barren desert covered in sand with some limestone hills. The northern coast is the most fertile benefiting from natural springs and is mostly covered in date, almond, and fig orchards. Agriculture extends partly down the western coast. South of the villages Zilaq and Askar agriculture stops and the island becomes desert. The highest point on the island is Jebel al Dukhan (Smoke Mountain), it rises 440 feet above sea level.⁴¹ Visibility reductions occur mid-summer when the deserts of Iraq and Saudi Arabia are

36 Central Intelligence Agency, "Bahrain," *The World Factbook* (2013), <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ba.html>.

37 Omar Al-Shehabi, "Demography and Bahrain's unrest." *Report for the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace* 16 (2011).

38 "Bahraini Shi'a Demonstration Turns Violent – Yet Again," *US Embassy Manama*, 22 May 2004, Wikileaks, <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2004/05/04MANAMA756.html>.

39 Central Intelligence Agency. "Bahrain," *The World Factbook*, 2013. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ba.html>.

40 "Bahrain plans new Muharraq downtown area," *Trade Arabia*, 7 Jun. 2012, http://www.tradearabia.com/news/cons_218654.html.

41 Princeton University, *Geography of Bahrain*, 2013, http://www.princeton.edu/~achaney/tmve/wiki100k/docs/Geography_of_Bahrain.html.

raked by a northwest wind. August is the hottest month when the mean temperature reaches 100 degrees Fahrenheit (38 Celsius). Rain falls during the cooler winter months on average just 9 days per year producing an average of four inches.⁴²

Society in Bahrain is divided primarily by sect. Shia and Sunnis “in almost all cases never live in the same village.”⁴³ Bahrain's Shia are further divided into three groups.⁴⁴ The Baharna (or *Bahrani*) are Arab Shiites considered the original inhabitants of the islands who use a unique form of Arabic influenced by ancient Akkadian and Aramaic languages.⁴⁵ Agriculture and unskilled labor are their primary vocations. A second group of Shia Arabs live in the urban centers and are merchants and civil servants. And lastly, a group of Bahrain's Shia, the Ajam families, are of Persian descent and also live in the urban centers working in private business. Their ancestors settled on the islands during the 17th century yet they continue to be bilingual in Farsi and Ajami Arabic. Despite differentiations in origin, occupation and location (urban/rural) Bahrain's Shia population has become to a good degree politically homogenous through rituals taking place at *ma'tams* (funeral homes), special halls designed for telling elegies of Husayn's death at Karbala and other rituals.⁴⁶ Several scholars have noted that *ma'tams* have “nurtured the link between religion and politics,” reinforced communal/sectarian bonds and provided a physical and symbolic space for opposing the Sunni regime in Bahrain.⁴⁷

42 Meteorological Directorate, Civil Aviation, Ministry of Transportation, *Bahrain Meteorological Service Climatological Summary* (2013), <http://www.bahrainweather.gov.bh/webPortal/BahClimateLog.html>.

43 Fahim Qubain, “Social Classes and Tensions in Bahrain,” *Middle East Journal* 9.3 (1955): 269-80.

44 Falah Al-Mdaires, “Shi'ism and Political Protest in Bahrain,” *Domes* 11, no. 1 (2002): 20-20.

45 Clive Holes, *Dialect, Culture, and Society In Eastern Arabia, Volume 2: Ethnographic Texts*, (Leiden: Brill, 2005).

46 Heinz Halm. *Shi'a Islam: From Religion to Revolution*. Markus Wiener Publishers (1997), 42. “*matam*” is the Persian word for “offering condolences” but in Bahrain means a funeral home.

47 Nelida Fuccaro, *Histories of city and state in the Persian Gulf: Manama since 1800*. Vol. 30. (Cambridge

Likewise, members of the Sunni sect in Bahrain can be divided into three groups: The ruling Al Khalifa family; the rural, tribal Sunnis, predominantly from the Bani Khalid and Bani Utubi tribes; and the Huwala, Arabized Sunnis of mixed ethnic origin who migrated to Bahrain from Iran. The first two groups are linguistically close to the Qatari dialect and have become politically homogenous through intermarriage and socialization at *majlises*, reception rooms in the homes of Sunni elites where gatherings take place that center on “family and kinship.”⁴⁸ Shia Bahrainis almost universally desire social and political equality which the Sunni community fears and opposes. The Al Khalifa family rules autocratically with support from the Sunni community and a very small number of urban Shia. The ruling family promotes itself as the conqueror, the modernizer and the patron with special emphasis on their tribal connections to Kuwait and Qatar.

B. Pre-Al Khalifa History of Bahrain

During the Middle Ages a unified territory known as al-Bahrain formed along the Gulf coast and included the islands that make up modern Bahrain.⁴⁹ The inhabitants converted to Islam in the 7th century but adapted it to fit their pre-Islamic beliefs by joining an unorthodox sect known as Ismailis. Under the Ismaili leader Abu Tahir, the people of al-Bahrain founded a communitarian state and raided the holy city of Mecca, stealing the Black Stone, and desecrated the Well of Zamzam.⁵⁰ The Carmathian State, as it was

University Press, 2009).

48 Ibid.

49 Arnold Wilson, *The Persian Gulf*, Vol. 10. (Routledge, 2011), 84.

50 "Black Stone of Mecca," Encyclopaedia Britannica Online Academic Edition (Encyclopædia Britannica Inc., 2013), <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/68328/Black-Stone-of-Mecca>.

called,⁵¹ ended in 1077⁵² when the Arab al-'Uyuni tribe successfully invaded al-Bahrain and established their rule until 1320.⁵³ This very brief history serves to show that Bahrain was a center of religious dissent stretching back into the 10th century and which might help scholars understand that the current attempts to make it part of a larger Sunni Arab cultural and economic zone are in error.

In the 14th century the Persian Seljuk Empire displaced the al-'Uyuni tribe in Bahrain and made the Prince of Hormuz, a Huwala Arab, Bahrain's governor. Juan Cole suggests it was in this period which Bahrain's inhabitants adopted a less activist, more quietist Twelver Shi'ism which is primarily what the Shia in Bahrain practice today.⁵⁴ During the Seljuk's rule of Bahrain the Bani Jarwan, Shia Arabs from Al-Hasa, paid tribute to the Prince of Hormuz for protection and permission to conduct pearl diving in the famously rich waters surrounding Bahrain and Qatar, which points out the early economic importance of Bahrain as a pearling center.⁵⁵ As a source of pearls and fresh water, horses, and having an excellent natural harbor, Bahrain was a highly valued territory.⁵⁶ During imperial struggles over the Gulf, Shah Abbas I of Iran made a special effort to conquer Bahrain for these reasons. This is an important point in Bahrain's Shia history because it “allowed them [Shiites] the

51 “Karmathians,” in *The Columbia Encyclopedia* (2013),

<http://www.credoreference.com/entry/columency/karmathians>.

52 David Commins, *The Gulf States: A Modern History*, (IB Tauris Publishers, 2012), 28.

53 Curtis E Larsen, *Life and Land Use on the Bahrain Islands: The Geoarchaeology of an Ancient Society*, (University of Chicago Press, 1983).

54 Juan Cole, *Sacred space and holy war: the politics, culture and history of Shi'ite Islam* (IB Tauris Publishers, 2002), 32. Cole writes, “This change is now difficult to trace. Carmathian tribes remained politically important at least into the 15th century. But from the 13th century Twelver biographical dictionaries begin mentioning ulama from Bahrain and al-Hasa.”

55 *Ibid.*, 32.

56 Government of India Report No. 18 of 1870. *Records of Bahrain*. Vol. 2 (Archive Editions, 1996), 303.

freedom to establish their religion and build up centres of scholarship on the island.”⁵⁷

C. Occupation of Bahrain by the Al Khalifa

The Al Khalifa family's governance of Bahrain began in 1783 when the family leader left Zubarah, a pearling village on the Qatari coast, to occupy Bahrain after defeating Bahrain's Persian vassal in a naval battle. The Al Khalifa's settling in Zubarah was product of the migration to the coast by the Jumayla clan of the Unayza tribal confederation from the Nejd.⁵⁸ The Jumayla settled in Kuwait in late 17th century and still rule it today.⁵⁹ Their migration earned the Jumayla clan the name *Utubi* or Bani Utub, after the Arabic verb meaning travel. The Bani Utub migrated from Arabian deserts in waves, responding to droughts, floods, and disease. Nejdī historian Ibn Bashir recorded a three-year drought known as the *samadan* (patience) in 1703 which initiated the first Unayzi/Jumayla coastal migration.⁶⁰ In 1723, regional famine conditions again caused entire villages to migrate east to the coastline. The people of Sdair left to Zubair, Basra, and Kuwait. Mainland famine prevailed in 1724 and “people resorted to eating dead donkeys” in Mecca. Livestock and human starvation were widespread.⁶¹

Utubi migration brought them through Bani Khalid territory whose leader, Emir Sa'dun, encouraged their settlement in Kuwait.⁶² A dispute following Sa'dun's death in 1722

57 Moojan Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam: The History and Doctrines of Twelver Shi'ism*, (Yale University Press, 1985), 120.

58 Abu Hakima, *History of Eastern Arabia 1750-1800 The Rise and Development of Bahrain and Kuwait*, (Beirut, Khayats, 1965), 49.

59 Jill Crystal, “Oil and Politics in the Gulf: Rulers and Merchants in Kuwait and Qatar,” (1990), 18.

60 Muhammad A.H. Abdulla, “Climatic fluctuation and natural disasters in Arabia between mid-17th and early 20th Centuries,” *GeoJournal* 37.1 (1995): 76-180.

61 Ibid.

62 Abu Hakima, *History of Eastern Arabia*, 27.

allowed the Utubi to become self-governing.⁶³ The three largest Utubi families governed Kuwait together and shared profits from pearling and merchant trade. Of the three, the Al Sabah branch administered the municipality, the Al Khalifa governed pearling, and the Al Jalahima controlled shipping.⁶⁴ In the mid-18th century most of the Al Khalifa branch departed. Historian Abu Hakima wrote that the Bani Utub Sheikh, Sabah bin Jabir Al-Sabaha chose his son as successor causing the Al Khalifas to depart Kuwait in protest over this decision.⁶⁵ Others believe the Al Khalifas were motivated by a desire to build their own city-state closer to the Bahrain/Qatar pearl beds.⁶⁶

In their departure, the Al Khalifa sailed to Bahrain, which had changed rulers 13 times in the previous century, looking for a place to settle.⁶⁷ They were rejected by the Al Madhkur ruler, the latest petty dynasty ruling for Iran,⁶⁸ and landed in Zubarah, Qatar. There they built a pearling city, attracting merchants with a free-trade policy. In 1782, Sheikh Nassir Al Madkhur, jealous of Al Khalifa wealth, sailed his fleet to Zubarah, and attacked the city but was defeated. The Al Khalifa force then sacked Manama in 1782 and returned to establish permanent control in 1783.⁶⁹ After the Al Khalifa victory over the Al Madkhur, the Al Khalifa's tribal confederation colonized Bahrain's eastern coast with self-governing pearling villages. Here we need to discuss the colonizing forces social relations, rooted in

63 Ibid., 53.

64 Crystal, *Oil and politics in the Gulf: Rulers and merchants in Kuwait and Qatar*.

65 Abu Hakima, *History of Eastern Arabia 1750-1800 The Rise and Development of Bahrain and Kuwait*, (Beirut: Khayats, 1965), 61.

66 Mr. Francis Warden's version appears in Abu Hakima's book on page 65 with a citation reading *Historical Sketch of the 'Uttoobee etc.* Bombay Selections. Vol. XXIV, 362-363.

67 Carsten Niebuhr and Robert Heron. *Travels through Arabia and other countries in the East*, Vol. 2. (R. Morison and Son, 1792).

68 Lawrence Potter, Ed. *The Persian Gulf in History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 11.

69 British Government of India Report No. 18 of 1870, *Records of Bahrain*, Vol. 2 (Archive Editions, 2003), 304.

Arab bedouin traditions, which emphasize loyalties to family and clan, a product of the desert environment and nomadic survival strategy. Within their newly conquered territory the Al Khalifa's kinship-based social network known as '*asabiyya*,⁷⁰ should have begun to fracture and weaken, but the Sunni community maintained its cohesion to ward off the threat of the expanding Wahhabi movement, a violently orthodox Sunni revival, emanating from the Nejd. Additionally, letters in the British archives show that Sheikh Ahmed Al Khalifa asked the British to arm his tribal followers in 1805, under threat from neighboring empires.⁷¹ The threat was real. The Sunni tribes of Bahrain were attacked by the Sultan of Muscat in 1799 and 1815 and were threatened by Ottoman and Egyptian expeditions in the same period.⁷² British naval patrols eventually decreased the threat of foreign forces, but the Sunni Arabs of Bahrain were also facing the possibility that the large Shia community could ally with the Persians.⁷³ Thus the Al Khalifa tribal settlers maintained their social cohesion and recruited more Sunni tribes from the mainland to join them, while transitioning from a kin-based '*asabiyyah* to a religious sectarian '*asabiyyah*. Sunni sectarianism expanded and intensified the Al Khalifa's familial '*asabiyyah* during the formative years of the new dynasty. To demonstrate their new cohesion and loyalty Sunni

70 The term '*asabiyyah* was used by famed historian Ibn Khaldun to describe the social force that makes individuals into groups forming a community. '*Asabiyyah* is strongest in a civilization's nomadic phase and decreases as the civilization advances. Ibn Khaldun argued that dynasties were formed by a strong '*asabiyyah* but would eventually become lax, decreasing their force as a political unit and allowing a new '*asabiyyah* to eventually effect regime change, and thus restarting the cycle. For analyzing Arab tribes, we use this concept to understand their cohesion, built by the natural affinity for blood-relations, but as demonstrated by several Islamic empires, '*asabiyyas* can grow beyond kinship using religious ideology.

71 British Government of India Report No. 18 of 1870, *Records of Bahrain*, Vol. 2, 305.

72 Ibid.

73 The Shia Baharna reached out to the Persians in 1817. See: British Foreign Office Confidential Memorandum on the Separate Claims of Turkey and Persia to Sovereignty over the Island of Bahrein, March 25, 1874, *Records of Bahrain*, Vol. 2, 329.

tribes in Bahrain – who to this day refuse to intermarry with the native Shiites – accepted the Huwala community, Sunnis with mixed ethnic backgrounds (non-tribal lineages) who for several generations had lived and worked in Persia, establishing a lucrative trade network that reached Asia. The sectarian 'asabiyya was also institutionalized by an annual tribute – each Sunni tribe's largest pearl of the year – paid to the ruling Al Khalifa sheikh. This sectarian cohesion was the backbone of the conquering Al Khalifa's regime and allowed the imposition of forced corvée, despotic agricultural taxation on and the confiscation of lands from the Baharna Shia. The permanence of the Shia population, providing both a constant threat and source of wealth, meant the sectarian 'asabiyya would remain strong enough to prevent the Khaldunian circulation of elites which would otherwise have eroded the cohesion of the tribal dynasty.⁷⁴ The Al Khalifa led Sunni conquest “killed and expelled” the Shia Baharna living on the east coast of the island.⁷⁵ Since then Al Khalifa sheikh has taken the title *al-Fateh* (the conqueror), legitimizing their exploitation of the Shiites as the spoils of war.⁷⁶ By 1790, the Shia Persians who could, chose to exit, and migrated out of in Bahrain en masse.⁷⁷

Interestingly, the vanquished Persian vassal, Sheikh Nassir al-Madkhur, who was from a notable family in Shiraz which traced its lineage to Oman, may have assisted the Sunni takeover of the Bahrain. Earlier Sheikh Nassir had converted from Sunni to Shia

74 Ernest Gellner, *Muslim Society*, Vol. 32 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

75 Graham E. Fuller, and Rend Rahim Francke, *The Arab Shi'a: The Forgotten Muslims* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 121.

76 Mansoor al-Jamri, “Prospects of a Moderate Islamist Discourse: The Case of Bahrain,” MESA'97, Middle East Studies Association 31st Annual Meeting, San Francisco, 22 Nov. 1997.

77 British Foreign Office Confidential Memorandum on the Separate Claims of Turkey and Persia to Sovereignty over the Island of Bahrein, 25 March, 1874, *Records of Bahrain*, Vol. 2 (Archive Editions, 1993), 329.

Islam and married a Persian woman in a bid to become Admiral of the Persian Navy. After he converted he was despised not only by Sunnis, but also by Shiites, for having chosen to practice the Persian *Usuli* school of Shi'ism. During the 18th century two sects of Twelver Shiism, the *Akhbari* and Usuli schools, were in a doctrinal conflict. Akhbari sheikhs refuse independent reasoning while interpreting the Quran and Hadith while Usuli sheikhs do not.⁷⁸ In the first half of the 17th century Bahrain's leading scholar, Sheikh Ali bin Suleiman al-Bahraini al-Qadami (d. 1653) established the Akhbari school in Bahrain which is the more popular sect among Bahrain's Shiites today.⁷⁹ In an email exchange, Juan Cole offered “that they [the Baharna] were Akhbari distanced them from the pro-Usuli Fat'h Ali Shah in Iran and so Al Khalifa were not at so much a disadvantage with regard to legitimacy versus Qajar Iran.”⁸⁰

D. British Informal Empire Gets Involved

In the 19th Century Gulf shipping was controlled by the Al Qawasim tribe of Sharjah who collected tolls on shipping through the narrow Straits of Hormuz. British East India Company ships who refused to pay the toll had been attacked on several occasions.⁸¹ This elicited a limited response by British warships. But it was the 1798 French expedition to Egypt, with the purpose of getting French Troops to India, which prompted the British to deploy major military and diplomatic resources to the Gulf. The deployment of British

78 Fu'ad Ishaq Khuri, *Tribe and State in Bahrain: The Transformation of Social and Political Authority in an Arab State* (University of Chicago Press, 1980), 71.

79 Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam: The History and Doctrines of Twelver Shi'ism*, 118.

80 Personal correspondence (email) with Dr. Juan Cole, 30 Jan. 2013.

81 James Onley. *Britain's Informal Empire in the Gulf, 1820—1971*. *Journal of Social Affairs*. Vol. 22, Number 87, Fall 2005.

warships accelerated again after Napoleon and Fat'h Ali Shah Qajar signed the Treaty of Finkenstein in 1807.⁸² This and the growth of European trade activity in the Gulf led the British to force leading Sheikhs from Ras al-Khaimah, Jorat al-Kamra, Abu Dhabi, Zyah, Dubai, Sharjah, Bahrain, Ajman, Umm al-Qawain to sign the Maritime Truce of 1820 on February 5 of that year.⁸³

The British involvement in Bahrain grew as result of internal conflict. The first Al Khalifa emir was Ahmed Al Khalifa. His sons, Abdullah and Salman, acted as his representatives at home and abroad. Before Emir Ahmed died in 1796, his final order was that his sons rule Bahrain in tandem.⁸⁴ This tandem rule continued peacefully until 1825 when Salman died and his son, Khalifah, took his position. Abdullah then used his seniority to shift feudal titles of Baharna date gardens from Salman's line to his own.⁸⁵ From 1825 to 1869 the Al Khalifa family was embroiled in a deadly internecine conflict over which of these two lines would rule Bahrain and control the date gardens. When the feud attracted brigands and outside tribes from Qatar, the British used an 1861 treaty as pretext to intervene in the Al Khalifa's feud.⁸⁶ After a military intervention which resulted in the destruction of the Abdullah branch's fort on Muharraq Island,⁸⁷ the British installed the 20-

82 Amini Iradji, *Napoleon and Persia: Franco-Persian Relations Under the First Empire*, (Mage Publishers, 1999).

83 "General Treaty with the Arab Tribes of the Persian Gulf – 1820," *Arabian Treaties 1600-1960*, Vol. 2 (Archive Editions, 1992), 7.

84 Muhammad Ghanim Rumayhi, *Bahrain: Social and Political Change Since The First World War*, Vol. 5, (London: Bowker, 1976), 4.

85 Ibid.

86 "Friendly Convention entered into between Shaikh Mahomed bin al-Khalifah, Independent Ruler of Bahrain and Captain Felix Jones Political Resident of Her Britannic Majesty in the Gulf of Persia, on the part of the British Government, 1861," *Arabian Treaties, 1600-1960*, Vol. 2 (Archive Editions, 1992).

87 Report No. 276 from Lewis Pelly, Political Resident Persian Gulf to the Secretary of the Government of Bombay, 25 Sept. 1868, *Records of Bahrain*, Vol. 2 (Archive Editions, 1993), 5.

year-old Isa bin Ali Al Khalifa as sole ruler in 1869, and the leaders of the Abdullah branch were exiled to India.

E. The Political Economy of Pre-modern Bahrain

The indigenous Shia Baharna's primary activity in the 19th century was the cultivation of date palms. These trees produce a uniquely nonperishable fruit, high in sugar content, whose skin is naturally germ-free and whose seeds are very resilient making them ideal for export. For centuries these farmers supplied pilgrim caravans en route to Mecca. The islands other economic activity was pearl diving, but this activity was dominated by Sunni tribes who exploited laborers, often slaves, from Africa and Persia. Because settled-agriculture was an unthinkable occupation for a tribal Arab, whose traditions were grounded in nomadic pastoralism, it was necessary for the Al Khalifa family to keep the Shia Baharna on the land rather than force their immigration.

After the British made him Emir, the uncles, cousins, brothers and sons of Sheikh Isa received feudal titles over entire Baharna villages.⁸⁸ In practice these lands were not inheritable nor of a set size. The ruler could, when needed, redistribute estates when one of his died or became too rich, effecting balance among competing Al Khalifa factions. The ruling family members did not personally lord over their titled lands, but would contract a Shia Baharna *wazir* (minister) to act as agent in subletting plots to individual farmers. Rent paid by farmers was in-kind, but taxes were not universally applied, some Shia villages controlled directly by the ruler containing families personally loyal to him paid no poll or

⁸⁸ For a description of Sheikh Isa's patronage of Baharna villages see Khuri, 43.

water taxes at all.⁸⁹ For collecting rents and enforcing its dictates the sheikhs of the ruling family hired Arabs who had no tribal pedigree and African slaves as enforcers known as *fidawi* (follower).⁹⁰

Like most cities along the Gulf littoral pearling was the largest employment sector. During the late 19th century pearling employed 20,000 men worked on 500 pearling boats in Bahrain.⁹¹ These men were given seasonal pay advances known as the *salaf* which carried high interest rates which often exceeded the diver's share of the catch at the end of the season, forcing them into a debt scheme which amounted to lifelong bondage.⁹² Pearling activity starts mid-May and stops in late September. A captain would take his crew to sea for two two-month periods with a five-day break in between. The largest ships carried 100 divers but the average was 30. For each diver there was also a rope-man who pulled the diver to the surface. In addition, each ship had a cook, a singer, and a complement of apprentices and serving boys meant the average ship supplied income for roughly 75 families.⁹³

Pearls were sent to market in India and dates were sold to pilgrims in Mecca.⁹⁴ The absence of mutual interdependence in the two main productive centers, agricultural hamlets and pearling villages, helped to cement the sectarian social divisions. A rough estimate of

89 Ibid., 48.

90 *Fidawi* are mercenaries loyal to the individual sheikhs who hire them. Khuri writes that they were of Baluchi and African origin, were armed with clubs, and were authorized to arrest and beat any Shiite who was suspected of resisting taxation or forced labor projects known as *sukhra*.

91 J.G. Lorimer, *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Oman and Central Arabia* (Gerards Cross, England: Archive Editions, 1986), 247.

92 Rumayhi, *Bahrain: Social and Political Change Since The First World War*, 46.

93 Holes, *Dialect, Culture, and Society in Eastern Arabia*.

94 Muhammad Ahmad Hasan Abdulla. *The Regional Identity of Bahrain: a Historical-Geographical Study* (Academic Publication Council, Kuwait University, 1996).

the ethnic based class distribution of wealth indicates foreign trade earned the Baharna community 1.15 German crowns per person in 1824. In comparison the Sunni tribal community earned 80 crowns per person.⁹⁵ The disparity in wealth between the Sunni towns and the Shia farming villages fueled the institutionalization of sectarian communalism.

F. Conclusion

The central concern of this chapter is understanding the role that sectarian differences between the indigenous population and the colonizing Sunni Arab tribesman played in the evolution of the political economy. The informal institutions of nomadic, Arab tribalism (the rejection of out group marriage and agricultural work) created of separate economic spheres. Though the British imperial deployment into the Gulf greatly limited the Al Khalifa regime's ability to conduct independent foreign relations, without it the the threat of external intervention was high, owing to the family's inability to divide and conquer the islands peacefully. A fact which has a damning impact on Herb's theory of dynastic resilience.

The impact at each level in the institutional framework that characterizes Sunni tribal norms, in overarching terms, the colonization of Bahrain by Sunni tribal society imposed upon the indigenous, settled Shiites a subordinate social status. This is putting it lightly. Despite being Arabs, Shiites were isolated from joining the ruling group by normative prohibitions on Sunni-Shia marriage and the rejection of agricultural activity by

⁹⁵ Estimates put the Baharna community at 45,000 and the Sunni tribal community at 20,000. See Kelly, 29. The 1824 "Trade of Bahrein" report indicates pearl exports totaling 1.6 million German marks and agriculture and cottage industry exports at 52,000 marks, *Arabian Gulf Intelligence* (Oleander Press, 1985), 569.

the Nejd's tribal Arabs.⁹⁶

At the more specific institutional level, the Al Khalifa regime's transition from the first to second generation by a contentious process dictated by the first ruler was an important deviation from the established tribal norm of allowing the tribe to collectively choose the next ruler. The negative consequences of this were manifest during the mid 19th century. The dispute over succession fractured the Al Khalifa family yet constrained the other Sunni tribes into choosing between a candidate for rulership from one of two branches of the Al Khalifa family. Furthermore, the British maritime treaties recognized the Al Khalifa as the rulers of Bahrain, this further institutionalized the deviation from tribal norms. Both changes to the succession process constrained the British when they sought to end the internecine conflict by forcing them to also choose between one of two Al Khalifa branches instead of the wider tribal grouping. These unique features of Bahrain, the deep social cleavage between the Sunni ruler and the Shia population along with the subjugation of the latter into feudal subjugation backed by coercion and administered through local agents, gave the Shiites little opportunity to prosper and instead relied upon their religious endowments as a survival guarantee.

⁹⁶ Rebecca L. Torstrick and Elizabeth Faier, *Culture and Customs of the Arab Gulf States* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 2009), 121-25.

CHAPTER III

ECONOMIC CHANGES AND ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS

This chapter explains how economic changes and increasing British control during the first three decades of the 20th century leave the opposition groups relatively weak. This has major implications on the political economy of the rentier state which develops after oil production begins in the 1930s.

A. Sectarian Abuses and British Reforms

As Chapter II showed communal relations in Bahrain were not harmonious at the beginning of the 20th century. The Baharna were imprisoned, tortured, and raped by the ruling family and Sunni tribes on a regular basis. Their lands were confiscated by the ruling family or made pastures for Sunni tribesman's livestock.⁹⁷ The rise of Ibn Saud's Wahhabi *Ikhwan* (brotherhood) in the Nejd, limited the possibility of Shia migration. A corvée labor tax called *sukhra* was often demanded on the Baharna and was their most common grievance. "The system of 'Sukhra' is regarded, as you may well understand, by the British Government as objectionable in the same manner as slavery," said a British diplomat in 1904.⁹⁸ To cope with their abysmal condition the Baharna relied on income from land endowments controlled by Shia clerics who paid for communal events, especially Ashura, the celebration of Husayn's martyrdom in Karbala.⁹⁹ Fuccaro estimated that 30% of

⁹⁷ Lorimer, *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Oman and Central Arabia* (Archive Editions, 1986), 248-249.

⁹⁸ Letter no. 259 from Captain F.B. Prideaux to Sheikh Isa bin Ali al-Khalifah, 7 Nov. 1904, *Records of Bahrain*, Vol.3 1892-1923, (Archive Editions, 1993), 191.

⁹⁹ Husayn ibn Ali, d. 13 October 680 CE, was the son of Ali ibn Abi Talib (fourth and final Rashidun Caliph of Sunni Islam, and first Imam of Shia Muslims) and Fatimah Zahra, daughter of the Islamic prophet

Bahrain's date plantations were held in Shia endowment during the 19th century.¹⁰⁰

European and Persian merchants also suffered from the royal family. One man caught a gang of thieves¹⁰¹ employed by the ruler's nephew which necessitated his hiring a bodyguard for fear of retributive assassination.¹⁰² Another incident with a German merchant led the British to exile the same nephew, Ali bin Ahmed, governor of Manama. The British were aggravated at the Al Khalifa's abuses of their imperial subjects and asserted control of mixed courts in 1905 to punish the insolent sheikhs.¹⁰³ While in practice the British Political Agent in Bahrain ensured justice, he had no legal base to do so. To prevent Iran and the Ottomans from claiming extra-territoriality in Bahrain the British published a decree, signed by Sheikh Isa, formalizing his submission to British control.¹⁰⁴

The new British authority created a contradictory, dual administration which competed with the Al Khalifa's private courts. These courts were a common forum for a Baharna farmer to lose his land for not having met his rent quota. During World War I the British used Bahrain as a base for their occupation of Basra, ensuring the Anglo-Persian Oil Company's exports which the British Royal Navy had lately become dependent on.¹⁰⁵ Seeing the growing value of oil, Bahrain's ruler guaranteed Britain an oil concession in

Muhammad. Husayn is an important figure in Shia Islam for having refused the Umayyad "usurper" caliph.

100Fuccaro, *Histories of City and State In The Persian Gulf: Manama Since 1800*, 23.

101Letter from Major Cox to Secretary of Government in India, Foreign Department, 17 Dec. 1904, *Records of Bahrain*, Vol. 3 (Archive Editions, 1993), 194.

102Testimony by Ali bin Mahomed, Persian of Dair given to Cox, Political Resident in Bushire. Enclosure no. 22, 19 Nov. 1904, *Records of Bahrain*, Vol. 3 (Archive Editions, 1993), 216.

103Letter from Major Cox to Foreign Department, Government of India, 4 Mar. 1905, *Records of Bahrain*, Vol. 3 (Archive Editions, 1993), 234.

104Talal Toufic Farah, *Protection and Politics in Bahrain, 1869-1915*. (Lebanon: American University of Beirut, 1985).

105Daniel Silverfarb, "The Anglo-Najd treaty of December 1915," *Middle Eastern Studies* 16.3 (1980): 167-177.

return for a small royalty.¹⁰⁶ But before the concession produced income the war's impact on trade pushed the ruling family into debt. "The outbreak of World War I, which caused great economic hardship throughout the region, forced Shaykh 'Isa to resort to merchant capital in order to rescue the town [Manama] from famine."¹⁰⁷ The pearl trade dipped from £1,451,000 in 1913-14 to only £79,800 in 1914-15. The imports of general merchandise fell from £980,300 to £545,060 in the same period.¹⁰⁸ To counter the corresponding dip in his revenues which were almost entirely financed by import duties, Sheikh Isa increased taxes on tranship goods bound for Arabia, angering Ibn Saud who the British were trying to persuade to join the war against the Ottoman Empire.¹⁰⁹ The British Political Agent began to worry about the regime's sustainability. Sheikh Isa's feudal system, appeared a suicidal policy to Major Dickson:

If he were a decent ruler and made any attempt at all to rule properly, he would know that he could raise revenue by such legitimate means as; numbering and taxing his native sailing craft, taxing pearling boats, selling some of his innumerable gardens to the inhabitants and so introducing a regular Date Tax, selling arable land for wheat and barley purposes and so introducing a Regular Land Revenue, farming the fisheries, sheep and camel tax.¹¹⁰ He later added, "the Island remains a dreadfully badly managed, and rapidly decaying private estate, with no revenue accruing from it at all."¹¹¹

To correct the situation Major Dickson, using the authority of the 1907 Order in Council, initiated a set of administrative reforms and the first municipal election in 1919. These were

¹⁰⁶*Records of Bahrain*, Vol. 3, 584.

¹⁰⁷Fuccaro, *Histories of City and State In The Persian Gulf: Manama Since 1800*, 81.

¹⁰⁸"War and the Trade of the Smaller Countries," *Economist* 11 Mar. 1916: 502. *The Economist Historical Archive, 1843-2010*.

¹⁰⁹Silverfarb, "The Anglo-Najd treaty of December 1915," 167-77.

¹¹⁰Letter from Major Dickson, political agent Bahrain, to Deputy Political Resident in the Persian Gulf, Bushire, 28 Feb. 1920, *Records of Bahrain*, Vol. 3 (Archive Editions, 1993).

¹¹¹Letter from Major Dickson to Deputy Political Resident in the Persian Gulf, 18 Mar. 1920, *Records of Bahrain*, Vol. 3 (Archive Editions, 1993), 615.

carried through by Major Daly, Dickson's replacement in 1920, which was also the year the Baharna began holding large demonstrations against the ruling family's abuses, triggered in part by the understanding that the Daly shared Dickson's sympathy for the Baharna.¹¹²

B. British Land Reforms

The major grievance that all Baharna shared was the ruling family's stranglehold on their agricultural land. As shown in Chapter II, control over many date orchards had been seized by the ruler and made into feudal estates. Junior members of the Al Khalifa extracted revenue from the orchards and gardens by leasing cultivation rights to their Baharna owners at continuously rising rates which led to abuses both physical and legal because the rent did not take into account changes in the date markets or bad crops. When a cultivator did not meet the terms of the lease he was in most instances beaten by fidawi, his produce confiscated and not infrequently removed from the land.¹¹³ As a partial solution, Daly allowed the Baharna to take out two-year leases which, if broken, could be rolled onto a new lease without fear of punishment. Furthermore, Daly banned all Al Khalifa private courts, a common forum for the confiscation of Baharna property.¹¹⁴ Daly also ordered a land survey completed. Delayed until 1926, the cadastral survey aimed at ending the ruling family's seizure and sale of Baharna farm land.¹¹⁵ Daly also established a land records office

112 The list of complaints against the ruling family was included in a petition to the British Political Agent. See letter from Major Richardson, Political Agent, Bahrain to Deputy Political Resident, Bushire, 03 Aug. 1920, *Records of Bahrain*, Vol. 3, (Archive Editions, 1993), 629.

113 Mahdi Abdalla Al-Tajir, *Bahrain, 1920-1945: Britain, The Shaikh, and The Administration* (London: Croom Helm, 1987), 168

114 David Commins. *Gulf States : A Modern History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012), 142.

115 *Ibid.*, 80.

that would enforce ownership rights and prevent the Al Khalifa from selling land they did not own to merchants eager to engage their capital in land speculation. When the survey was completed in 1930 it showed 10,127 plots of land in six different categories: individual private property, religious endowments, government land, family owned private property, and land held collectively by heirs.¹¹⁶ A century after the colonization began, the cadastral survey showed that 30% of Bahrain's date gardens were outright owned by the ruling family, 40% privately held by Shia families (yet still taxed), and another 30% in mostly Shia religious endowments. But these reforms could not counter Mother Nature. Droughts in 1925, 1926 and 1932 hurt British attempts to revive the agricultural sector.¹¹⁷

C. British Administrative Reforms

Daly also created a single court for pearling related debt disputes and established the Manama Municipality with taxation, health, transportation, water, and electricity policies. The municipal charter mandated elected councilors be responsible “firstly to God and then to the Ruler for the welfare of the people entrusted to its charge.”¹¹⁸ It treated all persons, whether foreigners under British protection or “ordinary subjects” of the ruler, equally. More importantly it attacked the ruling family's long list of abuses against the Shiites.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶Holes, *Dialect, Culture, and Society in Eastern Arabia*, 49.

¹¹⁷“Persian Gulf Coast Hit By Long Drought,” *New York Times*, 03 Jul. 1932, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/100584610?accountid=8555>.

¹¹⁸“Bahrain Municipal Regulation, No. 1 of 1921,” prepared under Article 70 of the Bahrain Order in Council 1913, 19 Aug. 1921, *Records of Bahrain*, Vol. 3 (Archive Editions, 1993), 651.

¹¹⁹Examples of Shia complaints against the ruling family in 1920 include the embezzlement of a Shia endowments, Sheikh Abdullah selling land he did not own. A Jewish prostitute assisted Abdullah's fidawis in blackmail scheme. Abdullah abducted a married woman from Sinabis and raped her. Abdullah's wazir in Jidhafs abducted young girls to rape. Abdullah attempted to steal a massive pearl. Abdullah collected undue taxes from Shia estates. Abdullah claimed dead men's homes as his own. Abdullah abducted and then pimped Shiite girls from Houreh. Abdullah's son Mohammed raped a girl from a well known family.

The transformative policies are found in paragraphs six and seven of the charter. Clause six read, "It is the right of the citizens of a town who pay taxes to have a voice in the expenditure of the taxes they pay and at any moment they have the right to demand scrutiny of the Municipal books." and clause seven, "No person living in a city has a right to refuse to pay the taxes imposed on him by the Municipality provided these do not exceed what is just, and provided as in the case of Bahrain such taxes are approved by the ruler and the political agent. It is a point of principle also that no man should be free from taxation." Addressing taxation Daly reorganized the Customs Department which collected duties at the port, revenue which provided the bulk of the treasury. The ruler's agent, an Indian who reportedly took bribes from the merchant community, was replaced by an English man. In addition, Daly hired Charles Belgrave, a British civilian, to be Sheikh Hamad's budget officer in 1926. Lastly, Daly had Sheikh Hamad appoint Suleiman bin Ahmed al-Hiraz as the top Shia *Qadi* (judge) in a bid to end pilfering of the Shia *waqf* (religious land endowment). Though the position was traditionally selected from within the Shia community, Daly noted that the previous Qadi had been abusing his position to the detriment of the community. This attempt to build a rational, central administration, enforced by an impartial police, Daly and the British hoped to end Baharna abuses, limit criticisms of British control thereby securing British interests and creating a sustainable regime. Unfortunately, the theoretically subordinate Sunni tribes and their patrons within the Al Khalifa had little incentive to accept the reform agenda.

Hamud bin Sabah murdered a man and then attempted to murder the man's family. The ruler's son Mohammed had his fidawis kill a Shiite boy from Jidhafs.

D. Conservative Opposition

Ruling family opposition to the British reforms was led by Abdallah and Khalid Al Khalifa, Sheikh Hamad's brothers who were seen as patrons of Sunni pearling tribes, especially the Dowasir, a large tribe that had settled in Bahrain around 1850.¹²⁰ Yet Abdullah's corruption and intriguing made him a symbol of oppression for the Baharna,¹²¹ his removal from the Joint Court and Municipal Council in 1921 was a major victory for the Baharna and blow to the Sunni tribes.¹²² Sectarian tensions escalated and thousands of Baharna took part in sit-ins and pro-reform petitions during the spring months of 1922.¹²³ The Dowasir tribe appealed to Ibn Saud for support in opposing reforms.¹²⁴ This worried Sheikh Isa who stalled for time. The following spring the Sunni tribes erupted in open defiance and began attacking Shia villages.¹²⁵ Anti-Persian riots closed the bazaar,¹²⁶ and a group of armed Nejdi bedu approached the British Political Agent's Office.¹²⁷

At a public meeting on May 26, 1923 Knox, the British Political Agent, forced Sheikh Isa to retire from active service and his first son Hamad was made ruler. The

¹²⁰The Dowasir tribe founded the village of Buidaya on the Northwest corner of Bahrain. In 1909 this tribe controlled 8% of all pearling ships, a large and very lucrative percent given the tribe's modest size and late arrival to Bahrain, "Table of Boats and Men Employed in the Pearl Fisheries of the Persian Gulf, 1907," *Records of Bahrain*, Vol. 3, (Archive Editions, 1993), 519.

¹²¹Letter by Lieutenant Colonel Trevor, Consulate General Bushire to the Foreign Office in Delhi, 19 Jan. 1922, *Records of Bahrain*, Vol. 3, (Archive Editions, 1993), 692.

¹²²Khuri, *Tribe and State in Bahrain*, 92.

¹²³Report by Major Daly in Bahrain to Lt. Colonel Trevor in Bushire, 13 Feb. 1922, *Records of Bahrain*, Vol. 3 (Archive Editions, 1993), 702.

¹²⁴Letter from Lt. Col. Trevor, Political Resident Persian Gulf to Mr. Bray, Foreign Secretary to the Government of India, 25 Jun. 1922, *Records of Bahrain*, Vol. 3 (Archive Editions, 1993), 717.

¹²⁵Khuri, *Tribe and State in Bahrain*, 94.

¹²⁶Telegram from Viceroy of Foreign and Political Department to Secretary of State for India, 11 May 1923, *Records of Bahrain*, Vol. 3 (Archive Editions, 1993).

¹²⁷Telegram from Knox to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 11 May 1923, *Records of Bahrain*, Vol. 3 (Archive Editions, 1993).

Baharna celebrated and triggered the second act of “The Battle of Ali” as Baharna oral tradition remembers it.¹²⁸ This involved two separate incidents of Dosari tribesman attacking the Baharna village of Ali, in May and June of 1923, burning homes and in the latter attack killing several Shiites.¹²⁹ The intent of these attacks was symbolic of the Dosari refusal to recognize Hamad as the ruler and the rejection of the increased British control.

The Sunni opposition began a campaign against Daly and organized an all Sunni congress.¹³⁰ There are conflicting accounts of what happened next. Official reports from Daly indicate the Dowasir tribe left Bahrain on their own accord following the arrest of their leader. The Dowasir hold that they attacked Ali, the second time, after a Dosari woman was accused of breaking a pot at the weekly market in front of a big Shia mosque in Suq al Khamis, a village southwest of Manama. Following the second attack, Daly reportedly threatened a naval bombardment of the Dowasir village if they did not leave the island within five days.¹³¹ In either case more than one thousand Dowasir tribesman migrated to al-Hasa where another branch of their tribe lived.¹³²

To enforce Hamad's rule, Daly formed a police force using 150 conscripts from the India Levies recruited in Baluchistan.¹³³ These trained and armed foreign troops were

128Holes, *Dialect, Culture, and Society in Eastern Arabia*.

129Telegram from Daly to Knox, 24 June 1923, *Records of Bahrain*, Vol. 3 (Archive Editions, 1993), 32.

130Mahdi Abdalla Al-Tajir. *Bahrain, 1920-1945: Britain, The Shaikh, and The Administration* (London: Croom Helm, 1987), 65.

131For an explanation of the British position see Al-Tajir, 65. The al-Dowasir position can be read in Holes.

132Al-Tajir, *Bahrain, 1920-1945: Britain, The Shaikh, and The Administration*, 65.

133From Al-Tajir, 70. A sepoy in this force later tried to kill his sergeant, during which he shot and bayoneted Daly. The whole company of sepoy was shipped back to Muscat. After this affair several entries in Belgrave's papers tell of some of these same men rejoining the police in Bahrain privately. Belgrave also writes about hiring at least one Egyptian and one Sudanese soldiers for the police force. However, Belgrave recruited the bulk of the replacements, 108 Punjabi men, during a trip to India in November 1927. It is unclear to me if they were fresh recruits or former soldiers. In addition, Belgrave's 1927 state budget lists 37 Arab policeman and 113 local armed watchmen. See *Records of Bahrain*, Vol. 4, 1923-

commanded by a British officer allowing Daly and Hamad to secure the new administrative reforms against the Sunni rebellion. By the end of 1924 Daly and Hamad's elimination of sukhra and judicial injustices had won the Baharna's full support. But the Sunni tribes and members of the royal family sent an assassin to kill Sheikh Hamad in October 1926.¹³⁴ The plot failed and two Al Khalifa princes were convicted, but escaped their death sentences (a first for a member of the ruling family) by fleeing to the mainland. After Daly, the longest serving political agent (6 years), was rotated out of Bahrain, the guiding imperial hand became Belgrave. Despite Belgrave's warnings the British approved Hamad's request to allow the exiled Dowasir tribe to return. Not only did Hamad give back the property Daly had confiscated, but he even paid the Dowasir reparations for their loss in revenue. Sheikh Hamad also gave all his family amnesty for their insurrections and pardoned all responsible for an attack on the Shia village on Sitra Island in 1923. This pardon also included the 1926 assassination attempt. With Daly gone, Hamad not only pardoned those convicted of attempting to kill him but increased their allowances to prevent it from happening again.¹³⁵

The British reforms, which curbed the ruling family's power, had clearly caused a rift in Al Khalifa elites and cracked the kinship cum sectarian 'asabiyya which kept the Al Khalifa in power. The anti-reform position attracted a majority of senior members of the

1932, 433. In October 1930 British officials agreed to Sheikh Hamad's request to reduce the number of Indians in the police force from 80 to 60 and replace them with Bahraini men who I have no doubt were Sunni bedouins, See report No. 597-8 of 1930 British Residency & Consulate General Bushire, 25 Oct. 1930, *Records of Bahrain*, Vol. 4 1923 – 1932 (Archive Editions. 1993), 612.

134Al-Tajir, *Bahrain, 1920-1945: Britain, The Shaikh, and The Administration*, 77.

135An excerpt from Belgrave's diary dated 19 Dec. 1927, "Went over some business but the only thing that he [Sheikh Hamad] took any interest in discussing was the canceling of his reduction in allowances to some of the Al Khalifa which Alban & I persuaded him to make. He hinted again that the attempt to assassinate him last year was someone very near to him, I fancy he may have meant Abdulla, & his excuse for canceling the reductions was that it might happen again if he annoyed his family."

ruling family who were supported by the rebellious Sunni tribes. Because the minority pro-reform faction centered on the British-backed deputy ruler, the anti-reform faction must have deliberated how to proceed in expelling Sheikh Hamad. But because the anti-reform faction knew that they could not depose Hamad, owing to Daly's foreign police, they logically perceived that an assassination was required.¹³⁶

Besides describing the Sunni pushback on reforms, helping define the political conflict, the interfamily feuding provides early evidence that challenges Michael Herb's theory of dynastic resilience, outlined in Chapter I, which argues that intra-family disputes are settled internally by bandwagoning around the more powerful faction. We might go so far as to use this historical perspective to understand the current conflict wherein a conservative faction, led by descendants of the same 1920s assassins, are challenging the current Crown Prince's political reforms, backed by the US. This predicts that the anti-reform majority may attempt to remove the Crown Prince and his minority of Al Khalifa allies, and if desperate will attempt his assassination. But let me be clear, this position against the Herb argument is also strengthened by the fact that Al Khalifa's internal-feuding over reforms often takes years to sort out. Instead of describing it as a bandwagoning process, I think most of the low-ranking Al Khalifa members are better described as fence-sitters, refusing to take sides.

Leaving this theoretical debate for now, we can return to the historiography. The 1920s episode generally ended in Sheikh Hamad's favor. The Dowasir tribes departure from

¹³⁶No literature yet suggests that Daly's shooting and stabbing and the attempted assassination of Sheikh Hamad are connected, yet I believe there is a possibility they will be in the future.

Bahrain reduced their possession of pearling ships by half and their relocation to Dammam meant paying taxes and conscripts to Ibn Saud. By allowing the Dosari to return to Bahrain, Sheikh Hamad repaired the sectarian 'asabiyya that kept other tribes, with powerful connections to the mainland, from mounting a bid to oust the Al Khalifa dynasty. A threat not so unthinkable given Ibn Saud's expansionist regime and his strong ties to the Dosari tribe. To deal with his own rebellious family, Sheikh Hamad banished two of his first cousins, but paid their room and board abroad, so the exile was much more like a long vacation than a punishment. Hamad also hired the very nephew who organized the 1926 assassination as his personal assistant, and increased cash allowances to the family. In fact, British agents complained Hamad had no interest in governmental affairs and constantly requested budget increases for the family allowances.¹³⁷

E. Collapse of the Pearl Market and Agricultural Issues

“The pearl divers, from whom all the wealth of the place comes, are actually slaves, capable of being handed from one Arab Captain to another, bought & sold.” -Diary of Charles Belgrave, 5 April, 1926

While living onboard ships for four months per summer the pearl divers (and their rope pullers) developed a strong class solidarity yet never formed a labor movement. Instead their grievances were heard individually at village level tribal courts. The Al Khalifa regime relied on the tribal sheikhs to control the divers via boat captains who were themselves Sunni tribesman financed by a “King of Pearls,” a tribal chief who was also a

¹³⁷Khuri, *Tribes and State in Bahrain*, 98.

pearl merchant.¹³⁸ Unbeknownst to the Bahrainis, a new King of Pearls was taking control of their industry. In 1901 Japanese entrepreneur Mikimoto Kokichi began producing “farmed” pearls. By 1925 Japan's 33 pearl farms produced 7,000 pearls per year, a decade later 10,883.¹³⁹ This glut of Japanese pearls and the global recession destroyed demand. In 1929 £375,000 worth of pearls returned from the US unsold. Bahrain's pearling community moved forward cautiously. Fear of losses led to a decrease in pay advances for divers and pullers. From 1920 to 1926 Sheikh Hamad had set diving pay in consultation with the Customary Court, one of Daly's reforms meant to protect divers from debt-bondage. After Daly left in 1926 the tribal sheikhs reversed the policy and set the diving pay themselves. When the divers refused to sail in May 1930, the merchants feared looting and met at the Political Agent's office to request British protection. Sheikh Hamad and Belgrave got the money-lenders to “lend” Rs. 20 to each diver against his end-of-season wages, a small concession which was accepted by the divers who had few other options.¹⁴⁰

But by 1932 the pearl market went comatose. Divers and pullers pay dropped from Rs. 100 and 75 respectively to Rs. 30 and 25, the lowest in recorded history. That summer a mob of divers attacked the Manama police station in May to free a colleague who Belgrave arrested for “making mischief among the divers,” in other words, the diver had called for protests.¹⁴¹ Having no cash to pay the divers their customary advances, the ships' captains

138“In general pilots and entrepreneur merchants were Arab tribesman, export merchants were Banyan of Indian origin, and divers and pullers were Baluchis, south Persians, and people of African origin.” Khuri, 66.

139Paul Southgate and John Lucas, eds. *The Pearl Oyster* (Elsevier, 2011), 304.

140Belgrave diary entry dated 19 May, 1930. <http://www.scribd.com/doc/16225787/Papers-of-Charles-DalrympleBelgrave-19261957>.

141Ibid., 26 May 1932.

were forced to give the crews letters of free agency, breaking the financial social control which fueled the Sunni tribes economic base. From 1930 to 1945 Bahrain's number of pearling boats dropped from 509 to 121 and 1935 was the last year European pearl buyers came to Bahrain.¹⁴² Thousands of divers joined protests during the early 30s, some lead to rioting. In response the head divers were publicly flogged by the police in 1933. An event which marks the shift of power from the tribal sheikhs to the municipal council.¹⁴³ But the divers' protests also marked the beginning of a widening of the opposition. The collapse of the pearl market laid the grounds for cross-sectarian, class based opposition and undermined the institutional sectarianism inherent in the division of labor. What I mean here is that Sunni divers, a large group of workers who were taking pay cuts or simply losing their jobs, began to protest against the conspicuous wealth of the Al Khalifa elite alongside, if not with, the Shia Baharna. But unlike the Shia, many Sunni divers chose to exit, to migrate away from the island, which undermined the prospects of a labor movement.

In the agricultural sector, a global depression in the early 1930s caused falling date prices and several consecutive years of drought meant many Baharna were unable to pay their land rents to their Sunni lords. These Shiites were taken to tribal courts where the ruler's own brother issued harsh sentences including the confiscation of their homes. To counter this trend the British introduced agricultural programs to increase production of export commodities, mostly wheat, but land speculation and drought prevented their

¹⁴²Al-Tajir, *Bahrain, 1920-1945: Britain, The Shaikh, and The Administration*, 130.

¹⁴³Fuccaro, *Histories of City and State In The Persian Gulf: Manama Since 1800*, 162.

successes. In 1934, the Baharna farmers began to hold “excited meetings” and circulated a petition calling for judicial reforms, including the publication of civil and criminal codes, the restoration of a Board of Education, and proportional sectarian representation in the municipal and administrative councils.¹⁴⁴ After delivering their petition a notable Shiite went so far as to tell the British adviser, Belgrave, that if the Al Khalifa government did not enact reforms they knew one who would – a reference to Shia support from Iran.¹⁴⁵

In 1935, the British Political Agent explained the increase in sectarian troubles:

The ill-feeling between the Baharinah and the al-Khalifah has, however, again become acute owing to a series of incidents in the past year: the conversion of one of the al-Khalifah to the Shi'ah faith, date garden troubles due to the fall in prices which has seriously affected the tenancy system in vogue, a feeling that they are not sufficiently provided with educational facilities, the depredations caused by camels belonging to the Shaikh, alleged unfair judgements by Shaikh Salman bin Hamad in the Bahrain Court and other smaller matters.¹⁴⁶

A 50% decrease in the market price for dates meant the Baharna were spending money they did not have when leasing date orchards. In addition, oil production began in earnest in 1934 causing a rise in land prices as foreign companies began building facilities. Land owners began to divide and sell agriculture land for non-agriculture purposes. While urban centers received electricity and other advances, the government budget excluded village development until the late 1950s and a prohibition on artesian wells in 1940 further undermined village productivity. Another trend among Sunni tribal merchants and the ruling family was to abandon Baharna sharecropping in favor of hiring Sunni laborers from

144Gordon Lock to Political Resident Bushire, No:C/112-1.b/5, 18 Feb. 1935, *Records of Bahrain*, Vol. 5 (Archive Editions, 1993), 92.

145The notable who made the reference was Mohsin al-Tajir. See Al-Tajir, *Bahrain, 1920-1945: Britain, The Shaikh, and The Administration*, 37.

146Gordon Lock to Political Resident Bushire, No:C/112-1.b/5, 18 Feb. 1935, *Records of Bahrain*, Vol. 5 (Archive Editions, 1993), 92.

al-Hasa and Oman, increasing Shia unemployment. Instead of protesting these changes the Baharna exited the agricultural sector and joined the oil field workforce.¹⁴⁷ The oil company's bus fleet precluded the need for worker camps, allowing the Sunni and Shia Bahraini oil field workers to maintain relatively strong communal identities vis-a-vis a class/employment identity.¹⁴⁸ This meant the Baharna's could exit the feudalism of agricultural work, join with Sunni laborers, but keep their communal identity and sectarian grievances.

F. Conclusion

As was made clear in the introduction this chapter provides a lead up to a critical historical event, the production of oil in Bahrain, which, when received, put Bahrain on an particularly authoritarian path. In Yom's study of Kuwait made a simple but elegant observation,

When incumbents enjoyed copious income from oil exports in conjunction with weak opposition, they chose to anchor state authority through exclusionary means. They constructed narrow ruling coalitions that excluded broader societal interests and failed to create the political institutions that could mobilize grassroots support and organize popular cadres during crises.¹⁴⁹

The breakdown of Bahrain's traditional political economy on the eve of oil production had enormous political consequences. The global recession's effect on pearl prices, along with improvements in Japanese pearl farming, led to a crisis in Bahrain's 2,000 year old trade. The power of the Sunni tribal sheikhs, based on their pearl wealth,

147A.O Hirschman. *Exit, Loyalty, Voice* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970).

148Fuccaro, *Histories of City and State In The Persian Gulf: Manama Since 1800*, 218.

149Sean Yom, Review of *Hard Times in the Lands of Plenty: Oil Politics in Iran and Indonesia*, by Benjamin Smith, *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 42, no. 1 (02, 2010): 164-166.

was correspondingly reduced. Thousands of Sunni men were put out of work, many migrated out of Bahrain and undermined Sunni tribal power. At the same time the agricultural sector became depressed. Most Baharna farmers could not pay their rents, many lost their leases and lands. The point is that all of Bahrain's social groups entered the 1930s in a weak economic position vis-a-vis the regime, which in 1933 began receiving oil royalties, a source of wealth which neither the Sunni tribes, Huwala and Persian merchants, nor Shia Baharna had any hold over. This simple yet powerful observation does much to explain why Bahrain is where it is today.

Yet this chapter's history is important in that it describes the tug-of-war over the British reforms. A conflict which conditioned how Sheikh Hamad would use the oil royalties. The Shia, who had an initial victory, actually moved further away from reconciling with the Sunni tribal leaders who resented their alliance with the British and perhaps deepened the sectarian divide. The next chapter dives into this question of a conditioned development of the oil fed allocative economy, explains the formation of a radical cross-sectarian labor movement, and the promotion of the Huwala community from trade merchants to middlemen who increase their own power by taking positions in the growing state administration.

CHAPTER IV OIL AND UNREST

The Baharna suffer from an inferiority complex, in the past they were really oppressed, but they are not now & lately they have been getting rather swollen headed and think they do not have sufficient say in the Government. They are about 2/3 of the population but they are poor and the big merchants are arabs not Baharna, the Baharna are Shia & the Arabs are Sunni. - Charles Belgrave, 28 Jan. 1935

In the decade since Belgrave arrived to Bahrain to act as Sheikh Hamad's budget adviser he and his position had grown extremely powerful. Belgrave basically took over the country's entire administration, acting as judge, jury, tax man, police chief, and head of the regime's political decision making. Many of Belgrave's diary entries you can see his growing contempt for everyone, save the occasional visiting Englishman, but especially the Shia underclass. It would be easy to succumb to the temptation to ascribe much of the regime's despotism to this one man. However, there were much bigger forces at play, forces and traditions which predate Belgrave.

This chapter details the political conflict which arose out of the shift in the political economy which followed a 1912 British geological survey which indicated petroleum lay beneath Bahrain.¹⁵⁰ In 1915 Emir Isa bin Ali (r. 1869-1923) pledged a monopolistic oil concession to the increasingly present British mission in Bahrain.¹⁵¹ In 1925, a British company received an extremely favorable two-year exploration license from Sheikh Isa by drilling several fresh water wells during a drought. But after several years of complex negotiations the American Standard Oil Company won the rights to begin Bahrain's oil

¹⁵⁰Angela Clarke, *Bahrain: Oil and Development 1929-1989* (1990), 306.

¹⁵¹Khuri, *Tribe and State in Bahrain*, 134.

production on the condition that the new oil company, Bahrain Petroleum Company (BAPCO), be registered in Canada under British law. The deal also stipulated BAPCO's Board of Directors would have one chair appointed by the British Government, and the company would employ British technicians.¹⁵² The first shipment of Bahraini crude left aboard an American ship headed for Japan in 1934. That year Isa's son, Sheikh Hamad (r.1923-42), signed a 55-year agreement with the BAPCO for the development of Bahrain's oil field.¹⁵³ Two years later a 200,000 barrel per day refinery was built on Sitra Island producing gasoline, kerosene, diesel, and bunker fuel.¹⁵⁴ To feed the refinery a pipeline was built by BAPCO so Saudi Arabia's oil could feed the refinery its full capacity. In 1934 Bahrain's royalties amounted to only \$16,750 but within two years they amounted \$173,000 and the sum kept growing.

Combined with the fading value of pearls this meant that for the first time the ruling family controlled more money than the urban merchants, Sunni pearling tribes and the Baharna combined. To supplement their declining income farmers and pearl divers sought work at the new oil company. There they competed with an influx of new foreign workers from India and Iran.¹⁵⁵ BAPCO's managers argued they needed Iranian workers because they were more skilled and Indian workers because they were cheaper. The British agreed in part because the Government of India thought the remittances to India would grow the economy there but were wary of Iranian workers bolstering Iran's territorial claims over

¹⁵²Clarke, *Bahrain: Oil and Development 1929-1989*, 309.

¹⁵³Ibid., 157.

¹⁵⁴Ibid., 158.

¹⁵⁵"A Citadel Of Oil," *The Times* [London] 19 Apr. 1938.

Bahrain.¹⁵⁶

A. The 1938 BAPCO labor strike

During the construction phase of the oil field, 1932 to 1937, a limited number of Bahrainis from both sects enjoyed employment opportunities at BAPCO as drilling crews and construction workers building a refinery on Sitra Island. To a lesser degree this was also true at the construction site of the new British naval base in Al Juffair, a village just south of Manama, in 1935.¹⁵⁷ But by 1938, with construction largely complete, BAPCO laid off 1,780 Bahrainis (expat employment also fell by 500). The Bahrainis who kept their BAPCO jobs were angered that Iranian workers continued to be paid higher wages. A joint Sunni-Shia petition from students and a group of non-tribal merchants was written. On Nov. 1 the petition was submitted to Sheikh Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa demanding preferential hiring policy at BAPCO, and parity with foreigners in housing, transportation and wages. Political posters began appearing, petitions circulated, and high school students in the new, desegregated schools discussed the anti-colonial movements in Cairo, Damascus, and Baghdad.¹⁵⁸ More importantly, the groups demanded a national legislative committee consisting of three Shia and three Sunnis.¹⁵⁹ This latter demand was the work of the Manama merchants whose members were upset by Belgrave's heavy handed dismissal of the work they had done with Daly to establish the Manama municipal council and the

156 Ian J. Seccombe. "Labour migration to the Arabian Gulf: evolution and characteristics 1920-1950." *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 10.1 (1983): 3-20.

157 "Naval Stations In The Gulf," *The Times* [London] 8 Apr. 1935.

158 Al-Tajir, *Bahrain, 1920-1945: Britain, The Shaikh, and The Administration*, 240.

159 Rumayhi, *Bahrain: Social and Political Change Since The First World War*, 197.

first public schools.

And 1938 was an active year across the Gulf. Like their neighbors in Kuwait and Dubai, the Bahraini merchants were still suffering from the decline in pearling and the overall depression in trade. The merchant activists began to espouse nationalistic views as the ruling family swam in oil royalties which totaled £250,000 in 1938, of which 1/3rd was kept for the ruling family and 2/3rd going to Belgrave's state budget. Two social clubs in Manama, *al-Ahly* (The Nationals) and *'Uruba* (Arabists) provided space for the nationalist movement's growth. There they shared and discussed Egyptian newspapers and political magazines.¹⁶⁰ The leader of these merchants, Yusuf Fakhroo (1871-1952), a successful import merchant of Huwala extraction who had financed the emir's budget deficit during World War I, began to sponsor joint Sunni-Shia meetings with Sheikh Salman, the ruler's eldest son. As his father aged, Salman feared he was being passed over in favor of his younger brother Abdullah. This led Salman to seek support from outside the family in case of a succession conflict.

The British Political Agent and Belgrave responded to the labor and nationalist movement's cooperation by giving a minor concession concerning reforms in the Shia courts and the dismissal of an unpopular Shia judge.¹⁶¹ Belgrave then ordered two Sunnis arrested, lawyer Sa'ad al-Shamlan and Ahmed al-Shirawi, an employee at BAPCO who was organizing workers, especially Sunnis, into a nonsectarian group.¹⁶² Belgrave's moves were

¹⁶⁰Ibid., 196.

¹⁶¹Report from Political Agent, Bahrain to Political Resident, Kuwait, 3 Nov. 1938, *Records of Bahrain* (Archive Editions, 1993), 123.

¹⁶²Sa'ad al-Shamlan's son Abdelaziz had been one of seven Sunni boys sent to the American University of Beirut in 1928 indicating he had been in Sheikh Hamad's favor. Budget cuts forced the boys to be recalled after two years.

an obvious attempts to divide the opposition along the familiar sectarian lines. In response to Belgrave's arrests of al-Shamlan and al-Shirawi, a youth movement, *al-Shabab al-Watani* (the National Youth), organized street demonstrations demanding their return. Belgrave ordered the police, who were "practically all Arabs"¹⁶³ (Sunni tribesman loyal to the ruler) to beat the students and arrest the leaders.¹⁶⁴ On 6 November, al-Shabab al-Watani called for a strike at the BAPCO refinery. Truck drivers, gaugers, and office workers responded and formed a picket line blocking roads to the BAPCO refinery and oil field. This escalated the situation. Belgrave made more arrests, which led to even larger protests against him. Eventually the entire bazaar was shut down by protesters after their leader, Ali bin Khalifah al-Fadhhal, a merchant and former secretary of the Manama municipality, was arrested during a night raid on his home. The youth distributed more leaflets demanding al-Fadhhal be released and the formation of a national labor union.¹⁶⁵ Again, Belgrave ordered more arrests and BAPCO managers made an example of 18 Bahraini workers on strike at the refinery by firing them off the job permanently.¹⁶⁶ After two days of intense clashing with police the protests subsided.

163Report from LTC Fowle written to the India Office, London, 23 Dec. 1937, *Records of Bahrain*, Vol. 5 (Archive Editions, 1993), 219.

164Letter from Shabab al-Watani to Political Resident, Bahrain, 4 Nov. 1938, *Records of Bahrain*, Vol. 5 (Archive Editions, 1993), 131.

165One such notice was documented by the Political Agent, Bahrain and translated for a telegraphed report dated 27 Oct. 1938. "Congratulations to you, O' Noble Public. The oppression will now be waived. You have heard from your leaders and speakers what has proved to you that the oppression is almost over. Be ready and await further order."

166Telegram from Political Agent, Bahrain to Political Resident, Kuwait, 12 Nov. 1938, *Records of Bahrain*, Vol. 7 (Archive Editions, 1993), 136.

B. Comparison with Kuwait's "Popular Rentierism"

In the 1930s the tribal Al Sabah dynasty in Kuwait also came near to losing power to a group of urban merchants demanding legislative powers. Because Kuwait's oil field did not begin production until 1938, the Al Sabah regime was more dependent on the urban merchants' payment of import duties and boat taxes. Unlike Bahrain, the British had not seen fit to become engaged in Kuwait's domestic affairs except to give recognition to the Al Sabah sheikh as the ruler. Furthermore, neighboring Iraq's pan-Arab movement, which openly called for the annexation of Kuwait, provided a compelling threat for the Al Sabah regime to make concessions to the opposition lest they ally with the Iraqis. This threat was made all the more real by the Kuwaiti merchant communities land holdings in Iraq. These land holdings produced rents which helped to buffer the Kuwaiti merchants from the pearling and entrepôt trade recession.

In June 1938, when Kuwait's 150 leading merchant families organized a shadow government to take control of the government and oil revenues the British gave their tentative support to the merchant movement as a way of guarding their own interests in the event the merchants succeeded. The Al Sabah countered by calling their tribal brethren to physically back the regime and guarantee the dynasty's rule. Just before the two sides came to blows hundreds of semi-nomadic farmers from the southern coast (Qusour) began riding into the city wearing their customary battle dress. These bedouins had been insulted by a merchant decree banning their pitted tomatoes from the bazaar. The news of the Qusouri's arrival persuaded the rebellious merchants into mediated negotiations with the ruler. But

having won the showdown the ruler simply began arresting members of the Merchant's council and appointing a new one stacked with loyal merchants.¹⁶⁷ Yom says that at this point,

Sheikh Ahmad's initial victory over this existential threat should have provided a compelling reason to permanently destroy this antagonist class to prevent more rebellions. Yet the regime took the opposite path. By the early 1940s, Ahmad had freed most jailed Majlis activists and amnestied exiled dissidents. The old pact returned. The al-Sabah government continued to tolerate the merchant and trading caste, which in retaining its assets and mobility remained an integral part of Kuwaiti society on the eve of the oil age.¹⁶⁸

Why did it do this? In 1938 more than 60% of the £60,000 which made up Kuwait's public revenues came from merchant taxes. The regime could not afford to shatter its most productive class, writes Yom. Furthermore, the regime learned which social groups were discontented or distrustful of the merchants. Loyal bedouin tribes, urban Shiites, and poor laborers who had not supported the merchants during their rebellion were "groups no longer seen as passive social units, but rather as sources of political support that needed to be engaged and captured."¹⁶⁹ By comparison, more than 74% of Bahrain's government revenue came from oil royalties in 1938, which totaled £298,725, and were paid directly to the ruler by BAPCO.¹⁷⁰ As is immediately obvious, no merchant or farmer held sway over the economic riches of Bahrain's regime and crushing protests had little effect on the ruler's fortunes. Like Kuwait, the 1938 protests in Bahrain taught the Al Khalifa who its friends

¹⁶⁷Kamal Osman Salih, "The 1938 Kuwait Legislative Council," *Middle Eastern Studies* 28.1 (1992): 66-100.

¹⁶⁸Yom, "Oil, Coalitions, and Regime Durability: the Origins and Persistence of Popular Rentierism in Kuwait."

¹⁶⁹Ibid.

¹⁷⁰Calculation derived from export totals detailed in Rumaihi, 72. Historical oil prices are from British Petroleum records, and exchange rate data from "The Rupee Exchange." *The Economist* 30 Apr. 1938, Using royalty rate of 3.5 Rupees per ton which was available in Clarke's book.

were, Sunni tribesman, foreign managers and immigrant laborers, who prevented the striking Bahrainis from causing more than a temporary disruption in oil output.

C. The 1953-56 Popular Uprising

In 1951, Iran elected Mohammad Mossadeq as Prime Minister. His mandate was to renegotiate the terms of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. The British balked at a proposed 50-50 profit sharing deal and when Mossadeq nationalized the company the British Navy set a blockade at Abadan. The next year, Egypt's Free Officer Revolution replaced the monarchy with an Arab republic. With examples of successful radical nationalist movements in Shia Iran and Sunni Egypt, Bahrainis of both sects converged to form their own nationalist demands. Photos of Mossadeq were seen in Manama's bazaar and a surge in subversive political activity by young Shia militants and Sunni Hawala radicals began.¹⁷¹ Leaders of the two groups merged via the *Sawt al-Bahrain* (Voice of Bahrain) editorial board, an independent monthly magazine that published from 1950 to 1954.¹⁷²

In September 1953, the annual Ashura parade in Manama erupted in violence after a member of the ruling family drove his car into the procession.¹⁷³ A fight broke out and hundreds of Sunni spectators and policeman attacked the Shiite parade. "All reliable reports of the morning's brawl agree that the police had no idea of crowd control and no notion of drill; that they appeared to be for the most part Sunnites themselves and so, naturally

171 Qubain, "Social Classes and Tensions in Bahrain."

172 Fuccaro, *Histories of city and state in the Persian Gulf: Manama since 1800*, 179.

173 Rumayhi cites Littlefield, who stated it was Sheikh Abdullah b. Jaber who started the fights, but corrects Littlefield with "It was in fact Shaikh Daij b. Hamed." Rumayhi, *Bahrain: Social and Political Change Since The First World War*; endnote 17, page 230.

enough, thought the best way to restore order was to hit a Shiite.”¹⁷⁴ Rumors of Sunnis being killed sparked two days of sectarian violence. More than 70 Shiites were hospitalized.¹⁷⁵ Sectarian tensions escalated in Bahrain. Eight Shiites and three Sunnis were put on trial for brawling at the BAPCO refinery. The regime-stacked courts convicted four of the Shiites as provocateurs and handed down multi-year prison sentences while the three Sunnis received but one month each. This caused further sectarian rioting. The BAPCO riot convictions also coincided with several other anti-Shia judicial rulings. Belgrave, who was then acting as Chief of Police and Supreme Court Judge, became the focal point of Shia demonstrations. A very large crowd of them formed at the British Political Agent's office, and a general strike was called.¹⁷⁶ Two days later, on 2 July 1954, a group of 200 Baharna, bussed into Manama to the Mumain Mosque across from the police fort and demanded the release of the men sentenced for the BAPCO riot. The police opened fire killing four and wounding 11.¹⁷⁷ The Shiite worker's strike at BAPCO held for another five days.¹⁷⁸ The nationalist opposition leaders feared sectarian strife and worked to increase cross-sectarian communications by appealing to the popular resentment of “urban conservatism and imperial encroachment.”¹⁷⁹ Groups of young, secular, white-collar workers who had found jobs in the growing administration compelled protesters to submit a joint Shia-Sunni list of

174A report from Wall, Political Agent Bahrain to Burrows, Political Resident in Bushire, 05 Oct 1953, *Records of Bahrain*, Vol. 7 (Archive Editions, 1993), 18.

175Fuccaro, *Histories of City and State In The Persian Gulf: Manama Since 1800*, 162.

176Telegram from Political Agent Bahrain to Political Resident, Dubai, 30 June, 1954, *Records of Bahrain*, Vol. 7 (Archive Editions, 1993), 38.

177Report by Burrows, Political Agent, Bahrain, 20 July 1954, *Records of Bahrain*, Vol. 7 (Archive Editions, 1993).

178Telegram No. 453 from Political Agent to Foreign Office, 10 July 1953, *Records of Bahrain*. Vol. 7 (Archive Editions, 1993), 44.

179Fuccaro, *Histories of City and State In The Persian Gulf: Manama Since 1800*, 172.

demands to the ruler on July 3. Their demands were an elected parliamentary government, removal of all Al Khalifa family members from the judiciary, the election of Municipal, Health, and Education councils, accountability for the Chief of Police (dismissal of Belgrave), compensation paid to those affected by the Ashura riot of 1953, and the punishment of police officers who fired into the crowd on July 2, 1954. The regime made some empty promises but failed to begin meaningful work on the list.

Soon after, taxi, bus, and truck drivers went on strike in September 1954 in response to a decree forced them to purchase insurance from foreign companies. The drivers feared price gouging and demanded the right to form a union.¹⁸⁰ Abdel Rahman al-Bakir, a prominent Sunni who had a law degree from India, negotiated the end of the driver's strike and organized a local insurance cooperative.¹⁸¹ Al-Bakir and the other nationalist activists capitalized on the success of mediating between workers and the regime. On October 18, 1954 a group of 3,000 Shia and Sunni, gathered at a mosque in the village of Sanabis.¹⁸² The group elected a committee of 100 to draft a new petition calling for a constitutional monarchy. They decided that if the ruler would not accede to the petition a representative would travel to Cairo to seek the Free Officers' support and submit their demands to the British official there.¹⁸³ Furthermore, the general assembly elected four Shia and four Sunni

180"Minutes," by Political Resident, 3 Oct. 1954, *Records of Bahrain*, Vol. 7 (Archive Editions, 1993), 75.

181Rumayhi, *Bahrain: Social and Political Change Since The First World War*, 214.

182Rumayhi cites Ali Humaidan's estimation that the number of those attending this meeting in Sanabis stood at 20,000, but clearly says "This is an overestimation." However, the problems describing this meeting do not end there. Rumayhi and the British Agent's accounts disagree on the number of people elected to the popular assembly, 120 v. 100 and there is disagreement on which date this meeting took place. Rumayhi has it at 13 October and the British at 18 October. I accept the the British version because it is a primary document.

183Report by Political Agent J.W. Wall to Foreign Office, 25 Oct. 1954, *Records of Bahrain*, Vol. 7 (Archive Editions, 1993), 70.

to a Higher Executive Committee (HEC) tasked with communication and leadership between the communities involved.¹⁸⁴

The petition the HEC submitted was simply-worded and demanded that legislative, judicial, and executive authority be transferred to an elected body.¹⁸⁵ Sheikh Salman and Belgrave quite arrogantly replied that it was “not practicable” and dismissed the opposition's assembly as a fraud which only represented a few villagers. On November 2 the HEC organized a more capable strike which was estimated to have stopped 70% of the country's economic activity, if only temporarily, by spiking or otherwise blocking the roadways. Under pressure from the Americans to sort this out the British Agent advised a public relations campaign including the printing of a newspaper explaining the positive role the government played in society.¹⁸⁶ The government did so and also setup a special grievances committee to hear individual complaints. By December 4 only 5% of BAPCO's laborers were at work and the grievances committee was boycotted. The regime deployed its entire police force to keep roads around Manama open and a force of Bedouin began to patrol the pipeline.¹⁸⁷ 50 more foreign policemen, several armored cars and a British officer were drafted into the government security service.¹⁸⁸ The Manama Municipal elections in February 1955 were boycotted by the HEC while they moved forward organizing the first

184 The Sunni HEC members were: Abdul Rahman al-Bakir, Abdulaziz al-Shamlan, Ibrahim bin Musa, Ibrahim Fakhroo; and the Shia members: Mohasin al-Tajir, Abdullah abu Dheb, Said Ali Said Ibrahim, and Abdali al-Aliwat.

185 Translation of the petition signed by the Higher Executive Committee, 28 Oct. 1954, *Records of Bahrain*, Vol. 7 (Archive Editions, 1993), 77.

186 Telegram from Political Agent Bahrain to Foreign Office, 12 Nov 1954, *Records of Bahrain*, Vol. 7 (Archive Editions), 79.

187 Telegrams 771, 776, 780, 781 and 799 from Mr. Wall, agent in Bahrain to the Foreign Office in Beirut, 2 Dec. 1954 through 11 Dec. 1954, *Records of Bahrain*, Vol. 7 (Archive Editions) 83-89.

188 Report by C.A. Gault, Agent in Bahrain to B.A.B. Burrows, Political Resident in Persian Gulf, 10 Feb. 1955, *Records of Bahrain*, Vol. 7 (Archive Editions), 110.

labor union. The HEC gave a letter to the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs when he visited Bahrain in March, asking why, if the British had long since rid itself of absolute monarchy, “does it not help other young rising countries rid themselves also gradually of similar abuses?”¹⁸⁹

The British and the sheikh only increased pro-regime propaganda by hiring Michael Rice & Co., a British public relations firm who hired Belgrave's son, James, as Bahrain's first Public Relations Officer.¹⁹⁰ Bahrain's ruler also tried to outflank the HEC by appointing a pro-government labor to hear worker grievances.¹⁹¹ More British administrative experts were hired, which Belgrave expected to dampen the HEC's accusations of corruption. The Muharram holiday that August was marked by anti-regime speeches in Shia ma'atams and Sunni private majlises, and afterwards the tensions between the HEC and the regime intensified. Clashes between the police and striking workers became daily occurrences. The British Political Agent requested more British troops to reinforce the police.¹⁹² Then the ruler tried to split the opposition by recruiting Shia notables into a sect based “National Convention Committee.”¹⁹³ The HEC quickly denounced it and enacted a boycott against this pro-regime organization.¹⁹⁴ Sheikh Salman also tried to undermine the HEC by forcing

189Letter from Higher Executive Committee to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 21 Feb. 1955, *Records of Bahrain*, Vol. 7 (Archive Editions, 1993), 120.

190James H.D. Belgrave, “Faster, Faster ...’ in Bahrain,” *Economist* [London, England] 4 Aug. 1956: 398. *The Economist Historical Archive, 1843-2010*. Web. 14 Mar. 2014. And; “Candidates For High Police Post.” *Times* [London, England] 19 Sept. 1966.

191Telegram No. 15 and No. 299 from Bahrain Political Agent to Foreign Office, 16 and 30 Apr. 1955, *Records of Bahrain*, Vol. 7 (Archive Editions), 160-163.

192Telegram No. 685 from Mr. Gault to Foreign Office, 19 Sep. 1966, *Records of Bahrain*, Vol. 7 (Archive Editions, 1993), 182.

193Hasan Tariq Al Hasan, “The Role of Iran in the Failed Coup of 1981: The IFLB in Bahrain.” *Middle East Journal* 65.4 (2011): 603-17.

194Abdulhadi Khalaf. “Contentious politics in Bahrain: From ethnic to national and vice versa.” 4th Nordic Conference on Middle Eastern Studies: The Middle East in a Globalizing World, Oslo, Norway. 1998.

the ruling family to make donations for Egypt's President Nasser who was denouncing British colonialism. This took place just before the British Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd visited Bahrain in March '56. When Lloyd arrived his motorcade was surrounded by protesters shouting profanities about Belgrave and chanted "Nasser, Nasser, Nasser."¹⁹⁵ Just a week later the police killed three protesters in the Manama Bazaar during a riot started by an Al Khalifa prince over a petty affair. Because clashes with the police were increasing in frequency and intensity, the British feared a regime collapse. The Foreign Office in London wrote to the political agent, "I want the Ruler to feel confident that we stand behind him and would of course send in British troops to assist in restoring order if there were a breakdown."¹⁹⁶ The bazaar shooting led to a labor strike and more anti-colonial street demonstrations. In response two British warships prepared for action in the Manama and Sitra harbors while a company of infantrymen landed at the BAPCO refinery augmenting two companies camped on the west coast. This gave the British Political Agent the leverage to settle the crisis peacefully and used it as an opportunity to force Belgrave to retire. The political agent also began a "dialogue" with the opposition, officially recognized by the government under a new name, the National Unity Committee (NUC).¹⁹⁷

Belgrave's forced retirement was a moral victory for the opposition, however, it did not solve any of the long-standing issues: judicial reform, labor unionization, immigration, housing, land and sectarian discrimination. Democratic demands continued to manifest themselves in the streets of Bahrain. Thousands turned out to welcome Jawaharlal Nehru,

¹⁹⁵Ibid., 223.

¹⁹⁶Ibid., 216.

¹⁹⁷Rumayhi, *Bahrain: Social and Political Change Since the First World War*, 219.

first prime minister of independent India, during a June visit. Indian expats and opposition members broke the police line and followed Nehru to his meeting with the emir's uncle, chanting Gamal Abdel Nasser's name and anti-British slogans.¹⁹⁸ While the opposition struggled to overcome the regime's British backing, the entire region was electrified by the news of Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal on July 26, 1956. When Egyptian forces were attacked by the British, French, and Israel, students in Bahrain marched in solidarity with Egypt and sacked several British buildings. Nasser's survival in the conflict inspired Bahrainis whose protests intensified afterwards. On 2 November, 1956 the NUC organized a large anti-colonial protest which became a riot, which caused properties in Manama to be destroyed.

The British had had enough of the NUC's provocation and believed they were on the brink of an anti-colonial revolution. The NUC's leading Sunni figure, Ibrahim Fakhroo, was arrested and a state of emergency was decreed by the emir. British troops were deployed alongside the police.¹⁹⁹ In the early hours of 6 November, the emir outlawed the NUC, arrested its leaders, convicted them of treason, and exiled three to St. Helena, the remote Crown colony infamous for having been Napoleon's island prison. Bahrain's reform movement was destroyed by the arrests and the country entered an era of repression. The regime's police force recruited a large body of Sunni men from South Yemen and Jordan to act as a riot squad and a special political crimes investigation unit was established; torture and indefinite detentions became common.²⁰⁰ At the moment of greatest potential for a non-

198Confidential Telegram No. 578 from Mr. Gault, Political Agent to Foreign Office, 21 June 1956, *Records of Bahrain*, Vol. 7 (Archive Editions, 1993), 325.

199"Riots in the Oil Sheikdoms," *The Economist*, 10 Nov. 1956.

200Rumayhi, *Bahrain: Social and Political Change Since The First World War*, 221.

sectarian political liberalization, a British military intervention allowed Bahrain's regime to liquidate the joint Sunni-Shia opposition.

D. Kuwait's response to Arab Nationalism

During the 1950s an Arab Nationalist movement also organized in Kuwait. It drew support from some sections of the merchant community and expatriate Arab workers who had immigrated to the Gulf in response to jobs created by the oil industry. They were bolstered with outside support from the Arab Nationalist regimes in Egypt and Iraq who were interested in Kuwait's oil reserves. As they had in Bahrain, these Arab Nationalists confronted the regime with demands for political liberalization and accused the Al Sabah regime of corruption and complicity with British imperialism. Towards the end of the decade the Al Sabah regime also used its police force to confront protesters but not to the extent that Bahrain had. Kuwait's experience in the 1930s had taught the Al Sabah regime negotiations and concessions could diffuse opposition movements without endangering the regime's survival. The Al Sabah government's response was to begin buying land from merchant families at enormously inflated costs. This dovetailed with the regime's granting of business monopolies to the big merchant families. The final touch was the unspoken agreement that the Al Sabah family itself would stay out of the private sector.²⁰¹ The effect was immediate. Kuwait's regime faced little internal opposition during the heady years of pan-Arab Nationalism. When Kuwait received independence in 1961, it further

²⁰¹Yom, "Oil, Coalitions, and Regime Durability: The Origins and Persistence of Popular Rentierism In Kuwait."

institutionalized regime support by drawing electoral districts for its National Assembly that gave disproportionate representation to conservative Sunni Bedouin settlements and working-class Shia neighborhoods.²⁰² For external security the Al Sabah dynasty guaranteed British protection by depositing much of its wealth in British banks, helping to stabilize the British economy. Having given Kuwait her independence, yet still reliant on her oil, the British sought to prevent Iraq's invasion of Kuwait by installing a quick reaction force in Bahrain. This policy increased the number of British forces in Bahrain, which could also be used to crackdown on Bahraini protesters.²⁰³

E. The March Intifada of 1965

After the 1950s experience with mass opposition, the Al Khalifa regime was constrained by the early decisions and institutionalization of grievances among a large part of the population, a narrow regime base was inevitable and so to was the continuation of mass protests. Following a mass layoff of 800 workers at BAPCO in the spring of 1965, Egypt's Nasser called on Bahrainis to join with workers to protest British colonialism.²⁰⁴ Manama High School students heard the call. They began protesting in the streets on March 5th, calling out "down, down, colonialism" and demanded the reinstatement of dismissed workers.²⁰⁵ Shops and schools were closed for most of March while the workers and students went on a strike led by the National Liberation Front (NLF), a Marxist

²⁰²Ibid.

²⁰³Anthony Verrier, "British Military Policy on Arabia," *Royal United Services Institution*. (1967) 112:648, pp. 349-355.

²⁰⁴"Growing Confusion On The Arab Scene: Cairo as a Disruptive Force," *Times* [London] 23 Mar. 1965.

²⁰⁵Telegram No. 26 from William Luce, Bahrain Political Agent to Mr. Tripp, Foreign Office, 12 Mar. 1965, *Records of Bahrain*, Vol. 7 (Archive Editions, 1993), 228.

organization with ties to the Tudeh Party in Iran.²⁰⁶ The police shot to death four protesters, two in front of a roadblock at the oil refinery.²⁰⁷ The government threatened that any shops not opened immediately would be closed permanently.²⁰⁸ Forty-six arrests were made in one week. British businesses were stoned and British citizens harassed.²⁰⁹ Thousands of protesters were herded onto Muharraq Island where they were blockaded for two days without water. During the siege British military helicopters dropped tear gas on the trapped protesters.²¹⁰ By March 23rd 1,500 of the 5,000 BAPCO employees reported for work to relieve the European managers who had been holding the place together on 12 hour shifts.²¹¹ The British Political Agent requested military intervention should the police be overrun²¹² but A US State Department telegram from Manama to Washington read, "POLICE PERFORMING WELL. NO REFUSALS TO CARRY OUT DUTIES."²¹³ No surprise, they were all Sunnis with tribal connections to the ruling family. Nonetheless the Arab Nationalists and NLF were able to paralyze the country for the entire month.

Continuing at the heart of unrest was the preference of foreign labor over Bahraini workers, the banning of labor unions and the emergency laws which had justified harsh

206 Ibrahim Kamal al-Din, "The role of the working class uprising in March 1965," 10 May 2004, *Center for Research and Studies of the Labor and Trade Union Movement in the Arab World*, (Arabic) <http://www.ahewar.org/debat/s.asp?aid=17953&t=3>.

207 "Three Killed In Bahrain Riots," *Times* [London] 15 Mar. 1965.

208 Weekly summary of events in the Middle East region. Memo. *Department Of State*. 2 Apr. 1965, reproduced in *Declassified Documents Reference System* (Farmington Hills, Mich.: Gale, 2014).

209 "More Rioting In Bahrain," *Times* [London] 16 Mar. 1965.

210 Confidential Cypher from William Luce, Political Agent Bahrain to Foreign Office, 15 Mar. 1965, *Records of Bahrain*, Vol. 7 (Archive Editions, 1994), 235.

211 Unrest in Bahrain discussed. *Department Of State*, 23 Mar. 1965, reproduced in *Declassified Documents Reference System* (Farmington Hills, Mich.: Gale, 2014).

212 Emergency Secret Cypher text from Foreign Office to Bahrain, No. 287, 13 Mar. 1965, *Records of Bahrain*, Vol. 7 (Archived Editions, 1993), 232.

213 Unrest in Bahrain discussed. Miscellaneous, *Department Of State*, 23 Mar. 1965, reproduced in *Declassified Documents Reference System*, (Farmington Hills, Mich.: Gale, 2014).

police tactics since the 1956 crackdown. When the situation calmed the regime blamed the strike on a communist group in Kuwait.²¹⁴ Internally, the British Foreign Office denied this claim.²¹⁵ The police and military forces arrested more members of the NLF, and forced many into exile. Just afterwards the Manama Municipal elections were held for the first time in eight years. In protest only 7% (380 out of 5,000) of voters turned out.²¹⁶ Though the elections boycott was successful, with the opposition's leadership in prison or exile, protests remained local, sporadic, and increasingly violent.

F. Henderson's Terror Squad

Contrary to the popular narrative pushed by the regime, which accuses Iran of fomenting an armed rebellion, a violent Shia opposition emerged from within the opposition after decades of harsh political oppression. The beginning of 1967 was marked by the bombing at the Muharraq Police Station. In response the Al Khalifa hired Ian Henderson, a colonial policeman infamous for his role in the suppression of the Mau Mau Uprising in Kenya.²¹⁷ Henderson became Bahrain's chief of state security and political investigations. No arrests were made in connection with the New Year's Day bombing but Henderson suspected the NLF.²¹⁸ When another bomb exploded at the East Muharraq Police

214 Telegram from Foreign Office to the Government, No. 135, 2 Apr. 1965, *Records of Bahrain*, Vol. 7 (Archive Editions, 1993), 280.

215 Telegram from Foreign Office to Tehran, No. 419, 26 Mar. 1965, *Records of Bahrain*, Vol. 7 (Archive Editions), 268.

216 Report by K. Oldfield to Foreign Office, 16 Aug. 1965, *Records of Bahrain*, Vol. 7 (Archive Editions, 1993), 307.

217 Obituary of Ian Henderson *The Telegraph*, 22 Apr. 2013, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/10011292/Ian-Henderson.html>.

218 Report from Bahrain Political Agent to Arabian Department, Foreign Office, London, 7 Jan. 1967, *Records of Bahrain*, Vol. 7 (Archive Editions, 1993), 83.

Station on February 10th Henderson ordered his police to roundup all suspected activists including remnants of the NLF.²¹⁹

According to Emile Nakhleha, Henderson's mission was to penetrate and defeat all opposition groups including peaceful democratic activists and violent revolutionaries.

The Security Service under Henderson's supervision and control commonly practised fear, intimidation, and 'enhanced interrogation methods. Henderson perceived all human rights advocates and proponents of the constitution and an elected parliament as 'radicals', 'extremists' and 'terrorists'. Many were arrested without due process or clear charges and often beaten and tortured. Some Bahrainis referred to Henderson as the 'Butcher of Bahrain'.²²⁰

Bahrain's opposition, under pressure from Henderson, suffered a symbolic injury when Arab forces led by Egypt's Gamal Abdel Nasser were routed by the Israelis in the 1967 June War.²²¹ It is noteworthy that Sheikh Isa was the only Arab ruler to allow oil to be loaded on ships destined for US forces in Vietnam, while all other Arab exporters embargoed shipments to the US as punishment for its support of Israel. Though the CIA called the ruling family "conservative and largely incompetent"²²² the US Government, obsessed with the Cold War against Communism, believed that: "It will be impossible for the petroleum industry to fuel an all-out war during the first six months unless the crude oil shortages can be eliminated by holding Saudi Arabia, Bahrein, Qatar, and Indonesia."²²³

219 Telegram from Bahrain Political Agency to Arabian Department, Foreign Office, London, 13 Feb. 1967, *Records of Bahrain*, Vol. 7 (Archive Editions, 1993), 85.

220 "Obituaries: Ian Henderson," *The Telegraph*, 22 Apr. 2013, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/10011292/Ian-Henderson.html>.

221 Confidential telegram No. 1131/67 from Bahrain Political Agency to Arabian Department, Foreign Office, London, 13 Feb 1967, 102.

222 National Intelligence Estimate no. 30-1-67, entitled: "The Persian Gulf States," Report, *Central Intelligence Agency*, May 18, 1967, reproduced in *Declassified Documents Reference System* (Farmington Hills, Mich.: Gale, 2014).

223 Oil, A National Petroleum Program, NSC 97/1, transmittal Note, James S. Lay, Jr., Exec. Secy, to the National Security Council, 27 Nov. 1951 Report, *National Security Council*, 27 Nov. 1951, reproduced in *Declassified Documents Reference System* (Farmington Hills, Mich.: Gale, 2014).

This calculation became critical for all the small Gulf States, especially the unpopular Al Khalifa regime in Bahrain, following Britain's announcement to withdraw all forces from Bahrain in 1971. No longer able to rely on British troops, the CIA predicted the Al Khalifa regime would be crushed by the Shah of Iran or overthrown by indigenous leftist nationalists.²²⁴ But in Washington, Cold War strategists were concerned for Japan's access to Bahrain's oil exports. To secure the regime and its oil, the US quietly deployed naval forces to the Mina Salman Naval Base, established US Embassy Manama in 1971, and replaced the British as the Al Khalifa's security guarantor.

G. Conclusion

The regime, with its oil rents, immigrant labor and foreign backing was under little pressure to widen its base of support. For the Shia majority, with their local identity, tradition of protest, activist clergy, and communal resources, were only partially prevented from staging protests by economic dependence on the state. Under the aegis of Arab nationalism, students and self-employed shopkeepers, who had their own form of economic independence, showed their solidarity with the BAPCO workers in 1965. From 1938 to 1965 mass protest became frequent, despite increasingly harsh repression. The use of repression was, on the surface, a straightforward survival strategy. What the next chapter shows is how a major disruption to the regime's security structure, the British departure, motivates the regime to experiment with institutional patronage channels by creating a

²²⁴National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) no. 30-1-67 entitled: "The Persian Gulf States," Report, *Central Intelligence Agency*, 18 May 1967, reproduced in *Declassified Documents Reference System* (Farmington Hills, Mich.: Gale, 2014).

parliament through which would be loyalists could access wealth and prestige. What actually happens is more interesting.

CHAPTER V PARLIAMENT AND PETITIONS

During the period following the British decision to withdraw from the Gulf the Al Khalifa regime experimented with parliamentary democracy. This opening was cut short by the October 1973 War between Egypt, Syria and Israel. In response to US support for Israel, the Arab oil producing countries indirectly raised the price of oil. Buoyed on increased oil rents, Bahrain invests in a relationship with the US. The US, still engaged in Cold War planning, reciprocated with security and diplomatic support. With the two countries interests aligned, the US Navy began renting the formerly-British naval base in Manama.

Chapter V also covers the under-studied impact of the Iranian Revolution on the Baharna. After several years the Iranian example lost its salience but did provide the Gulf Arab regimes new fodder for sectarian messaging, at least for a few years. Yet by the early '90s the democratic left was able to compose a new cross-sectarian alliance which led to five years of protest and violent instability.

A. The British Withdrawal East of Suez

In 1968, the UK announced a military withdrawal and an end to special treaty relations with Bahrain, Qatar and the UAE effective in 1971.²²⁵ In late 1964 the British Labour Party won control of parliament by a five-seat margin. Its electoral platform included reducing defense spending but maintaining its presence “East of Suez,” a phrase which included Bahrain. In 1966, under pressure to stem currency devaluation, the British

²²⁵US visit of Amir Sabah al-Salim al-Sabah of Kuwait, White House, 03 Dec. 1968, *Declassified Documents Reference System* (Farmington Hills, Mich.: Gale, 2014).

Labour Government completed its defense policy and budget review and reversed course on commitments in the Middle East. Before the British departed, US National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger concluded a stationing agreement for the continuation of the small American naval office in Bahrain known as Middle East Force (MIDEASTFOR).²²⁶ Established in 1951, MIDEASTFOR sent ships to various ports in the Gulf, showing the flag, but keeping a low profile. Its three destroyers were only in Bahrain 6 months of a year. The British withdrawal left the Americans to deal with the smaller Gulf monarchs who feared Iran, Iraq, and Saudi expansionism in the security vacuum.²²⁷ Through the 1970s the American naval force in the Persian Gulf increased slowly. In 1983, US Central Command was collocated with MIDEASTFOR in Bahrain, increasing the security of petroleum shipments through the Straits of Hormuz. American priority at the time was to contain Soviet and Iranian expansion while ensuring petroleum shipments to Japan. The American decision to resupply Israel during the 1973 October War led to the Arab oil price increases, production cuts, and finally a Libyan instigated embargo on Canada, Japan, United Kingdom and the US. This caused a spike in the market price of oil from \$3.5 to \$12 per barrel in a matter of days. The market price grew steeply until 1980 providing oil-producing states with an abundance of cash.

B. Retribalization of the Political Economy

The boom in oil prices allowed the regime to reward old loyalty and expand its

²²⁶Memorandum to National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger, Department of State, 6 Jan. 1972, *Declassified Documents Reference System* (Farmington Hills, Mich.: Gale, 2014).

²²⁷Background information on the US Naval Presence in Bahrain, Department of Defense, 15 Jul. 1973, *Declassified Documents Reference System* (Farmington Hills, Mich.: Gale, 2014).

political client list. As part of a plan for a post-oil economy, Bahrain's ruler, Sheikh Isa ibn Salman Al Khalifa, moved to capitalize on the new wealth in the region by granting licenses to foreign banks wishing to "take large deposits from the governments, ministries of finance, central banks, and banks of surrounding rich countries."²²⁸ The largest banks from Asia, Europe, and North America setup offices from which they could attract the growing number of rich Arab royals. Before receiving a commercial license all foreign companies were required to take on silent partners of Bahraini nationality.²²⁹ On the surface this business of local agents appeared normal, but the most successful agents were from particular Sunni Huwala and Arab tribal families who used their old relationship with the ruler to transition into the regime's base of support.

Since the 1950s banking in Bahrain has been dominated by the Sunni Huwala families. Today this trend is indicated by Abdul Razak A. H. Al-Qassim, CEO of the National Bank of Bahrain;²³⁰ Murad Ali Murad, Chairman of Bank of Bahrain and Kuwait; the Housing Bank; the Bahrain Institute of Banking and Finance Specific Council; and the Human Resources Development Fund;²³¹ Esam Janahi, Executive Chairman of Gulf Finance House;²³² Joining this list is Mohammed Abdul Rahman Bucheerei, Chief Executive Officer of the Ithmar Bank.²³³ Sunni Huwala families also generally dominate

228 "Bahrain looks to key bank role with offshore units," *The Times*, 10 Oct. 1975.

229 "How to Find the Right Trade Channel," *Financial Times*, 31 May 1983.

230 "National Bank of Bahrain Honours Long Serving Staff," *National Bank of Bahrain 2010*, accessed 15 Mar. 2014, <http://www.nbbonline.com/default.asp?action=article&ID=793>. The names of the people being awarded at this ceremony indicates a majority are Hala.

231 "No. 41, Murad Ali Murad, Bahrain Power List," *ArabianBusiness.com*, 26 Sep. 2009, accessed Feb. 15, 2014, <http://www.arabianbusiness.com/bahrain-power-list>.

232 Frederik Richter and Martin de Sa'Pinto, "Special Report: In Bahrain, a symbol at the heart of revolt," *Reuters*, 16 June 2011, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/06/16/us-bahrain-gfh-idUSTR75F4LF20110616>.

233 "Ithmaar Bank," *CPI Financial*, 2011, accessed 15 Mar. 2014,

Bahrain's business community, namely the Kanoo, Fakhroo, and Al Mo'ayyed families. In 1973 Tariq Abdal Rahman Al Mo'ayyed became Bahrain's Information Minister and represented the beginning of large Sunni merchant families moving into the upper echelons of the state.²³⁴

During the 1970s the *Financial Times* listed Ahmed Kanoo, son of the famed Yusuf Kanoo and Mohammed Jalal, as the most important merchant agents in Bahrain.²³⁵ Jalal is the son of a Muharraq shopkeeper. Working in Saudi Arabia's oilfield allowed Jalal to save enough to begin a construction company at home. After receiving a lucrative contract to build a bridge from Manama to Muharraq, he grew his capital via land speculation, creating new investments through the 1950s and 60s. The family then became a prime agency for several foreign automobile companies, especially the popular British company, Jaguar Cars.²³⁶ During the 1980s the Jalal family also represented Chrysler, Citroen, Alfa Romeo, Peugeot, Suzuki, and Subaru. In addition, Jalal had agency representation for IBM, Swiss manufacturer Schindler, and Irish equipment maker Ingersoll Rand, lucrative deals which he acquired because of his loyalty to the regime.²³⁷

For many tribal Sunnis, those with links to the mainland, the end of the pearling economy in the 1930s meant migration out of Bahrain. This is why the regime turned to the Huwala to exclude the Shia from business and banking. The Sunni tribal families who

<http://www.cpifinancial.net/directory/company/128/ithmaar-bank-b.s.c.->

234Biographic sketch of Minister of Information Tariq 'Abd al-Rahman al-Mu'ayyid. Report. Central Intelligence Agency, 22 Mar. 1976, *Declassified Documents Reference System*. Farmington Hills, Mich.: Gale, 2013.

235"Key Figures in Bahrain," *Financial Times*, 10 Feb. 1976.

236" Mohammed Jalal, the Force of Jaguar," 06 Feb. 2009. *Labour Market Regulatory Authority*, Government of Bahrain, (Arabic) <http://blog.lmra.bh/ar/archives/2106>.

237"Major Companies of The State of Bahrain," G.C. Bricault (ed.) *Major Companies of the Arab World* 1988, (Graham & Trotman Ltd., 1988).

remained were well rewarded. One of the largest pearl merchants in the 1920s was Abdel Rahman al Zayani.²³⁸ The Al Zayani clan, part of the large Bani Adwan tribe, comes from a village near Mecca and has wealthy branches in the UAE and Saudi Arabia. Following the 1973 oil boom the family became a business empire in its own right. Khalid Rashid Al Zayani was the chairman of the Bank of Bahrain & Kuwait and the Alubaf Arab International Bank, a member of the Board of Directors of the Bahrain Islamic Bank according to 1988 documents. He was also a director of the Bahrain Kuwait Insurance Co., owner of the Hotel Delmon, chairman of the Midal Cables Co.²³⁹ Today he limits himself to running the highly successful Al Baraka Islamic Bank, which operates in 12 countries.

His brother Hamid was chairman of the Bahrain Light Industries Co. Another brother, Ahmad Abdulrahman Al Zayani was the owner of the Gulf Plastic Industries. His cousin Jassim was a board member at the Bahrain Saudi Bank. The family also had a general trade agency where they acted as local partners for major foreign companies: Wickham Engineering, Eaton Corporation, Winget, Sanyo, Imperial Chemical, Otis International and Tecalemit. Rashid Al-Zayani's son, Abdullatif Bin Rashid, is a former deputy minister of Interior and the current secretary general of the GCC.²⁴⁰

Likewise, Bahrain's Sunni tribal Al Zubari family represented major companies in the oil sectors: James Walker & Co., Wilson Pipe Fittings and Joseph Nason's Malleable Iron Fittings Company. They represented large shipping companies like the Manila Cordage

²³⁸Papers of Charles Belgrave, 12 June 1926, <http://www.scribd.com/doc/54162009/Papers-of-Charles-Dalrymple-Belgrave-1926-1957>.

²³⁹Archie D'Cruz, "Master of his destiny, Success Stories: Khalid Al Zayani," *Visitor's Complete Guide to Bahrain 2000*, <http://www.bahrainguide.org/BG5/khalidzayani.html>.

²⁴⁰"Dr Abdullatif bin Rashid Al-Zayani takes Over as GCC Secretary General," *Bahrain News Agency*, 01 Apr. 2011, <http://www.bna.bh/portal/en/news/451374>.

Co. and Excelsior Ropes. They also had seats on the boards of the Unitag Group, National Insurance Co., Bramco Construction. Today Hisham Zubari is the Deputy CEO at Tatweer Petroleum and previous executive at BAPCO.²⁴¹

This retribalization in the 1970s and 80s – giving businessman from old merchant families or new businessmen with tribal pedigrees special access to state resources – became the regime's base building method and is the analogous to the Kuwaiti regime's system of side-payments during the 1950s.²⁴²

But this isn't to say that Shiites were totally excluded from the economy. A few loyal Shia merchant families also prospered during the era of big oil. The Al Fahad family's Abdulaal Construction Services, founded in 1944, became the Ebrahim Abdulaal Group (EAG), an impressively large company in the 1970s. The founder's son, Ali Bin Ebrahim Abdul-Aal, even represented an electoral district in Manama during the 1973 parliament.²⁴³ Ali Bin Ebrahim Abdul-Aal's LinkedIn profile reads: “Since 1977, EAG is highly involved in the development of the Kingdom of Bahrain and other neighbouring countries [Kuwait and UAE] by providing a comprehensive range of business development and strategic support services.”²⁴⁴ He later received several royal commendations from the government for his “service to the nation.”

By 1980 more than 80 major international banks had opened offices in Bahrain

241 “Hisham Zubari Deputy CEO at Tatweer Petroleum,” *LinkedIn*, accessed 15 Mar. 2014, <http://www.linkedin.com/pub/hisham-zubari/55/670/110>.

242 Many thanks to Ali Al-Jamri at the School of Oriental & Asian Studies who provided some insightful comments on re-tribalization in Bahrain.

243 “Mr. Ali Bin Ebrahim Abdul-Aal (Group Chairman),” *2007 Abdul-Aal Group Holding*, accessed 14 March 2014, <http://www.abdul-aal.net/Mr.Ali.html>.

244 “Ebrahim Alfahad, Chairman at EAG group of companies,” *LinkedIn*, accessed 15 Mar. 2014, <http://www.linkedin.com/pub/ebrahim-alfahad/70/785/123>.

holding billions of dollars in cash and investments.²⁴⁵ Compounding the success of this project was the simultaneous destruction of Beirut as a regional banking hub during Lebanon's civil war. But Bahrain had laid the groundwork for the banking sector expansion by early investments in satellite²⁴⁶ and radio telecommunications which enabled it to link with American, British, and Asian financial centers.²⁴⁷ Under pressure by private interests and the IMF, Bahrain's regime relaxed restrictions on work visas for Asian construction workers, deregulated the banking sector, cut contributions to the social welfare fund, and setup a stock exchange.

C. American Weapons, American Support

In 1974 the Bahrain Defense Forces commander, Col. Al-Khalifa, met with the US Embassy Officer and requested TOW anti-tank missiles, Stinger anti-aircrafts MANPADS, and the Hawk anti-aircraft missile defense system. In his report advising the US to deny the request Ambassador Twinam noted Bahrain had no need for such weapons and that the money would be better spent on housing and wage increases.²⁴⁸ Yet fears of Iranian and Soviet expansionism grew in the 1980s. By 1985 Bahrain had bought 12 F-5 supersonic fighter jets produced by the American company Northrop at a cost of \$2 million each. That year Bahrain also purchased M60 Patton Tanks from the US.²⁴⁹ Bahrain made access to

245“Bahrain Turns Sour for the Bankers,” *Financial Times*, 06 July 1988.

246“Bahrain Satellite Station Opened,” *Financial Times*, 15 July 1969.

247Peter Hopkirk, “Bahrain: Anxiety Replaces Calm,” *Times* [London] 06 Feb. 1980.

248US Ambassador Joseph Twinam informs Secretary of State Henry Kissinger of a request by the government of Bahrain to purchase US military equipment, Cable, Department Of State, 24 June 1974 *Declassified Documents Reference System* (Farmington Hills, Mich.: Gale, 2014).

249Background information concerning US-Bahrain military relations, which are based on a history of mutual trust and understanding. Memo, Department of State, *Declassified Documents Reference System* (Farmington Hills, Mich.: Gale, 2014).

sophisticated arms sales like the Stinger part of the unspoken agreement that allowed President Reagan to increase naval activity in Bahrain. This was a reversal of the usual trend of supplier states like the US and Russia offering client states weapons-for-access. In late 1987 the Reagan administration felt forced to publicly battle Congress over the sale of 70 Stinger missiles worth \$7 million.²⁵⁰ Earlier that year the US Government agreed to allow Bahrain to be the first Arab country to buy F-16 Fighter Jets, a \$400 million deal, paid for by the Saudi government.²⁵¹

In the post-British Gulf, Bahrain, along with the other Gulf Monarchs, initiated a protection racket with the United States. This approach to national defense resulted in the purchase of costly weapons by the Gulf States who could hardly field such weapons with their small, untrained armies. Yet this pursuit of American security guarantees via weapons purchases worked. By 1980 security matters, long-term basing agreements and weapons contracts were central to the US-Bahrain relationship and tied regional security to regime survival. By mixing financial and arms sector interests the Al Khalifa regime found powerful friends in Western capitals, especially Washington, D.C. In 1991 the US signed a 10-year Defense Cooperation Agreement with the Al Khalifa regime and designated Bahrain a major non-NATO ally allowing Bahrain access to the most sophisticated American weapons. Bahrain's position in the regional system was so good that by 1994 the US gave, free of charge, Bahrain's first 6 attack helicopters. A flood of free or low-cost weapons followed. By 1999 Bahrain had received 22 attack helicopters, 60 tanks, anti-

²⁵⁰David Ottaway, "Reagan Wins Big Fight Over Small Arms Deal: Missile Sale to Bahrain Has Political Price," *Washington Post*, 18 Dec. 1987.

²⁵¹David Ottaway, "US to Sell F16 Jets to Bahrain," *Washington Post*, 21 Jan. 1987.

aircraft radars, torpedoes, pistols, rifles, machine-guns, artillery, and grenade launchers.

From 1994 to 1999 the US Government military equipment grants to Bahrain totaled \$406 million.²⁵²

D. Oil Rents, Labor and Housing

Capacity expansion at the BAPCO refinery in 1960 helped to soften the effects of peak oil production in 1972. By then 75% of BAPCO's refinery output of 250,000 barrels per was from Saudi Arabia. But after the '73 price hike the government was able to finance several large industrial projects including the Alba aluminum plant, a massive oil-tanker dry-dock facility, and electricity and water desalination plants. And in a reversal of pre-'73 policy, the government facilitated foreign investment by creating several tax-free industrial zones.²⁵³ The government bought the 60% share CALTEX owned in BAPCO in 1976,²⁵⁴ finally giving it full control and making the state the sole source of economic growth. The oil price boom in '73 enabled the government to become the dominant factor in the economy. From 1974 to 1985 the number of government employees rose from 12,305 to 25,089 and wages rose from an average of 1,706 to 8,346 BD per year.²⁵⁵

In an ironic paradox, unemployment in Bahrain increased during the decade when the state's oil income was highest. From 1971 to 1981 official Bahraini unemployment grew from 4% to 11%,²⁵⁶ mostly due to lax restrictions on labor migration from Asia. Despite

252US Government *Excess Defense Articles* database, <http://www.dsca.mil/programs/eda>.

253Michael Prest, "As the oil runs down....," *Times* [London], 16 Dec. 1976.

254 Stefan Kembal, "Bahrain to Take 60% in BAPCO," *Financial Times*, 26 Sep. 1974.

255Khalid M. Abdulla, "The State in Oil Rentier Economies: The Case of Bahrain," *Change and Development in the Gulf* (1999): 51-78.

256Robert E. Looney, "Manpower policies in a semi-rich Oil Economy: The Case of Bahrain," *Journal of*

being the first Arab state to receive oil royalties, Bahrain's indigenous Baharna work force remained largely uneducated and utterly discriminated. Most new jobs created by government investment in private enterprise required white-collar skill sets which had historically been denied them. Furthermore, the government and business community wished to sidestep political confrontations with Baharna laborers. To do so, the booming construction sector which was building the King Fahd Causeway, the oil-tanker shipyard, and other large-scale projects, gave preference to cheap Indian laborers. Bahraini participation in the construction workforce to dropped from 54% in 1971 to only 13% a decade later (5,600 to 3,900 Bahraini construction workers). Foreign laborers numbered 12,000 in 1971; a decade later they were more than 86,000. In percentage terms the 1970s saw the foreign labor force grow from 38 to 59% of all workers.²⁵⁷ While thousands of Bahraini students left the school system every year,²⁵⁸ few had the English, mathematics and science skills necessary to become white-collar workers for the state, while blue-collar jobs were given to immigrants.²⁵⁹

The oil price hike also caused land prices and rents to skyrocket. Growth in the finance and tourism sectors attracted Western expatriates who paid higher prices for apartments and houses. For skilled European labor coming into Bahrain in 1977 renting a three bedroom house cost as much as \$3,250 per month.²⁶⁰ Many homes were converted into apartments for the British staff of Gulf Air. As the small but growing Sunni middle

Asian and African Studies 25.3-4 (1990): 3-4.

257Ibid.

258“Bahrain Turns Sour for the Bankers,” *Financial Times*, 06 July 1988.

259Alain Cass, “Manpower Planning at the Crossroads,” *Financial Times*, 09 July 1974.

260“Boom in Homes and Offices,” *Financial Times*, 31 Jan. 1977.

class were allowed into government financed housing projects on the outskirts of Manama land prices along the northern Shia villages which lined the highway from the Saudi causeway to Manama increase dramatically. Suburban property rose from 50-100 fils per square foot to 5-8 dinars (5,000-8,000 fils) in just three years.²⁶¹ A 321-acre plot of undeveloped land on the outskirts of Manama, that cost a Bahraini banker 7 million dinars in 1968, was valued at 42 million dinars in 1976. By 1985 the price of a square foot in Manama ranged between \$500 and \$800.²⁶² These new and wealthy settlements limited the physical growth of the Baharna communities at a time when their population was steadily growing.

The new Sunni middle-class was also rewarded with government financed housing projects like Isa Town and Adliyah where the majority of housing units were single homes, built on farm lands owned by the ruler and old merchant families. Likewise, the old merchant families built their own villas among date groves they had bought from the ruling family in the 1940s, land whose ownership was contested by the rural Shia since the Land Department's survey in the '20s.²⁶³ The Baharna were not so lucky. The government built much fewer, smaller, and poorly constructed apartment buildings in Shia villages which had higher population concentrations. While the number of urban homes increased from 25,841 in 1971 to 43,848 in 1981 the number of rural homes only increased from 5,204 to 8,962. While the Ministry of Housing and the Housing Bank started making land grants and loans to anyone looking to build a home, eligibility requirements favored government employees

261 Ibid.

262 *Highlights of the Human Settlements Situation in Bahrain*, (Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, 1987).

263 Fuccaro, *Histories of City and State In The Persian Gulf: Manama Since 1800*, 206.

who were almost all Sunnis. Both housing and employment inequality grew along sectarian lines.

E. False Start for Democratic Governance

In an astonishing reversal caused by the British naval withdrawal, on 19 December 1970, the nine-year anniversary of his accession, Sheikh Isa promised Bahrain a modern constitution.²⁶⁴ In August 1971 Bahrain and Britain signed a treaty of friendship marking Bahrain's independence and a constitution was drafted by a constituent assembly composed of 22 elected delegates, 12 ministers, and eight appointees.²⁶⁵ The new constitution maintained the dynastic monarchy but established a unicameral parliament called the National Assembly with 30 elected members empowered to review and ratify legislation and interrogate government ministers. The first National Assembly elections took place in December 1973 and saw three groups emerge: the Shia clergy, with six seats, the secular nationalist/leftist "People's Bloc" won eight seats, and the rest went to independents, mostly regime supporters. This was a watershed moment for the opposition. Though the ruler handicapped parliament by making his entire cabinet voting members of the legislature, never before had the opposition received such legitimation.

In response to America's support for Israel in 1973, Sheikh Isa bin Salman announced the termination of the 1971 US Navy basing agreement (later rescinded).²⁶⁶ Also

²⁶⁴"Bahrain Reforms Promised," *Financial Times*, 17 Dec. 1970.

²⁶⁵Abdul Lateef. Bahrain: Emerging Gulf State. *Pakistan Horizon*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (First Quarter, 1973): 10-15.

²⁶⁶Under-Secretary of State Joseph Sisco provides National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger with background information on the small US naval contingent stationed in Bahrain since 1949. The government of Bahrain has notified the US that there will be a two-year limit on the navy's continued

seizing the issue of Israel, the parliament became a platform for criticizing the US-Bahrain relationship. The Al Khalifa were caught in a contradiction of dynastic interests; the need for the United States as a foreign patron chafed with Bahraini Nationalism. Labor agitation which had begun in 1970 also presented a roadblock for the regime. In March 1972 Bahraini airport workers went on a five-day strike, demanding a 25% pay increase, free transportation, and a reduction in immigrant labor use. They were joined by 1,200 Bahraini workers at the Alba Aluminum factory and the employees of the Cable and Wireless Communication Company.²⁶⁷ In the culminating incident that month, foreign-owned banks and hotels were smashed by mobs of angry workers. Fifteen hundred policemen, mostly immigrants themselves, clashed violently with protesters and arrested hundreds of workers.²⁶⁸ In an effort to effect reconciliation Sheikh Isa appointed three ministers to a "grievances committee," but the police had jailed those the committee was meant to receive.

To deal with rebellious trade unionists and nationalists the ruler, Sheikh Isa, issued State Security Decree of 1974 which gave Ian Henderson the power to arrest, and hold without trial, any suspect for three years. After eight months of deliberation the Leftist bloc convinced the religious bloc to stand with them and vote down the decree.²⁶⁹ The regime responded on August 23, 1975 by ordering the police to arrest 30²⁷⁰ leftist opposition

presence and that the unit must leave the country by 6/30/1977, Memo, Department of State, Secret, 12 Sep. 1975, *Declassified Documents Reference System* (Farmington Hills, Mich.: Gale, 2013).

267Richard Jones, "Bahrain Appoints Grievances Committee," *Financial Times*, 15 Mar. 1972.

268"Back to Work Order in Bahrain," *Financial Times*, 14 Mar. 1972.

269Abdulahdi Khalaf. Contentious politics in Bahrain From ethnic to national and vice versa, The 4th Nordic conference on Middle Eastern Studies: The Middle East in globalizing world: Oslo, 13-16 August 1998 online <http://www.smi.uib.no/pao/khalaf.html>.

270David Watts, "Prisoners of conscience Bahrain: Dr Abdul Hadi Khalaf," *The Times*, 07 June 1976.

leaders including members of parliament.²⁷¹ Parliament was dissolved and the constitution suspended indefinitely.²⁷²

To limit criticism from Arab nationalists²⁷³ the ruler ordered, for the second time, the US Navy to leave Bahrain,²⁷⁴ an order which the US ignored and which was again rescinded.²⁷⁵ However, the regime used the opportunity to raise the Navy's rent payments from \$600,000 to \$4 million per year and sent its first ambassador to the US in 1976.²⁷⁶ The US also allowed Bahrain's political elite to send their children to the Navy's 'Bahrain School' which became part of the *quid pro quo* discussed earlier regarding access to weapons.²⁷⁷

F. The Iranian Revolution and the 1994 Intifada

In 1979 the rural Baharana population held demonstrations in support of the Iranian Revolution and exiled Shia cleric Ayatollah Khomeini. The successful revolution in Iran

271 Bahrain National Liberation Front Statement on Current Suppression. MERIP Reports , No. 41, Arabs in Israel (Oct., 1975), pp. 22-23. Published by: Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP) Article Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3693721>.

272 "New Cabinet for Bahrain," *The Times*, 26 Aug. 1975; See Emiri Decree No. 4 of 1975 subsequently suspended article 65 of the 1973 Constitution which stipulated elections if the parliament were dissolved. It also transferred legislative authority to the Council of Ministers until a new elections law was promulgated. 26 Aug. 1975. This decree was not abolished until Emiri decree No.2 of 2002. <http://www.legalaffairs.gov.bh/>.

273 "Egypt Criticises Bahrain," *Financial Times*, 11 Jan. 1972.

274 Fred Emery. "Bahrain asks US Navy to withdraw," *Times* [London] 01 Oct. 1975.

275 Robert Oakley provides National Security Adviser/Secretary of State Henry Kissinger with a draft of the US response to Bahrain's decision to impose a two-year limit on the US Navy's presence of MIDEASTFOR, Memo, National Security Council, 27 Sep. 1975., reproduced in *Declassified Documents Reference System* (Farmington Hills, Mich.: Gale, 2013).

276 Profile of Abdulaziz Abdulrahman Buali, Bahrain's newly nominated Ambassador to the US, Department Of State, 21 May 1976, reproduced in *Declassified Documents Reference System* (Farmington Hills, Mich.: Gale, 2013).

277 Background information concerning US-Bahrain military relations, which are based on a history of mutual trust and understanding, Department of State, reproduced in *Declassified Documents Reference System* (Farmington Hills, Mich.: Gale, 2013).

provided an ideological alternative for the Shiite opposition in Bahrain inasmuch as it was a wake up call and source of pride.²⁷⁸ After the Shah fled, Iran's Revolutionary clergy broadcast calls for the Baharna to overthrow the Al Khalifa.²⁷⁹ Ayatollah Khomeini sent envoys to preach revolution in Bahrain.²⁸⁰ "Down with Al Khalifa" was sprayed on walls in Manama's bazaar atop stenciled paintings of Khomeini.²⁸¹ The trend continued into Saudi Arabia. Revolutionary leaflets from Bahrain were found in Qatif, where 400,000 Saudi Shiites lived. Protests and civil disobedience erupted²⁸² but was crushed by heavy-handed police action.

In April 1980, the Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain organized large anti-US protests after the failed attempt to free American hostages in Tehran was launched from Bahrain.²⁸³ In June, a representative of Bahrain's Shiite community delivered a petition to the emir demanding conservative reforms and an Islamic government.²⁸⁴ An anonymous diplomat told an American reporter, "The original Shiites here all think they have had their birthright stolen by the al-Khalifas."

In December 1981, Ian Henderson arrested more than 70 men in what the regime dubbed an Iranian-backed coup. Thirteen of the men were from Saudi Arabia's Al-Hasa and Qatif. One was Omani and another Kuwaiti, the rest were Shia Bahrainis.²⁸⁵ The group who

278Vali Nasr, *The Shia Revival: How Conflicts within Islam will Shape the Future* (WW Norton & Company, 2007),139.

279"Foreign Minister Denies Iran Seeks to Export Revolution," *Washington Post*, 04 Oct. 1979.

280"A black day in the history of Islam," *Globe and Mail*, 06 Oct. 1979.

281"Iranian-Backed Coup Bid In Bahrain Reverberates Throughout Persian Gulf," *Washington Post*, 31 Mar. 1982.

282"Saudi Arabia's Shi'ite Minority Troubles Riyadh," *Financial Times*, 12 Mar. 1980.

283"US Raid Triggers Arab Criticism, Protests in Bahrain," *Washington Post*, 27 Apr. 1980.

284"War Seems To Bolster Khomeini's Appeal To The People Across The Arab World," *New York Times*, 26 Oct. 1980.

285"Iranian-Backed Coup Bid In Bahrain Reverberates Throughout Persian Gulf," *The Washington Post*, 31

called themselves the Islamic Front of the Liberation of Bahrain was organized by Hadi Al Mudarressi under guidance from Iran's Grand Ayatollah, Sayyid Muhammad ibn Mahdi al-Shirazi. Even after the conspirators were arrested, cassette recordings of Al Madaressi monologues were smuggled into Bahrain.

During the '80s the Saudi regime reacted violently to anti-government protests in the Eastern Provinces where thousands of Saudi Shiites live. The Saudi regime believed these protests were part of the Iranian Revolution's regional aims to export the revolution. In November 1979 "bloody street violence between state security forces and thousands of frustrated Shiites rocked the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia."²⁸⁶ Part of the Saudi reaction was to instruct the Al Khalifa to embrace Sunni fundamentalists as a counter-balance to Shia mobilization. The Saudis began to finance upstart Sunni clergymen who emphasized the heresy of Shi'ism in Saudi Arabia and Bahrain.²⁸⁷ Though most of Bahrain's Sunnis remain religiously moderate, the message they received from state sponsored Sunni clergy was clear – the Shia are only loyal to Iran. It is difficult to assess the exact impact of this pivotal moment on Bahrain's Sunni opposition. Yet we can guess from what emerged that for non-ideological Bahrainis, especially Sunnis who simply opposed the ruling family's corruption, not their rule, the specter of a Shiite revolution was a powerful deterrent against cross-sectarian cooperation.

This effect, an inspirational demonstration effect on Shiites, was temporary. After a decade the cross-sectarian, democratic opposition movement rebounded in Bahrain. In 1992

Mar. 1982.

286Toby Craig Jones, "Rebellion on the Saudi Periphery: Modernity, Marginalization, and the Shia Uprising of 1979." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 38-2 (2006): 213-33.

287James A. Bill, "Resurgent Islam in the Persian Gulf," *Foreign Affairs*, 63.001 (1984): 108.

a pro-democracy petition signed by 200 notables called for the restoration of the constitution.²⁸⁸ Instead the government appointed a powerless 30-member consultative council.²⁸⁹ Feeling partially successful the petitioners circulated another petition which garnered 25,000 signatures,²⁹⁰ 30% of which were Sunni.²⁹¹ The Shia's leader, Sheikh Abdul Amir Al-Jamri and secular Sunni intellectuals including, Abdul Latif al-Mahmoud, Munira Fakhro and Ahmed Isa Al Shamlan, used the petition as a symbolic promise and evidence that non-sectarian cooperation was real.²⁹² After months of renewed labor sit-ins and street demonstrations a young Shia Imam, Sheikh Ali Salman, was arrested for directing an attack on an runner's marathon in November 1994. The story was fabricated, but Salman's growing popularity and support for rebellion had caused concern for the government. His arrest sparked tens of thousands of Shiites to march in street protests on December 5, 1994.²⁹³ Several Baharna were shot to death by police. During the weekend of December 17 and 18 clashes resumed and four more demonstrators as well as three policemen were killed.²⁹⁴ Two of the Shiites killed on December 17 were both named Hadi and this day has since become the Baharna's Martyr's Day, marked by annual protests since.

288Kathy Evans, "Sheikhs Fob Off Gulf Reformers," *Guardian*, 17 Dec. 1992, Text of the 1992 petition and a list of the primary sponsors is available online at "1992 Petition for Reforms to Amir of Bahrain" *Wikisource*, http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/1992_Petition_for_Reforms_to_Amir_of_Bahrain.

289Abdullah Shihri, "Saudi King Forms Advisory Council," *Washington Post*, 22 Aug. 1993; For a description of the council's mandate see: "Bahrain: Consultative Council," *Arab Law Quarterly*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (1993): 234. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3381584>.

290Douglas Jehl, "Bahrain Rulers Say They're Determined To End Village Unrest," *New York Times*, 28 Jan. 1996.

291Munira Fakhro, "The Uprising in Bahrain: An Assessment," *The Persian Gulf at the Millennium* (1997): 167-188.

292"1994 Popular Petition for Reforms to Amir of Bahrain," *Wikisource*.
http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/1994_Popular_Petition_for_Reforms_to_Amir_of_Bahrain.

293"World News Briefs; Protesters in Bahrain Clash with Police," *New York Times*, 06 Dec. 1994.

294David Hirst. "Riots Give Emirs Warning," *Guardian*, 20 Dec. 1994.

With a GCC summit scheduled for December 22 in Manama, the regime ordered mass arrests to prevent an embarrassing moment. Sixteen-hundred protesters were jailed, but this failed to deflate the growing frequency and intensity of clashes, and the number of dead protesters grew. A media blackout was ordered and all press visas were cancelled. BBC, Iran State Radio and Agence France Press relied on local stringers telephoning in reports of helicopters and armored vehicle checkpoints.

The organization of compact communities facilitates the regime's containment and suppression of popular protest movements by conducting siege like offenses, especially against the Shiites that live on Sitra and Muharraq Islands. That same compactness allows moral economy based mobilization as part of the Shia resources that comes from Shia endowments and villages remaining autonomous and free of state surveillance. As it had done before, the government aimed to divide the cross-sectarian cooperation by focusing arrests and a disinformation campaign against the Shia clergy.

On January 18, 1995, the government announced it had arrested and deported Shiite Sheikhs Ali Salman, Hamza al-Dairi, Haidar al-Sitri, Adil al-Shu'la, Muhammad Kojestah and two others.²⁹⁵ Despite the government's tough stance protests continued. Among the dead was a 14-month-old baby who died inhaling police tear gas on February 8. In April another policeman was killed. A Bahraini police officer told reporters the police vehicle which had been attacked was occupied by "two Pakistanis, a Bangladeshi and two Yemenis,"²⁹⁶ giving rare confirmation to the accusation that the regime still employs

295 "Routine Abuse, Routine Denial: Civil Rights and the Political Crisis in Bahrain," *Human Rights Watch*, 1997, <http://www.hrw.org/reports/1997/bahrain/>.

296 "Security Tightened After Policemen Attacked. One Killed," Associated Press, 09 Mar. 1995.

immigrants in the police force. Two weeks later policemen shot to death a 17-year-old boy while clearing students from a school in Diraz.²⁹⁷ Two days later Shia protesters burned down an Islamic Bank and Baharna schoolgirls went on a “rampage” demanding all British “mercenaries” be deported.²⁹⁸ The police arrested Sheikh Abdel Amir Al-Jamri again, charging him as an Iranian spy attempting to create an Islamic Republic by starting a Bahraini Hezbollah. Al-Jamri was put in solitary confinement for three years. During the raid on Al-Jamri's home police opened fire, killing three men who tried to block them.²⁹⁹ Bahrain University students held an anti-government rally and police cleared it with tear-gas.³⁰⁰ A police campaign against so-called illegal mosques ensued, scores of Shiite mosques were destroyed in night raids which sparked 50,000 strong Shia street marches.³⁰¹ Thousands were arrested including nine more Shia clerics.³⁰² In response, The Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain bombed the Diplomat Hotel in Manama.³⁰³ Eight members of Kuwait's parliament flew to Manama to effect a reconciliation but were denied entry visas.³⁰⁴ Following the deportation of three more Shia clergymen in February 1996, Sunni lawyer and famous Bahraini poet, Ahmed Al-Shamlan, called a popular radio show to support democratic reforms.³⁰⁵

The rights of citizens are put aside by authoritarian action ... what the Bahraini people are demanding is the return of the constitution, political

297“Security forces kill schoolboy in college clash: opposition,” Agence France Presse, 26 Mar. 1995.

298“Schoolgirls Rampage, Islamic Bank Burned In Bahrain Protests,” Associated Press, 28 Mar. 1995.

299“Bahraini police killed at least two in raid on cleric's home: son,” Agence France Presse, 02 Apr. 1995.

300Michael Binyon, “Teargas used on Bahrain Students,” *Times* [London] 01 May 1995.

301Kathy Evans, “Shia Mosques Smashed as Police Answer Bahrain Unrest,” *Guardian*, 11 Apr. 1995.

302Douglas Jehl, “Bahrain Rulers Say They're Determined to End Village Unrest,” *New York Times*, 28 Jan. 1996.

303Adnan Malik, Associated Press, *Worldstream*, 11 Feb. 1996.

304Robert Fisk, “'Medieval' Bahrain Struggles to Contain Fires of Rebellion,” *Independent*, 13 Feb. 1996.

305Ibid.

rights, freedom of expression, elections. Words like democracy or reform are regarded as illegal ... if Gulf citizens were given their full rights, there would be no more problems here ... instead of protecting the legal rights which [Bahraini] citizens are demanding, the government aborts our demands by igniting sectarian conflicts, creating troubles and complaining about foreign intervention. -Ahmad Al-Shamlan statement on *Qatar Radio*

The following day Al-Shamlan was arrested on charges of sabotage, arson and terrorism³⁰⁶ and later for spreading false information abroad.³⁰⁷ The regime hoped to send a signal to Sunni opposition figures. Violence escalated in Bahrain. Hotels, restaurants, cars and government facilities, electrical substations and police offices were attacked with molotov cocktails. The Royal Meridian Hotel, owned by the Prime Minister, was bombed.³⁰⁸ On March 26, a Shiite man was executed by firing squad for killing a policeman during a demonstration near the village of Nuwaidrat, the first execution since 1977. On the 40th day of mourning for the executed man, nine bombs destroyed four shops and damaged five others.³⁰⁹ The police found and defused six other bombs that night and blockaded several Shia villages.³¹⁰ Despite the violence, prominent Shiite businessmen supported the protesters³¹¹ as dozens of arrests were made in Shia villages during police night raids. On July 1, the government sentenced three Shia Bahrainis to death for a firebombing attack that killed seven Bangladeshis in a restaurant. Throughout the crisis the government repeatedly insisted that Iran was orchestrating an Islamic revolution yet never produced any

306 Michael Binyon, "Lawyer Arrested in Bahrain Crackdown," *Times* [London] 09 Feb. 1996.

307 Amnesty International "Documento - Bahrain: Further information on legal concern: Ahmad al-Shamlan," 23 Apr. 1996, <http://www.amnesty.org/es/library/asset/MDE11/012/1996/es/7b807c3b-eb03-11dd-aad1-ed57e7e5470b/mde110121996en.html>.

308 John Lancaster, "Protests Mount in Bahrain," *Washington Post*, 27 Mar. 1996.

309 "Bombs Damage 9 Stores in Bahrain; No Injuries," *Boston Globe*, 06 May 1996.

310 "Bombs Damage Bahrain Stores," *The Record*, 06 May 1996.

311 John Lancaster, "Protests Mount in Bahrain," *Washington Post*, 27 Mar. 1996.

evidence or specified how.³¹² Firebombings and arrests continued through 1997. Several Shiites, including an imam, died while in police custody. Following a UN subcommittee report, Shia accusations of torture were vindicated. Ian Henderson, the British colonial officer who served as Bahrain's Director General of Security, was retired from service but was retained by the Ministry of Interior as an "adviser." The Al Khalifa pressured Kuwait to arrest five activists who were then convicted there. In late 1997, Bahrain's state security court convicted eight exiled activists of spying for an unspecified foreign government and sentenced five men to 15-year prison terms, an attempt by the prime minister to undermine the crown prince's attempts at reconciliation with absurd punishments. However, the political conflict continued until 1999, but was suddenly ended by the death of Sheikh Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa. After 38 years the ruler succumbed to a heart attack while meeting with the US Secretary of Defense.³¹³

G. Conclusion

The transition from a British to an American deployment at the Mina Salman naval base was deliberate. The regime succeeded in building an access-for-support relationship with the US, deepening financial and defense ties that ensured the US's commitment to their external defense, a quietist response to any internal repression, and a reduction in any damage to Bahrain's international legitimacy coming from repression. State revenues were increasingly channelled along sectarian lines bringing the Sunni community into a rent-

³¹²"Dozens Arrested in Bahrain Unrest Manama," *Washington Times*, 10 July 1996.

³¹³"World: Middle East Bahrain's Ninth Al Khalifa," *BBC*, 06 Mar. 1999.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/291757.stm.

seeking relationship. This project was greatly assisted by the Iranian Revolution in 1979 which undermined cross-sectarian opposition via regime propaganda. Even so, the expansion of foreign labor use, an increasing cost-of-living, driven by land speculation and the oil market's downturn in the 1980s, allowed a cross-sectarian democratic opposition to reemerge in the 1990s. The regime's only response was to order a police crackdown and increase divide-and-conqueror sectarian tactics. The continued crackdown undermined the peaceful protests and instigated violent reactions from the opposition. The last episode ended when the two sides were nearly exhausted and Bahrain's reputation badly damaged. The ruler's death provided the regime with a new opportunity to rebuild the country, a historical juncture in 2001 which echoes 1971.

CHAPTER VI BROKEN PROMISES

Chapter VI is organized to explain how a small, despotic monarchy survives a massive political protest in 2011. It begins by identifying a major problem in Bahrain – she needs more oil to fuel the economy. Saudi Arabia now controls most of the oil that feeds Bahrain's industrial sector from a shared oil field. As the regime tries to grow into a post-oil economy it increases trade with a FTA with the US, which has a slight positive side affect of increasing the US's interest in keeping Bahrain stable. The other side affect is that it makes the Saudis upset. This seems illogical but remember that there are two major camps within the regime, and one of them is pro-Western business and the other is pro-Saudi. When a flood of cash flows from the West back to the Gulf, the use of migrant labor once again becomes a point of contention for the native Shiites. The cost of living rises along with Shia unemployment, a mix which would cause protest in any country. Yet the regime successfully channelled much of the opposition into a hollow parliament. The creation of a “national political field” is partially successful in containing Shia grievances and very successful in showing the regime who they can count on. Elections for this parliament need to be rigged and gerrymandered districts used to make sure the Shia don't get too many seats and turn it into an embarrassing soap box of discontent. To move beyond these petty tactics the regime will have to increase the number of Sunni voters, and they do, by naturalizing thousands of Sunnis from Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Jordan and other neighboring countries. This process takes time and is expensive, nor does it address the Shiites underlying grievances. Increasingly the upper class is criticized by the Shia for abusing

their power to control the limited supply of land the country has. Mega villas and private beach resorts fuel resentment in every poor and crowded Shia village. Sporadic protests and communal actions continue on a regular basis but are contained locally by the police. This system holds, but as the Arab Spring shows, is vulnerable to exogenous shocks. Inspired by Tunisian and Egyptian protesters, a cross-sectarian democratic protest movement swamps the country. The police cannot contain it and the regime falls back on the GCC, who for fear of regime change in their own countries, deploys a paramilitary force to Bahrain. Widespread repression ensues, along with some familiar sectarian tactics, which succeeds in reestablishing the regime's domination. While similar events in the region sparked condemnation from the US, Bahrain's use of Iran as a scapegoat and the deep relationship it has built with the US provides it political cover which lowers negative international attention. Thus the regime survives yet another massive wave of protests which are unheard of in the other oil monarchies.

A. Oil Rents and Economic Issues

In March 1999, Sheikh Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa suddenly died of a heart attack. Isa's eldest son, Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, succeeded his father without incident. After the 1994-'99 uprising the death of his father gave Sheikh Hamad the opportunity to start fresh. Hamad soon announced an overhaul of the political system, changed his title to King, pardoned 400 political prisoners, and announced a national referendum on democratic reforms intended to return Bahrain to the 1973 Constitution. To legitimize his plan a vote was held on February 14, 2002 in which Bahrainis overwhelmingly approved the reform

plan that Hamad had titled the National Action Charter (NAC), a guiding document on constitutional reforms.

Before the vote, King Hamad promised that the NAC would maintain legislative power in a single, popularly-elected lower house. After the referendum King Hamad reneged on his promise and promulgated a new constitution which created an appointed second house of parliament equal in size and power to the lower house. This in itself caused some opposition members to write off Hamad as another tyrant, but what happened over the next nine years brought Bahrain to a new level of opposition mobilization.

1. Domestic Petroleum Consumption

As of 2014, Bahrain locally produces 50,000 barrels per day of oil and 1.2 billion standard cubic feet of gas per day, the least of any Gulf state. Both feedstocks are refined and completely consumed within the country.³¹⁴ While Bahrain's natural gas consumption has always mirrored production, crude oil consumption did not surpass production until 2009. 60% of Bahrain's natural gas consumption is used for electricity production, 27% by Aluminum Bahrain – the 9th largest smelter in the world, and 33% by the Bahrain Electricity Authority and Power Company.³¹⁵ In search of more gas to fuel heavy industry expansion, Bahrain signed a memorandum with Iran to further negotiations over a pipeline connecting the two states. To deflect US officials who have sanctioned Iran, Bahrain's Oil Minister “observed that it also served US interests for Bahrain to avoid the popular

³¹⁴“Scenesetter For Manama Dialogue, December 11-13,” *US Embassy Manama*, 03 Dec. 2009, Wikileaks. <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2009/12/09MANAMA691.html>.

³¹⁵“Bahrain Continues Search For Additional Gas Supplies, Including Negotiations With Iran,” *US Embassy Manama*, 14 Oct. 2008. Wikileaks. <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2008/10/08MANAMA702.html>.

instability that an energy crisis would bring.”³¹⁶ The 2004, 15-hour nationwide electrical blackout which shutdown the entire country and caused mass immigration out of Bahrain, showed how vulnerable the country is.³¹⁷ The gas negotiations with Iran are aimed at pressuring Saudi Arabia to allow the construction of a gas pipeline between Qatar and Bahrain.³¹⁸

With domestic oil and gas production consumed locally, since 1994, Bahrain's government has relied on 150,000 barrels per day received from Saudi Arabia which comes from the shared the offshore Abu Safa oilfield. In 2012, Abu Safa petroleum accounted for 60% of Bahrain's exports, 60% of government revenue, and 30% of GDP.³¹⁹ In addition to the Saudi control over Bahrain's oil revenues, the largest foreign holding in local industry is the Saudi Basic Investment Company's 20% share in Aluminium Bahrain. The Saudi dominated Arab Petroleum Investments Corporation also owns 25% of the Bahrain National Gas Company. Durrat al-Bahrain, the largest real estate project in Bahrain, valued at \$3.4 billion, is financed by the Bahrain Kuwait Finance House. And the Amwaj Island tourism project is owned jointly by Kuwaiti, Saudi, and Bahraini corporations. Under

316“Oil Minister Comments On Iran Natural Gas MOU,” *US Embassy Manama*, 28 Nov. 2007, Wikileaks, <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2007/11/07MANAMA1070.html>.

317“Hot Time, Summer In The City: Bahrain Copes With Nationwide Blackout,” *Embassy Manama*, 24 Aug. 2004, Wikileaks, <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2004/08/04MANAMA1319.html>.

318Qatar and Saudi relations have been strained since Emir Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani deposed his father in 1995. Following the bloodless coup Saudi Arabia and Bahrain supported an unsuccessful attempt to reinstate Hamad's father. See: Ian Black, “Wary Qatar Digs in for More Trouble; There is no love lost between the rulers of this Gulf region after the Valentine's Day 'conspiracy.” *The Guardian*, 04 Mar. 1996. Since then Qatar's controversial relations with Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas, Iran, and Israel have often angered Saudi Arabia. Bahrain and Qatar's bilateral relations improved dramatically in 2001 when the International Court of Justice adjudicated a territorial dispute over the Hawar Islands located just off Qatar's western coast see: Krista E. Wiegand, “Bahrain, Qatar, and the Hawar Islands: Resolution of a Gulf Territorial Dispute,” *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 66, No. 1. (Winter 2012): 79-96.

319“Bahrain: oil and gas facts,” *The Telegraph*, 16 Mar. 2011, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/globalbusiness/8385822/Bahrain-oil-and-gas-facts.html>.

pressure to maximize profits for their foreign investors, the regime neglected to increase subsidies in line with inflation. Not until February 2nd, 2011, a week after the Arab Spring had spread to Egypt, did the king announce a food subsidies increase in an attempt to address the poverty experienced by much of the population.³²⁰

2. Migrant Labor and Increasing Unemployment

Unemployment in the 2000s was reported at 15% but unofficial estimates continued to be as high as 30% in Shia villages. From 2002 to 2005, US and European central bank monetary policy held government backed securities at interest rates below inflation, causing a flood of liquidity across the world. In the Gulf, excess cash created a surge in construction. By 2006, over \$1,000,000,000,000 in infrastructure and skyscraper construction projects were underway across the Gulf, including major projects in Bahrain.³²¹ This caused an increase in the number of migrant construction workers from Asia who are paid \$6 per day. By early 2011, the migrant community in Bahrain surpassed the number of citizens. As the accompanying cost of living increased, the Shia Baharna were increasingly excluded from the labor market. Within the largest single employer in Bahrain – the state – Shiites continue to be discriminated against at all levels. They are completely excluded from the police and military and all but a few token posts in the bureaucracy. The Bahrain Centre for Human Rights claimed that even the number of high-

320Camilla Hall and Vivian Salama, "Bahrain's King Orders Increase in Main Food Subsidies," *Bloomberg News*, 03 Feb. 2011, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-02-03/bahrain-s-king-orders-increase-in-main-food-subsidies-update1-.html>.

321Ambrose Evans-Pritchard, "Gambling on the Gulf: Staggering building boom may be a bubble waiting to burst," *The Vancouver Sun*, 15 May 2006.

ranking public posts held by Shiites fell from 25% in 2000 to 13% by 2009.³²² As documented in Chapter IV, Shiites did have a limited presence in low-ranking positions in the police and military forces (Bahrain Defense Forces, Interior Ministry), but were completely excluded after the Iranian Revolution in 1979.³²³ In 2011, the *International Crisis Group* reported: “In poorer, mainly Shiite, villages it is not uncommon for streets to be filled with unemployed or under-employed young men, many of whom express eagerness to work but are exasperated at being unable to find jobs that pay a living wage or losing them to foreign workers.”³²⁴

B. Relations with Defense and Economic Patrons

1. Bahrain and the United States in the 2000s

The US-Bahrain Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in 2006 opened up Bahrain to more US businesses and allowed US exports to Bahrain to grow from \$500 million to \$1.2 billion,³²⁵ but the decade of positive relations with America was overwhelmingly militaristic. The 2001 and 2003 wars in Afghanistan and Iraq created an opportunity for Bahrain to grow defense ties with the US yet again. In the aftermath of the first US war against Iraq in 1991, Bahrain and the US signed a Defense Cooperation Agreement. The war on terror made renewing the agreement more than justified.

³²²Digby Lidstone, “Fed Up with Immigration and Discrimination,” *Financial Times*, 10 Nov. 2009.

³²³The exclusion of Shiites from the Armed Forces is confirmed by a 500 household survey, see: Justin J. Gengler, “Ethnic Conflict and Political Mobilization in Bahrain and the Arab Gulf.” Diss. (The University of Michigan, 2011).

³²⁴“Popular Protests in North Africa and the Middle East (III): The Bahrain Revolt,” 06 Apr. 2011, *International Crisis Group*, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/middle-east-north-africa/iraq-iran-gulf/bahrain/105-popular-protests-in-north-africa-and-the-middle-east-iii-the-bahrain-revolt.aspx>.

³²⁵“Bahrain Free Trade Agreement,” *Office of the US Trade Representative*, <http://www.ustr.gov/trade-agreements/free-trade-agreements/bahrain-fta>.

Continuing US access to Bahrain's naval port at Mina Salman in south Manama allowed the US Navy's 5th Fleet base known as Naval Support Activity-Bahrain (NSA-Bahrain), to grow in personnel size from 3,000 to over 7,000 and since 2001, Bahrain's bases have allowed the 5th Fleet's air power and logistic capabilities to grow into a major component of wartime operations, supporting fuel and other critical supplies reaching troops in Iraq and Afghanistan.

During the initial phase of the Iraq War, the 5th Fleet commanded and supplied five of the US's 11 carrier strike groups (in 2014 it serves two). NSA-Bahrain is also host to the US Marine Central Command, nine guided missile destroyers, six 110' Coast Guard patrol boats and a growing number of smaller Cyclone-class patrol craft and is now beginning to house state-of-the-art Littoral Combat Ships.³²⁶ In addition to these surface and air combatant ships, NSA-Bahrain is homeport to a 8 US minesweeper ships, which prevent blockages of the Strait of Hormuz's narrow shipping channel, and two batteries of US surface-to-air Patriot Missile Systems capable of intercepting aircraft and ballistic missiles.

Bahrain is also host to the 30-nation Combined Maritime Forces, a naval anti-piracy/anti-terrorism effort founded by the US in 2002.³²⁷ Bahrain further ingratiated itself to US by deploying a small paramilitary force to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in 2010³²⁸ and approved a permanent US deployment to Bahrain's secretive Isa Air Base where US Navy P-3 anti-submarine and maritime surveillance

326 Sam LaGrone, "US Navy Trading Destroyers for PCs in 5th Fleet," *USNI News*, 03 July 2013, <http://news.usni.org/2013/07/03/u-s-navy-trading-destroyers-for-pcs-in-5th-fleet>.

327 "About us," *Combined Maritime Forces*, <http://combinedmaritimeforces.com/about/>.

328 "Bahrain troops to lead Afghan Special Forces," *Gulf Daily News*, 24 Dec. 2010, <http://www.gulf-daily-news.com/NewsDetails.aspx?storyid=294605>.

aircraft are now stationed.³²⁹ In late 2013, the US Navy began a \$580 million expansion of NSA-Bahrain which will allow it to accommodate an increased troop presence.³³⁰ By hosting and participating in US military operations, Bahrain more than compensates for its lack of petroleum reserves and expensive weapon purchases which marry US industry interests to other Gulf states. In return for this support in the War on Terror the US has made major commitments to Bahrain's external security and refuses to be overly critical its despotic rule. By taking a quietist position on Bahrain's internal politics, the US deflects and decreases the negative international standing which normally accompanies despotic rule.

2. Saudi Rules in the GCC

Saudi Arabia and Bahrain's relations have appeared largely positive throughout the last decade. Yet the Saudis have become concerned about Bahrain's growing relationship with the US, seeing it as loss of influence with both countries. Just one month after the US-Bahrain FTA was signed, Saudi Arabia cut Bahrain's share of Abu Safa oilfield's output to 50%, down from 100% since 1996, and ended the 53,000 bpd it granted Bahrain from other Saudi fields.³³¹ The Saudis explained that reduction was warranted since higher prices meant Bahrain was receiving more than enough charity. However, the opposite was true, Bahrain's onshore Awali oilfield production had been in steady decline. Furthermore,

329“Bahrain's King Hamad Approves USG Requests For Use Of Isa Air Base,” *US Embassy Manama*, 01 Feb. 2010, Wikileaks, <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2010/02/10MANAMA57.html>.

330Hendrick Simoes, “Bahrain expansion latest signal of continued US presence,” *Stars and Stripes*, 13 Dec. 2013, <http://www.stripes.com/news/bahrain-expansion-latest-signal-of-continued-us-presence-1.257371>.

331“Bahrain: Frozen out,” *Energy Compass*, 16 Dec. 2004, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/199511633?accountid=8555>.

Bahrain had borrowed \$700 million to pay for the joint off-shore Abu Safa production expansion, assuming an increase in production there would mean a corresponding increase in Bahrain's government revenue. Because of the Saudi cuts in aid and a corresponding refusal to allow Bahrain's new parliament to review Abu Safa financial statements, the new parliament, while pro-regime, still assumed that Bahrain's royal family was siphoning the predicted increase in oil rents into their own accounts instead of funding the promised development plans.³³²

According to scholars, the Saudis view Bahrain as a proxy battleground in its regional struggle with Iran. Unlike in Lebanon, Iraq, and Syria there is no evidence that Iran materially supports the Bahraini opposition, yet within this context Bahrain is the only proxy war that Saudi Arabia clearly wins. Any wane in Saudi influence over Bahrain is seen as a gain for Iran and Shiism, and because of Bahrain's proximity to the Arabian mainland, its physical connection via the causeway and the large Shia population that lives in Saudi Arabia's adjacent Eastern Province, keeping the Sunni Al Khalifa regime in power and highly-dependent on Saudi oil revenue has an internal, strategic logic. Any gains for Shiites in Bahrain may provide a demonstration effect for Eastern Province Shiites. This explains why the Saudi controlled "Al-Watan" newspaper attacked King Hamad's democratic reform plan in 2002.³³³ This offers a partial explanation as to why the Saudis opposed the US-Bahrain Free Trade Agreement: The deal was alarming to the Saudis who see their regional influence as a zero-sum game. Qatar is largely free to pursue its own foreign policy because

³³²"King Focuses On Relations With Saudi Arabia In Meeting With Ambassador," *US Embassy Manama*, 04 Jan. 2005, Wikileaks, <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2005/01/05MANAMA24.html>.

³³³"King Stresses Importance of US Role in Regional Stability," *US Embassy Manama*, 31 Aug. 2006, Wikileaks, <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2006/08/06MANAMA1599.html>.

it is financially independent and protected by the US, which uses Al Udeid Air Base, a military base west of Doha, Qatar. Any lessening of Bahrain's reliance on Saudi patronage is a decrease in Saudi dominance in the GCC and the region. The Saudis are alarmed by any bilateral agreements between GCC states and outside powers and reflexively oppose them.³³⁴ And despite accusations that Iran is secretly trying to overthrow Bahrain's regime, the Al Khalifa privately assert views that Saudi Arabia is the greater threat to their independence. In 2005, Crown Prince Salman privately told the US Ambassador: "Bahrain has worked hard not to become a vassal of Saudi Arabia, and we're certainly not going to let ourselves become a vassal of Iran."³³⁵ In this light, the Al Khalifa's close relationship with the US also creates a space in which the regime can act independently of Saudi interests. While US bilateral relations provide some regional independence, economic levers into the heart of the oil economy continues to provide Saudi Arabia the ability to influence policy and politics within the regime and its supporters.

C. Creation of a National Political Field

King Hamad's revival of parliamentary politics was the first step in a process of establishing a controllable, singular political identity "aided by the construction of what Zubaida has called a 'national political field' within which, after independence, all significant political activities are then focused."³³⁶

334 "Saudi Statement On GCC Bilateral Agreements Concerns Bahrain," *US Embassy Manama*, 06 Dec. 2004, Wikileaks, <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2004/12/04MANAMA1814.html>.

335 "Crown Prince Discusses Democracy, Trade, Security With Ambassador," *US Embassy Manama*, 12 Apr. 2005, Wikileaks, <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2005/04/05MANAMA544.html>.

336 Roger Owen, *State Power and Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East* (Routledge, 2002), 4.

1. Shia Political Societies

Since 2002, parliamentary elections have been held every four years in Bahrain. Furious with Hamad's reneging on the NAC, the Shiites boycotted the first election. Each election since has been tainted by Shiite accusations of gerrymandering and vote-buying by the regime and their Sunni loyalists but has affected Shia participation. After boycotting the 2002 elections the largest Shiite political society, *Jam'iyat al-Wafaq al-Watani al-Islimiyah*, (National Islamic Accord Society) Wafaq for short, participated in the 2006 elections. This society is led by the Shia clergyman, Sheikh Ali Salman. Despite their strong organization irrational district lines prevented Wafaq from taking a majority of seats in the lower house. Despite 23 Wafaq leaders being arrested just a month before the vote, Wafaq won 18 seats in the 2010 parliament. In coalition with Wafaq is the National Democratic Action Society - *Wa'ad* (Promise). It is a group of leftist intellectuals active in the 1970s labor organization efforts, but who have since been sidelined by the popularity of the religious resistance and the decreasing number of Sunni opposition members. Their political goal is a secular, liberal state and they are able to attract some middle-class professionals from both sects. Wa'ad's leader is Ibrahim Sharif, a Sunni lawyer who replaced Abdulrahman al-Nuaimi, also a Sunni and an AUB graduate who died after four years in a coma in 2011.³³⁷

Two other Shia activist groups, *Haq* (the Truth) and *Wafa'* (Loyalty), are not registered political societies yet deserve mentioning. Haq is an Wafaq splinter which

337 Claire Beaugrand, "Abd al-Rahman Al-Nu'aimi: Forty Years of Bahraini Opposition," *OpenDemocracy*, 20 Sep. 2011, <http://www.opendemocracy.net/claire-beaugrand/abd-al-rahman-al-nuaimi-forty-years-of-bahraini-opposition>.

staunchly opposes participation in elections. They are led by Abduljalil al-Singace and Hassan Mushaima who quit Wefaq when the decision was made to register as an official society in 2005. Al-Singace has been very actively working with international NGOs and in 2008 tried to meet with President Bush to present a petition criticizing the regime, signed by 80,000 people.³³⁸ Among Haq founders were Sunni leftist leader Ali Rabea and Sunni cleric Isa Jowder (d. 2011). In recent years Haq has been competing with a new rejectionist group named Wafa'.³³⁹ Wafa' is led by Abdulwahab Hussain, a man who earned popular respect in 2008 for going on a hunger strike as political prisoner. Unlike Haq, Wafa' is exclusively Shia and endorsed by high-ranking Shia cleric Abduljalil Maqdad.³⁴⁰ Lastly, there is *Amal* (hope), a small group of Shia Islamists affiliated with the Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain which attempted the coup in 1981. Amal's members were in exile during the 1990s but returned after the general amnesty in 2000 and are now non-violent.

2. *Sunni Political Societies*

Asala (the original Muslims) is an all Sunni society whose members are orthodox *salafi* Muslims. Ghanim Albuanain is there leader and has been a member of parliament since 2006.³⁴¹ Asala won five seats in the 2006 parliament and three in the 2010 election.

The group promotes greater adherence to Islamic law and successfully lobbied the King to

338 "Bahraini Activists To Brief Congressional Human," *US Embassy Manama*, 06 Oct. 2008, Wikileaks, <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2008/10/08MANAMA681.html>; and, Abduljalil Alsingace, "What the Muslim World Wants to Hear from Obama: Promises Kept," *New York Times*, 02 June 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/02/opinion/03muslimworld.html>.

339 "Wafa': A New Shia Rejectionist Movement," *US Embassy Manama*, 19 Oct. 2009, Wikileaks, <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2009/10/09MANAMA609.html>.

340 Ibid.

341 "A Field Guide To Bahraini Political Parties," *US Embassy Manama*, 04 Sep. 2008, Wikileaks, <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2008/09/08MANAMA592.html>.

legalize women driving while fully veiled.³⁴² Many believe that Asala receives financial support from the government as a tactic to balance against Wefaq. In 2013, Asala member Member of Parliament, Abdelhalim Murad,³⁴³ helped finance 1,600 Sunni jihadists being sent to fight against the Syria regime.³⁴⁴ *Al-Minbar al-Watani al-Islami* (Islamic National Tribune), Minbar for short, is the Muslim Brotherhood party in Bahrain and political arm of the Eslah Society. The Eslah Society operates a number of popular Sunni mosques and is overseen and sanctioned by Isa bin Mohammed Al Khalifa, a member of the ruling family.³⁴⁵ This all Sunni group is purportedly dominated by the Huwala community and won seven seats in the 2006 parliament and two in the 2010 election. Today, Minbar is led by Salah Ali, also an AUB alumnus. It works closely with Asala on conservative social issues, banning pork and mixed-gender housing, yet maintains some liberal positions on female participation. The less influential *Mithaq* (Covenant) is a party of wealthy, loyalist businessmen who had five seats in the 2002 parliament but lost all of them to Wefaq in 2006.³⁴⁶ Similarly, the loyalist group *Mustqbal* (Future), was a voting bloc in the 2002 parliament with strong connections to anti-reform, pro-business Prime Minister Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa. *Al-Watani* (The Centrists) is a cross-sectarian splinter of Wa'ad led by Fadhel Abbas, who replaced Abdulla Hashim, an extremist Sunni nationalist. After being

342“Blocs in the newly-elected Bahraini Parliament,” *US Embassy Manama*, 28 Feb. 2007, Wikileaks, <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2007/02/07MANAMA190.html>.

343The salafi MP Abdelhalim Murad is of Baluchi decent and not to be confused with the liberal Huwala family of Murad Ali Murad.

344 Husain Marhoon, “Bahrain Salafists Increase Involvement in Syria War,” *Al Monitor*, 02 July 2013, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/07/bahrain-salafists-syria-war-fighters.html>.

345“Al-Dhahrani receives copy of Isa bin Mohammed biography,” *Bahrain News Agency*, 07 May 2012, <http://www.bna.bh/portal/en/news/507228>.

346Habib Touma, “Juma ridicules reports of Al Mithaq being replaced,” *Gulf News*, 28 Feb. 2006, <http://gulfnews.com/juma-ridicules-reports-of-al-mithaq-being-replaced-1.226891>.

removed from Al-Watani's leadership, Hashim founded the *Adala* (Justice), a small group of Sunnis who oppose the American military presence in the region.³⁴⁷

2002 to 2011 40-Member Council of Representative Election Results

Year	2002 ³⁴⁸	2006 ³⁴⁹	2010 ³⁵⁰	2011 ³⁵¹
Wefaq	boycott	17	18	boycott
Shia Independents	6	0	0	8
Sunni Independents	18	8	17	27
Minbar	9	7	2	2
Asala	7	8	3	3
Shia : Sunni ratio	6 : 34	17 : 23	18 : 22	8 : 32
Voter Participation	53%	73%	67%	17%
Females elected	0	9	4	4

3. Political Naturalizations

The country's demographics and these election results make it clear that if allowed Shiites would dominate a democratic regime in the highly sectarian society. To address this sectarian imbalance the Al Khalifa regime is engaged in a long-term effort to alter the country's demographic characteristics by naturalizing non-Bahraini Sunnis, a project which began during the 1994 crisis.³⁵² The aims of the project are to shift the country's religious demography to a Sunni majority.

347 "A Field Guide To Bahraini Political Parties," *US Embassy Manama*, 04 Sep. 2008, Wikileaks, <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2008/09/08MANAMA592.html>.

348 "Bahrain's October 24 and 31, 2002 Legislative Elections," The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, http://www.ndi.org/files/2392_bh_electionsreport_engpdf_09252008.pdf.

349 "Bahraini opposition "fails" to win majority seats in parliament," *Al-Jazeera*, 03 Dec. 2006, via BBC Monitoring Middle East, 03 Dec. 2006.

350 "Independents the biggest winners," *Gulf Daily News*, 01 Nov. 2010, <http://www.gulf-daily-news.com/NewsDetails.aspx?storyid=290557>.

351 "Fewer than 1 in 5 vote in Bahrain by-elections," *Reuters*, 26 Sep. 2011.

352 Robin Allen, "Bahrain Economy Suffers as Shia Dissent Simmers," *Financial Times*, 28 May 1998.

In a 2002 filmed interview, members of the al-Dawasir tribe from Damam and Qatif, Saudi Arabia, explained how thousands of Dosari tribesmen were given citizenship, passports and housing in Bahrain and were driven to polling stations to elect pro-government candidates.³⁵³ The regime denies the video's credibility but as far back as 1820 the Al Khalifa sheikhs have "called upon the Dawasir tribes of Saudi Arabia to assist in further displacing the Shi'a by sending forces to land on the western side of the island."³⁵⁴ The issue resurfaced in 2006 when a British-Sudanese government adviser working in Bahrain, Salah al-Bandar, leaked a detailed report entitled "A Proposal to Promote the General Situation of the Sunni Sect in Bahrain."³⁵⁵ In addition to confirming naturalization of non-Bahraini Sunnis, the report contained cheque receipts totaling \$2.2 million in alleged vote-rigging payments made by Ahmed bin Atiyatallah Al Khalifa, Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs and Director of Elections.

A leaked US diplomatic cable from 2006 confirms the Bandar Report. In an interview with Essa al-Dossari, leading member of the Saudi Dosari branch, Essa bragged that he brokered elections in three electoral districts in Bahrain with the votes of Saudi Dosari. The same cable estimates that 20,000 to 30,000 Saudi Dosaris have obtained Bahraini citizenship.³⁵⁶ All attempts by Wefaq's parliamentary delegation to investigate the Bandar Report and political naturalizations have been blocked. The regime has gone as far

353 "The Documentary Film Script: The Political Naturalization in Bahrain," *Bahrain Center for Human Rights*, 12 Aug. 2006, <http://www.bahrainrights.org/node/269>.

354 Fuller, *The Arab Shi'a: The Forgotten Muslims*, 121.

355 "Ex-Bahrain adviser alleges political plot; Aim was to rig elections and ensure Sunni control, report charges," *International Herald Tribune*, 03 Oct. 2006.

356 "Tribal Leader Plays Politics on Both Sides of the Causeway," *US Embassy Riyadh*, 26 June 2006, Wikileaks, <https://wikileaks.org/cable/2006/06/06RIYADH5111.html>.

as to deport the lower house's Egyptian parliamentarian who made the mistake of not voiding an Wefaq MP's motion on the issue.³⁵⁷ Later, Wefaq's leader, Sheikh Ali Salman, publicly called for Ahmed bin Atiyatallah's resignation after the government's own Central Information Organization published statistics which showed beyond a doubt that there have been 82,000 political naturalizations since 1981.³⁵⁸ Shia activists exiled in Beirut believe the number is now over 100,000 or 17.5 percent of all citizens.³⁵⁹

4. Land Reclamation

Related and as controversial to naturalizations is the continuing conflict over Bahrain's land. For example, Sheikh Hamad bin Mohamed, the King's first cousin, who built a 4-meter high concrete wall around his beach property adjacent to Malkiya, a Shia village, in 2005. The wall extended 300 meters into the sea and blocked public access to the beach and coastal fishing grounds. The local villagers lodged complaints and their MP raised the issue with the regime. After weeks of government inaction hundreds of Malkiya's residents protested, destroyed parts of the wall and attacked the policemen who responded to the sheikh's calls for help. The indignant Sheikh Hamad initiated legal proceedings against Malkiya's MP. After two weeks of tension King Hamad intervened and ordered the wall taken down.³⁶⁰ Following this rare victory, in a conflict with a member of the ruling family, Bahraini activists began using Google Maps to show people just how much of the

357“Society slams violent protests,” *Gulf Daily News*, 01 May 2008.

358“It Doesn't Add Up: Shi'a Mp Challenges GoB Population Figures,” *US Embassy Manama*, 08 Feb. 2008, Wikileaks, <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2008/02/08MANAMA76.html>.

359Anonymous interview, 22 Nov. 2013.

360“Royal Family Member Tests Rule Of Law,” *US Embassy Manama*, 20 June 2005, Wikileaks, <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2005/06/05MANAMA884.html>.

country had been taken over by palaces and villas.

Mahmood, who lives in a house with his parents, four siblings and their children, said he became even more frustrated when he looked up Bahrain on Google Earth and saw vast tracts of empty land, while tens of thousands of mainly poor Shiites were squashed together in small, dense areas. "We are 17 people crowded in one small house, like many people in the southern district," he said. "And you see on Google how many palaces there are and how the al-Khalifas have the rest of the country to themselves."³⁶¹

The Al Khalifa family is also expanding the size of the islands by allowing landfill dumping. Reclaimed land is sold to powerful supporters who build skyscrapers using cheap foreign labor. The best example of this is Tubli Bay, one of three protected environmental areas in Bahrain, just south of the capital, which has been reduced from 25 sq. km to 10 sq. km by landfill dumping. The government, despite banning dumping in the bay since 1975, has sold the land to developers, enriching both parties. Activists have pointed out that Decree No. 19 of 2002 gives the king sole authority to make land grants of public land. During a 2008 parliamentary inquiry into corrupt land distribution, Wefaq MP Jawad Fairouz questioned Sheikh Khalid bin Ali Al Khalifa, Minister of Justice and Islamic Affairs, about how senior officials were able to sell public land. Fairouz produced documentation showing the Minister of the Royal Court had illegally sold three plots of land for \$9.3 million.³⁶² The corrupt land reclamation has also caused substantial losses to Bahrain's working class. In early 2009, over 1,700 fishermen went on a 6-day strike

361 "In Bahrain, Democracy Activists Regret Easing of US Pressure," *Washington Post*, 27 Nov. 2006, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/11/26/AR2006112601135_2.html. You can see the maps at: Gus Lubin, "These Are The Controversial Satellite Photos That Set Off Protests In Bahrain," *Business Insider*, 02 Mar. 2011, <http://www.businessinsider.com/bahrain-google-earth-2011-3?op=1#ixzz2wTREtdX7>.

362 "Al Wifaq Mp Raises Allegations Of Land Sale Corruption With Minister Of Justice," *US Embassy Manama*, 03 May 2007, Wikileaks. <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2007/05/07MANAMA409.html>.

specifically citing the prime minister's involvement in land reclamation projects that destroyed fishing waters.³⁶³ The issue is still unresolved and another strike was organized in September 2012 indicating that the issue will continue to fuel unrest.³⁶⁴

D. The Arab Spring Arrives

Inspired by the fall of the Ben Ali and Mubarak regimes in Tunisia and Egypt, on Feb. 14, 2011 Bahrainis from both sects demonstrated. A policeman shot to death 21-year-old Ali Abdulhadi Almeshaima, a Shiite. When his body was released from the hospital the next morning, more than 2,000 people carried him to the cemetery in Jidhafs. During the procession police forces attacked and killed 31-year-old Fadhel Salman al-Matrook, also a Shiite.³⁶⁵ Enraged by the deaths, tens of thousands of protesters converged at the Pearl Roundabout near the capital. Their initial demand was for the dismissal of the Prime Minister. If they came to include constitutional monarchy, ending corruption, job opportunities, social justice, and an elected parliament. These protesters became the Feb. 14 Coalition and began camping under the giant Pearl Roundabout statue. After more police violence, Wefaq MPs suspended their participation in government and Bahrain's trade union coalition called for a general strike on February 17th. That morning security forces stormed the Pearl Roundabout, clearing the 1,500 protesters camping there. Four Shia protesters were shot to death. Over the course of the day clashes continued as elements of

363Basma Mohammed, "Fishermen plan another strike," *Gulf Daily News*, 04 June 2009, <http://gulf-daily-news.com/NewsDetails.aspx?storyid=252389>.

364Sandeep Singh Grewal, "Fishermen strike over new controls," *Gulf Daily News*, 04 Sep. 2012, <http://m.gulf-daily-news.com/NewsDetails.aspx?newsid=337144>.

365Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry, Mahmoud Cherif Bassiouni, and Nigel S. Rodley, *Report of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry*. The Commission, 2011.

the national military arrived in armored vehicles.

In response to the government crackdown a group of political societies, including Shia and Sunni Islamists, issued a joint statement demanding the government's resignation.³⁶⁶ Wefaq's members of parliament and the few Shia ministers resigned, most notably Majid al-Alawi, Minister of Housing.³⁶⁷ The street protests continued to focus on sacking Prime Minister Khalifah bin Salman Al Khalifa, the world's longest-serving prime minister and leader of the ruling family's hardline faction. PM Khalifah's 2005 purchase of the Bahrain Financial Harbor for one dinar is the island's *cause célèbre* of corruption.³⁶⁸

Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad met with opposition leaders and clearly favored a negotiated concession-based deescalation. At the crown prince's insistence the king pardoned 308 political prisoners, including opposition leaders Hassan al-Meshaim and Abduljalil Alsingace. However, the opposition's insistence that the Prime Minister be sacked reportedly prevented the Crown Prince from moving forward with other demands. Wefaq, along with the other opposition groups, boycotted reconciliation talks until Prime Minister Khalifah was retired. Despite this, the concession track was unilaterally advanced. The king announced he had sacked four Sunni ministers and was hiring back one Sunni and one Shiite.³⁶⁹

³⁶⁶As documented in the BICI report, the statement was signed by al-Wefaq, Wa'ad, the Islamic Action Society, the National Democratic Assemblage, the Nationalist Democratic Society, the Al Ikha' National Society and the al-Menbar Progressive Democratic Society.

³⁶⁷"Bahrain Shiite minister, MPs resign," *Al Arabiya*, 17 Mar. 2011, <http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2011/03/17/141944.html>.

³⁶⁸"Special Report: In Bahrain, a symbol at the heart of revolt," *Reuters*, 16 June 2011, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/06/16/us-bahrain-gfh-idUSTRE75F4LF20110616>.

³⁶⁹"King Hamad Drops Four Ministers," *McClatchy - Tribune Business News*, 27 Feb. 2011.

1. Sunni Counter-revolution

A counter-revolutionary mobilization was led by loyal Sunni Islamists and began on February 16th. In the aftermath of the Feb. 17 police crackdown, they formed the National Unity Gathering, a coalition comprising al-Asala and al-Minbar society members, and held a well-attended rally on Feb. 21 at a Al Fateh Mosque 3.8 km southeast of the Pearl Roundabout. Like the protests at the roundabout, the rally at Al Fateh Mosque was not authorized, yet no policemen dispersed it. The speeches given at Al Fateh Mosque were broadcast on state television.³⁷⁰ The key figure at this rally was Dr. Abdul Latif Al Mahmoud,³⁷¹ who called for democratic reforms but consistently affirmed the Al Khalifa family's legitimacy.

In December of 1991, while a professor of Islamic Studies at Bahrain University, Al-Mahmoud gave a conference lecture in Kuwait discussing democracy in the postwar Gulf. During his presentation Al-Mahmoud said Bahrain was “filling its ranks with unqualified princes.”³⁷² Upon his return to Bahrain he was arrested and held for a short time.³⁷³ Al-Mahmoud then disappeared from the political scene only reappearing in 2011 to lead the Sunni loyalist counter-revolution. Al-Mahmoud's history of democratic activism and Islamic scholarship gives him an aura of credibility with Sunni fence-sitters who support gradual liberalization but fear Shia intend to make Bahrain part of the Iran's Islamic Republic.

370Mohammed, Basma, "MASSIVE SHOW OF SUPPORT!" *Gulf Daily News*, 22 Feb. 2011.

371“Lecturer held,” *The Guardian*, 23 Dec. 1991.

372Neil MacFarquhar, “Summit Dragnet, Activist Arrest Deepen Sullen Kuwaiti Mood,” *Associated Press*, 19 Dec. 1991.

373“Lecturer held,” *The Guardian*, 23 Dec. 1991.

Government media outlets used the National Unity Gathering protests to frame the Feb. 14 protests as an Iranian-backed attempt to take over the island by force.³⁷⁴ The Minister of Interior's chief deputy, Abdullatif Bin Rashid, has direct ties to this effort. As a member of Bahrain's powerful Al Zayani merchant family (see Ch. 4) and Secretary General of the GCC, Abdullatif Bin Rashid has much to lose, in terms of wealth and power, if the regime falls.³⁷⁵ On April 9, Bin Rashid hired Adel Ali Abdulla, a Bahraini salafi, as his political adviser. Adel Ali Abdulla actively recruited salafists to the National Unity Gathering and accused the US of conspiring with Iran to overthrow the Al Khalifa regime.³⁷⁶

On March 2, Al-Mahmoud called for protesters to vacate the Pearl Roundabout and engage in dialogue without preconditions.³⁷⁷ When the Feb. 14 Coalition refused, the National Unity Gathering demanded that the king deploy the military, impose a curfew and "ban illegitimate acts."³⁷⁸ In the months that followed Al-Mahmoud became a frequent media guest, his connecting protests to Iran, Israel, and the US, offered a convenient distraction from reality.³⁷⁹ Later, the National Unity Gathering joined with pro-regime businessman under the umbrella organization *Jami'at al-Fateh* (The Conqueror's Society).

Mobilizing Sunni Islamists caused moderate Sunnis to reconsider demanding reforms for fear of what conservative polices the conservative Islamists might enact in a

374 Mohammed, Basma, "Open Society Urged," *Gulf Daily News*, 27 Feb. 2011.

375 "Dr Abdullatif bin Rashid Al-Zayani takes Over as GCC Secretary General," *Bahrain News Agency*, 01 Apr. 2011, <http://www.bna.bh/portal/en/news/451374>.

376 Mazen Mahdi, "Al-Qaida Backers use Unrest to Gain Foothold in Bahrain," *Defense News*, 16 May 2011, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/869002994?accountid=8555>.

377 "Sunni Party Calls Protestors to Leave Pearl Roundabout," *Xinhua News Agency – CEIS*, 02 Mar. 2011; and, Basma Mohammed. "Dialogue without Conditions," *Gulf Daily News*, 03 Mar. 2011.

378 "Plea for Martial Law in Bahrain," *TradeArabia*, 14 Mar. 2011.

379 "Obama Speech Rapped," *Gulf Daily News*, 22 May 2011.

democratic regime, in this way the Prime Minister drove a wedge between the moderate Sunni middle class and Shia activists who continued to call for regime change. There is an understanding between the hardline faction and Sunni Islamists, that if the latter blocks Wefaq's parliamentary activity, it is largely free to pursue its religious agenda. Ruling family hardliners then use parliament's activity on these issues to warn the business-class, which has the liberal, Western outlook about the dangers democracy poses to a liberal, capitalist society in an Islamic country. The Sunni Islamist agenda in parliament provides ready evidence to observers, both foreign and domestic, that an elected government in Bahrain would negatively affect the status quo. A recent example, in 2013, when the all Sunni lower house of parliament passed legislation criminalizing the importation of pork, which was then voted down by the regime appointed upper house after a backlash from businessmen.³⁸⁰

In addition to mobilizing Islamist forces to counter the revolutionaries, the regime also began holding loyalty events, ceremonies where a member of the ruling family would receive employees of a company so that they could individually pledge their allegiance to the Al Khalifa. The largest was ALBA Aluminium plant's 7-day "Alba for Hamad" event³⁸¹ and BAPCO's "Sword of Allegiance" event, wherein employees from the two largest companies individually pledged their loyalty to Bahrain's king in the summer of 2011.³⁸² If there was any doubt as to what these ceremonies were for, a government controlled

380 Mohammed al A'ali, "MPs vote to ban pork in Bahrain," *Gulf Daily News*, 22 May 2013, <http://www.gulf-daily-news.com/NewsDetails.aspx?storyid=353716>.

381 "Alba celebrates loyalty festival," *Gulf Daily News*, 12 May 2011, <http://www.gulf-daily-news.com/NewsDetails.aspx?storyid=305748>.

382 "BAPCO Loyalty," *The Bahrain Islander*, BAPCO, 11 July 2011, <http://www.bapco.net/ebook/islander/issue1/index.html?pageNumber=14>.

newspaper, *Gulf Daily News*, printed the headline “Loyalty 'key to government employment'” on its front page.³⁸³

2. GCC Intervention

On March 13, 2011, a month into the uprising, two important events took place. First, the the Feb. 14 Coalition moved from the Pearl Roundabout to converge on Manama's Financial District in an attempt to blockade the area. Second, the crown prince announced a “National Dialogue” and agreed, in principle, to an elected parliament with full legislative powers, fair redistricting, and other moderate demands. Both actions provoked the hardline Khawalid/Saudi camp into action, who deployed the GCC Peninsula Shield Force to Bahrain on March 14th. Twelve-hundred Saudi armored vehicles and 600 UAE police cars entered Bahrain and established defensive positions around the country's infrastructure and patrolled roadways.

It was reported that Bahrain's King requested the GCC forces to come to Bahrain. But another possibility is that the hardline camp forced the king to accept the deployment as *fait accompli* before the Crown Prince could move forward with making concessions. That King Hamad decreed the national state of emergency *after* GCC troops arrived on March 15 provides some circumstantial evidence to this view.³⁸⁴ So to does the crown prince's ongoing dialogue which became moot as Bahrain's security forces, bolstered by GCC forces, cleared Pearl Roundabout and demolished the Pearl Monument. The GCC

³⁸³“Loyalty 'key to government employment',” *Gulf Daily News*, 05 Apr. 2011, <http://www.gulf-daily-news.com/NewsDetails.aspx?storyid=303225>.

³⁸⁴“Bahrain king declares state of emergency after protests,” *BBC News*, 15 Mar. 2011. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12745608>.

forces openly occupied Bahrain for 14 weeks but with many of the troops staying behind after the armored units left.³⁸⁵ Additionally, the GCC created a \$10 billion fund for Bahrain, to be distributed over 10 years, for social initiatives and projects aimed at creating jobs.³⁸⁶ In January 2014, Bahrain announced it would spend \$4.4 billion from the fund on water and energy infrastructure upgrades, the first use of the GCC aid.³⁸⁷

To end any doubts of the Saudis backing of the regime, in June 2011, the Al Saud and Al Khalifa families announced a marriage between a Bahraini prince and a Saudi princess. This “strategic wedding,” as the press dubbed it, was between King Hamad's fifth son, Khalid bin Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, and the daughter of Saudi King Abdullah.³⁸⁸

On March 17, the government arrested 20 opposition leaders, including Hassan al Meshaima (Haq), Ibrahim Sherif (Wa'ad), Abduljalil Alsingace (Haq), Abdulwahab Hussein (Wafa'), Sayyid Merza Ahmed al-Nouri, Abdulhadi Abdulla Al-Makdour, Youseff al-Semeekh, Mohammed Hassan Jawad, Mohamed Reda Ismail, Abduljalil al-Mekdad, Mohamad Habib al-Safaf, Merza Abdullah al-Mahrous, Salah and Abulhadi Al-Khawaja and Nabeel Rajab, both from the Bahrain Center for Human Rights. A military tribunal sentenced eight of the men to life in prison, four of the men received 15 years imprisonment, and two received five-year sentences; in early 2013 each of the men lost their appeals in civilian court.³⁸⁹ By the end of March 2011, security forces and regime

385Caryle Murphy, “Saudi troops begin to pull out of Bahrain,” *The National*, 29 Jun. 2011, <http://www.thenational.ae/news/world/middle-east/saudi-troops-begin-to-pull-out-of-bahrain>.

386Tarek El-Tablawy, “GCC Pledges \$20 Billion In Aid For Oman, Bahrain,” *The Washington Post*, 10 Mar. 2011, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/03/10/ar2011031003629.html>.

387“Bahrain spends \$4.4bn GCC aid on projects,” *Trade Arabia*, Jan. 2014, http://www.tradearabia.com/news/CONS_250664.html.

388“Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad marries daughter of Saudi Monarch,” *Bahrain News Agency*, 16 June 2011, <http://www.bna.bh/portal/en/news/461140>.

389“Bahrain rejects jailed opposition activists' appeal,” *BBC News*, 07 Jan. 2013,

supporters (allegedly paid) had killed 24 protesters. Over the following two years the death-toll climbed to over 100.³⁹⁰ The violence and arrests pushed the uprising back into a series of ongoing, but sustainable, low-intensity street clashes inside Shia villages. Containing the clashes allowed the financial, tourist, and production sectors to resume operating at capacity.

3. US Response to Uprising and Crackdown

In contrast to the US response to the 2011 uprising in Libya, Syria and Yemen, the Obama Administration never suggested the Al Khalifa regime step down. The first response came from Sec. of State Hillary Clinton, who voiced support for Crown Prince Salman's dialogue with the opposition and called on the government "to exercise restraint, there is no place for violence against peaceful protesters."³⁹¹ To be clear, the US did not oppose the GCC intervention in Bahrain. During a press statement regarding the bombing campaign in Libya on March 19th Sec. Clinton said:

"Bahrain obviously has the sovereign right to invite GCC forces into its territory under its defense and security agreements. The GCC has also announced a major aid package for economic and social development in Bahrain. We [the US] have made clear that security alone cannot resolve the challenges facing Bahrain."³⁹²

This tepid, initial reaction from the Obama Administration was abandoned after the initial

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-20930702>.

390"List of people killed in Bahrain since 14th February 2011," *Bahrain Center for Human Rights*, 04 Apr. 2011, <http://bahrainrights.org/en/node/3864>.

391"Secretary Clinton Comments on the Situation in the Middle East," *US Department of State*, 22 Feb, 2011, Video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GbucMZUg3Gc>.

392"Transcript: Remarks by Secretary Clinton following international meeting on Libya," *US AFRICOM Public Affairs*, 19 Mar. 2011, <http://www.africom.mil/newsroom/transcript/8096/transcript-remarks-by-secretary-clinton-following->.

crackdown was complete. Despite protests by members of Congress, who alleged that Bahrain's government was in violation of international human rights standards, the US continued arming Bahrain's military after an 8-month pause following the Feb. 14 uprising.³⁹³ Since then the US has occasionally reiterated support for reforms but has refused to apply economic, defense, or rhetorical pressure on the regime. By refusing to do so the US has given tacit approval to the regime and signaled that its military base is more important than a principled stance in support of human rights or democracy.

The overarching argument in this thesis is that Bahrain's late attempt at institutionalizing patronage, and that patronage going exclusively to Sunni supporters, is a path dictated by the early receipt of oil royalties in the 1930s. By choosing to be a despotic, narrow based regime, Bahrain set itself down a very long road marked by near constant political contests and frequently large, democratic protest movements. This chapter of the thesis shows that the Arab Spring protests in Bahrain are but the most recent manifestation in a line of protests that stretch back to 1933, the year the regime began receiving oil rents.

The following, and final chapter, concludes the thesis by offering judgements on the topic. I will explain what my research has found and what the findings mean and how well they support my thesis.

³⁹³Karen DeYoung, "US to resume some military sales to Bahrain," *Washington Post*, 12 May 2012, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/us-to-resume-some-military-sales-to-bahrain/2012/05/11/gIOAZcROJU_story.html.

CHAPTER VII CONCLUSION

A. Findings

This thesis presented a theoretically guided case study of Bahrain, a repressive rentier autocracy. It explained why a relatively large opposition movement was unable to force the regime to make concessions. Presenting a macro sequence of Bahrain's political history and social institutions allowed me to show how early social opposition combined with geopolitics that induced the Al Khalifa regime to choose a narrow regime coalition which conditioned future investments in oil revenues in a small group of enterprises which deepened the narrow base into the entire Sunni community. Through this historical analysis it becomes apparent that the 2011 Arab Spring protests in Bahrain are rooted in a history of protests stretching back to 1938. That Bahrain's society, especially the Shia Baharna, were in a weakened state of disarray when oil rents began accruing to the state in 1933, allowed the regime to repress opposition movements and not make concessions. Though they could have exited the country or become loyal rent-seekers, at several critical junctures the majority of the non-elite population defied rentier logic by continuing to protest for democratic rights that would allow them economic and social equality in their own land. The regime has never been forced to make concessions and remains entrenched in a despotic authoritarian path dependency but has begun widening the domestic base of support to prevent a cross-cutting opposition from forming. What makes widening all the more difficult is Bahrain's relatively small petroleum reserves which have been in production declines for two decades. But even if that were not the case, the institutional

sectarian discrimination, tradition of protest, and repertoire of collective action would still limit the regime's base.

These findings mean that Bahrain's pre-oil social and economic conditions have created the conditions which leave it unstable today. The frequency and strength of the opposition movements that test the resilience of Bahrain's Monarchy are unavoidable on a the narrowly supported, despotic regime path. That Bahrain experienced these troubles in 2011 while the remaining Arab monarchs did not suggests that Bahrain's unique demographics, institutional sectarian discrimination, and early oil have created a setting where the processes normally associated with rentier states, negotiating side-payments with large opposition groups – have not taken place. Furthermore, the regime survived and quickly rebounded because of strong foreign patronage from Saudi Arabia and the US.

B. Limits of the Argument

Though relevant for Bahrain and Gulf specialists, this thesis has wider implications for the study of sectarianism in the Arab region. First, the argument improves new studies about the resilience of authoritarian regimes by pointing out that early social factors conditioned who and what would affect social support for the regime. The Bahraini case also reveals the shortcomings in the rentier state argument of political acquiescence in exchange for no taxation. Unresolved political conflicts leave deep impressions on rentier states that affect or prevent the system loyalty produced by rent seeking in a rentier state. I refine the field of monarchical resilience in the oil rich states by pointing out the

importance of foreign patrons during crises. Historical analysis of Bahrain, combined with revealing comparisons with Kuwait, suggest to students of Arab monarchies that resilience is linked to regime origin. The early choice to abuse the Baharna, to treat them as conquered people, set the two groups into a conflict which haunts the regime today.

This theses' long view on Bahraini politics undermines the major trend in Gulf analysis, those commentators, mostly Americans, who see today's conflict as an extension of Islam's 7th century feud over the caliphate, analysis which often leads to emphasis on the role of Iran's in stoking Shia activism and rebellion in Bahrain.³⁹⁴ In addition to the Iranian narrative, other scholars have formulated sectarian analyses based on the US invasion of Iraq and the consequent Sunni-Shia civil war in that country circa 2006. Here to I don't mean to be overly critical of Vali Nasr, but his book, which had been met with popular acclaim, focuses on the evolution of Shia institutions as the conditioner of political conflicts. I believe the shifting patterns in the region, and their interplay among local forces, will do more to explain future conflict. Even when refraining from asserting direct foreign intervention in Bahrain observers like Nasr frequently refer to the ripple effect that foreign events, like the Iranian Revolution and the invasion of Iraq, have in Bahrain. This logic is ahistorical, in that it silently assumes Bahrain would be an otherwise quiet island. As this thesis unequivocally shows sectarian strife in Bahrain is neither new or foreign. That the 1979 Iranian Revolution's impact on the political life in Bahrain is frequently exaggerated and under analyzed is no surprise, scholarship on the topic is difficult given the

³⁹⁴Ronald E. Neumann, "Bahrain: A Very Complicated Little Island," *Middle East Policy* 20, no. 4 (2013): 45-58.

research climate in both Iran and Bahrain and is emphasized by the Arab monarchs *ad infinitum*. Even in the US scholars must use legal requests to dislodge small passages of official memorandum which may or may not provide additional insight into the IFLB and other activities in Bahrain with ties to Iran's 1979 revolution. In sum, this thesis suggests rethinking the sectarian paradigm in understanding Bahrain's political life. While grievances can and do fall along sectarian lines, it is largely because the regime and its supporters have manipulated the political economy along those lines, and broadcast sectarian propaganda, as a way to build a base of support and become rich while encouraging foreign patrons to invest resources in regime survival.

From the historical vantage point, the Al Khalifa regime has, in many instances, and still can “run out the clock” by exhausting the opposition with police repression, arrests, torture, and endless sessions of meaningless dialogue. However, the Al Khalifa regime continues to entrench the inherent risk in a repressive survival strategy. Repression may continue to work until the geopolitical and/or the rentier environment in the Gulf fundamentally changes, but there is going to be times when the regime has to blink. One trend that is apparent in the thousands of youtube videos that are posted from Shia villages is that the protesters are becoming bolder in their use of violence. There may be a point in the near future when violence spirals out of control. That Bahrain is an island does make it difficult to smuggle in weapons for an armed uprising. Dr. Tell recently pointed out that Adam Hanieh's very similar historical review of Bahrain included an observation that Bahrain was an “island without beaches.”³⁹⁵ And it is true, the ruling family and their

³⁹⁵Paul Amar and Vijay Prashad, *Dispatches from the Arab Spring: Understanding the New Middle East*

supporters have seized so much beachfront property that it effectively acts as a sort of anti-smuggling border.

C. Further Research

What the literature most lacks is a detailed account of the regime's current coalition of supporters. During my research I found several sources of information, business databases and detailed descriptions of families, that if combined could create a political security map. But even when scholars identify the regime's supporters we are left speculating about the motivations and deliberations which they contend with, especially during times of crisis when their support is probably most shaken and most important to the regime's survival.

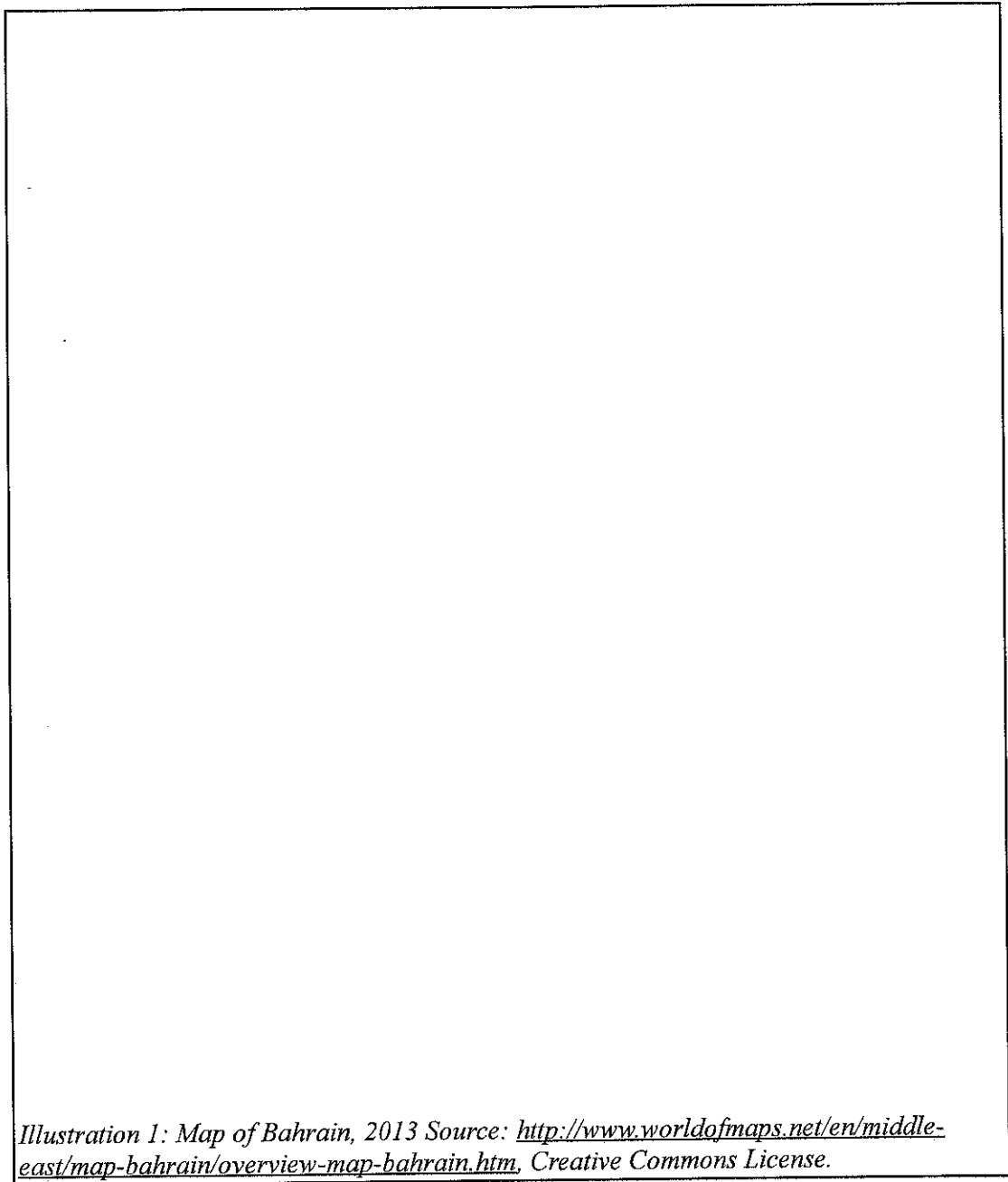
Having benefited from Dr. Tell's lectures, including those on networks of *khaleeji capital*, first theorized by Adam Hanieh, I am beginning to see how transnational links that criss-cross Bahrain integrate into the larger Gulf political security map.³⁹⁶ The Huwala community, which dominates Bahrain's banking sector, needs to be given more scholarly attention. This group is able to work with both Persian and Arab sides of the Gulf, is deeply entrenched in the political economies of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Qatar. I suspect that this group in particular, with its tradition of dealing with both sides of the Gulf, is able to use regional tensions to not only act as suppliers to Iran and the Arab Gulf states, but to also ensure that certain economic restrictions are kept in place which, with their special access

(University of Minnesota Press, 2013).

³⁹⁶Adam Hanieh, "Khaleeji-capital: class-formation and regional integration in the Middle-East Gulf," *Historical Materialism* 18, no. 2 (2010): 35-76.

to government agencies and heads of state, can bypass, forming de facto monopolies. The promotion of the sectarian narrative may in fact have created an opportunity from which the Huwala community is able to increase its rent-seeking on the Arab side of the Gulf. Likewise, the Shia Afro-Persian Ajam community is understudied. Their adherence to the Usuli jurisprudence may keep them at a distance from the Baharna who are coreligionists but of the Akhbari school. And like the Huwala, Ajam families occupy powerful positions within public enterprises like the central bank. Knowing how cohesive these groups are and what their political outlook is would be a step in understanding how rent seeking and socio-political identities intersect. Research along these lines would undoubtedly allow the development of new theories of regime strategy which would help empirically grounded comparisons with other Arab monarchies.

APPENDIX





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