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**REPRESSION, CIVIL CONFLICT, AND LEADERSHIP TENURE: A
CASE STUDY OF BAHRAIN**

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REPRESSION, CIVIL CONFLICT, AND LEADERSHIP TENURE: A CASE STUDY OF BAHRAIN^{1,2}

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(Photo of the protests at the Pearl Roundabout, Manama, Bahrain, 2011)

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³ Bahrain Petroleum Company (Bapco), About company. <http://www.bapco.net/en-us/about-bapco>

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Executive Summary

Bahrain is a textbook case study of how government officials can rely on repression to stay in power over decades. The descendants of the Sunni Al Khalifa family have ruled the majority Shia country since 1783. The Royal Family monopolizes the economy and controls access to land and resources. After oil was discovered in 1932, Bahrain's economy became dependent on petroleum. The Royal Family uses that money to provide free education, health, and other services - in short, to buy loyalty.

Bahrain has some of the trappings of a democratic state and yet it is neither democratic nor accountable to the majority of its people. The Royal Family has consistently used violent, peaceful, and a mix of repressive tactics to maintain its rule over the Shia majority. Moreover, the government has no system of taxation or checks and balances that can promote accountability. The Shia people who have experienced decades of oppression are likely to continue to engage in civil conflict.

Q1. Do Bahrainis respond differently when confronted with political repression, violent repression, or a mix of repressive tactics?

In general, the protestors, who tend to be Shia, respond to violent, peaceful, and a mix of repressive tactics with peaceful protest. Nonetheless, some Shia have radicalized: a growing number are willing to rely on violent means. They see the government unwilling to work with moderates or any Shia and they see the reforms made by the government as inadequate. However, the great majority of Shia activists rely on political means and are outraged by the state's continued attempts to silence dissent.

Q2. Do officials use different types of repression in response to different types of civil conflict?

Bahraini officials rely on a changing mix of political and violent repression, depending on the domestic situation and foreign attention. They tend to use violent repression in response to violent protest, but they have also relied on expulsion, use of malware, and banning of political parties (political means). Nonetheless, it is important to note that for some 40 years, the government has relied on violent repression, including torture, to the majority Shia in line.

Q3. Does the use and type of repression (whether political, violent, or some combination) increase the likelihood that rulers retain power?

Bahrain has a history of reforms, where the Royal Family flirts with greater democratization and periods of high repression. The Sunni leaders seem determined to maintain their control over the Shia populace and their use of repression seems likely to maintain their power in the short run. However, we see three reasons why the Royal Family risks a major civil war and could lose power. First, the Sunni are unlikely to become the majority despite efforts to increase the number of Sunni

by importing workers from other countries. Secondly, as the oil runs out, the Royal Family will be less likely to be able to provide benefits (either monopoly rents to their allies, or subsidized education and housing to the broader population) to keep the population quiescent. While the numbers of unemployed citizens are relatively low, the economy is not providing enough jobs for its entire people. Corruption and inadequate governance increasingly frustrate many Sunni. Moreover, many of the new jobs are taken by foreigners, not locals. Finally, given the violence in the region and the sheer numbers of Shia, it seems unlikely that Sunnis can maintain control without also resorting to violence. Iran and Bahrain are engaged in a verbal war as well as a proxy war in Yemen. Iran has threatened to bring that war to Bahrain (McCurdy: 2016). The Bahraini leadership refuses to engage in dialogue because it believes it can only maintain control with brute force.

The case study proceeds as follows. First, we give an overview and recent history of Bahrain. We next outline the civil conflict/repression relationship in Bahrain focusing on the protests in 2011 and the government's response since then. We describe the protestors and the repressors, and then examine the underlying factors that have caused people to protest in Bahrain. Next, we focus on the nature of repression in Bahrain (types and victims), as well as the people's response to repression. We next discuss the economic and political consequences of Bahraini repression at home and abroad. We then talk about the likelihood of continued repression in Bahrain. Finally, by focusing on our three questions, we note the key points revealed by the Bahrain case study.

I. Bahrain Case Study

A. Overview

Bahrain is an island country in the Middle East with the population of 1.377 million (2015) and GDP of \$32.22 billion (2015). Approximately half of the populace is Bahraini nationals and the rest are mainly low-paid migrant workers from South Asia, as well as expatriate professionals (World Bank: 2016 and Human Rights Watch: 2015). Because of its central location in the Gulf, Bahrain has long been a trading nation linking ancient cultures such as the Phoenicians in the Levant, Mesopotamia in ancient Iraq, and the Nile Valley in Ancient Egypt. According to the New York Times, Bahrain today is a weekend playground for Saudis, a regional business hub, and a center for Islamic banking (Fattah: 2006).

Bahrain is also a prominent example of how government officials can rely on repression to stay in power over decades. The descendants of the Al Khalifa family have ruled the country since 1783. Bahrain declared its independence from the United Kingdom on August 15, 1971 (CIA: 2015 and Kingdom of Bahrain: ND). The Sunni minority rules over and limits the economic, political, and civil rights of the majority Shia population (roughly 70 percent) (CIA: 2015 and Department of State: 2015a). The civil service, defense, and internal security forces are also predominantly Sunni, and few Shia members attain high-ranking positions (Department of State: 2010, 17). Meanwhile, the Royal Family monopolizes the economy and controls access to land and resources (Al-Haddad: 2015 and Gengler: 2012).

Bahrain's economy is dependent on oil, which is rapidly running out.³ Despite the government's efforts to diversify the economy, the oil sector accounted for 73 percent and 85 percent of government revenues in 2000 and 2010, respectively (Bahrain Economic Development Board: 2013, 10). In 2015, petroleum production and refining accounted for 77 percent of Bahrain's export receipts, 87 percent of government revenues, and 19 percent of GDP (Al-Haddad: 2015). The economy also produces aluminum and is heavily engaged in construction (CIA: 2015). In 2012, the major contributors to GDP were government (12 percent), finance (17 percent), manufacturing (15 percent), and mining and quarrying (20 percent).⁴

Like many Gulf countries, the government has an implicit bargain with its people - it provides free education, health care, and housing in return for social and political quiescence (Warner: 2010 and Lahn: 2016, 3-4). The Kingdom of Bahrain has also long subsidized food, fuel, and utilities and maintained price controls as a way to protect national living standards (Lahn: 2016, 5). However, with the recent downturn in the price of oil, Bahrain has less money to provide these benefits to its people. Bahrain had a budget deficit of \$4 billion, or 13 percent of GDP, in 2015 (CIA: 2015, Al Monitor: 2015). As a result, the government has cut subsidies to fuel, food, and utilities and raised prices for energy, water, and food (Lahn: 2016, 2, 4). Bahrainis are increasingly divided about macroeconomic management - they are concerned about access to state housing, corruption, and the quality of public goods, such as infrastructure (Al-Haddad: 2015).

Bahrain expatriate workers do the jobs that locals are unwilling to do (such as construction workers, waiters, drivers, and domestic workers) or bring skills that locals do not have (Department of State: 2015a, 28). Despite helping to fuel the economy, foreigners are oftentimes mistreated and deprived of basic human rights.⁵ For example, according to the Human Rights Watch (HRW) Report of 2012, many foreign workers were paid lower wages if at all, had their passports confiscated, and experienced "physical, psychological, and sexual abuse" (HRW: 2012, 2). Because of the expanded population of "guest workers" during the economic boom years, and the naturalization of foreign Sunnis, some Shia believe the government is trying to alter the demographic balance to reduce Shia majority (Chayes and Matar: 2013).

B. Why is there so much Repression in Bahrain?

Bahrain has some of the trappings of a democratic state and yet it is neither democratic nor accountable to the majority of its people. The Royal Family has consistently used violent, peaceful, and a mix of repressive tactics to maintain its rule over the Shia majority. Moreover, the government has no system of taxation or checks and balances that can promote accountability. Instead the government is funded by oil revenues, which the Royal Family uses to buy favors and maintain the loyalty of the populace (Al-Haddad: 2015).

³ Bahrain Petroleum Company (Bapco), About company. <http://www.bapco.net/en-us/about-bapco>

⁴ Bahrain Economic Development Board, "Kingdom of Bahrain: Economic Yearbook 2013," p. 10. <http://www.bahrainedb.com/en/EDBDdocuments/Bahrain-Economic-Yearbook.pdf>

⁵ US Department Human Rights Report 2010, p. 19. <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/160073.pdf>

Bahrain has a long history of violent repression and civil conflict. The government periodically reforms, but then returns to violent and political repression (Interview with Nicholas McGeehan: 2016). In its 2015 report, HRW traced that history. In 1975, the ruling Al Khalifa family suspended the 1973 constitution and arrested its critics. In 1981, the government conducted widespread arrests of Shia after the government had allegedly uncovered a plot to replace the Al Khalifa with an Islamic republic modelled on Iran. In 1994, after Shia demonstrated for political reform amid concerns of high Shia unemployment, the government again engaged in mass arrests and violent repression (Human Rights Watch: 2015).

The government has not been on a steady path towards more democracy and improved rule of law, but instead seems increasingly opaque and less accountable. In February 2001, Bahrainis overwhelmingly approved by referendum a National Charter proposed by Shaikh Hamad that elevated his title from Amir (prince) to King and endorsed an elected National Assembly (a parliamentary body) comprised of a Council of Representatives and an appointed Shura Consultative Council of equal size (Katzman: 2016, 2-3). However, the parliament does not have powers equivalent to the King. Either Chamber of the National Assembly can propose legislation, but the King must approve all laws. The King's veto can be overwritten by a two-thirds majority vote of both chambers (Human Rights Watch: 2015 and Katzman: 2016, 2-3). In October 2002, with the intent of pre-empting any initiative from the new National Assembly, the King issued Decree 56 that conferred immunity from prosecution for government. The opposition, Shia and Sunni alike, considered this move a betrayal of the National Charter (Human Rights Watch: 2015).

The current regent, King Hamad Bin Isa Al Khalifa controls the executive, legislative, and judicial branches.⁶ The King may dissolve the Council of Representatives at his discretion; he also has the power to amend the constitution and to propose, ratify, and promulgate laws. Both councils may question government ministers (except the prime minister), and the Council of Representatives may require a minister's resignation with a two-thirds majority vote of no confidence. The Council of Representatives may introduce a resolution indicating it cannot cooperate with the prime minister, in which case the joint national assembly would have the option to pass the resolution by a two-thirds majority, requiring the King to dismiss the prime minister or to dissolve the Council of Representatives. The King has never had to face a no-confidence vote, despite years of protests by his subjects. The King retains the power to appoint all ministers and judges, to amend the constitution, and he also appoints half of the parliamentary body. The King's family holds 7 of 19 cabinet posts including key defense, internal security, and foreign minister positions. The King usually appoints four-five Shiite ministers (Katzman: 2016, 2 and Department of State: 2010, 15). Hence, the government gives the appearance of a democracy but in truth the Royal Family has complete control.

C. Recent History of Repression and Civil Conflict in Bahrain

In 2011, after observing the protestors in Egypt topple President Hosni Mubarak, some 200,000 Bahrainis went to a major traffic circle, the Pearl Roundabout, which was named after a statue that

⁶ Shura Council, Constitution of Bahrain, Article 35.
<http://www.shura.bh/en/LegislativeResource/Constitution/Pages/Constitution05.aspx>

depicted the country's pearl divers. The protesters called for greater democracy and a constitutional monarchy, in which the Prime Minister and cabinet were selected by the Parliament, as well as for economic reforms. Although the protesters were generally individuals of Shia origin, they also included Sunnis who wanted political and economic reforms (O' Murchu and Kerr: 2014 and Interview with Brian Dooley: 2016). The protestors shared concerns about how the Royal Family governed the economy and polity; they believed that the Royal Family seems to view Bahrain as its property to use or sell when and where it wants. The Financial Times investigated these allegations and found the Royal Family seized undersea plots, reclaimed them for land development, and profited from them, rather than using that land to build additional and much needed housing. The King uses these plots to obtain stakes in private joint venture projects, but Bahraini lawmakers have found no record of payments to the states for these plots (O'Murchu and Kerr: 2014 and Richter and De Sa' Pinto: 2011).

Although most of the protestors were peaceful, on February 17-18, 2011, security forces used rubber bullets and tear gas to clear the Roundabout. Four demonstrators were killed as security forces arrested over 1,600 people - including children - who participated in, or were suspected of supporting, the anti-government demonstrations. In many cases armed masked men, some in civilian clothes, pulled people out of their homes in pre-dawn raids and transferred them to unknown locations. Others were arrested at work or pulled from cars at checkpoints (Human Rights Watch: 2015). The US urged the government to pull its security forces back and respond to the protestors' demands (Katzman: 2016). The government invited the representatives of the protestors to begin a formal dialogue, and the King released and pardoned 308 Bahrainis. On March 13, 2011, the Crown Prince announced seven principles to guide what he called a National Dialogue, including a Parliament with "full authority" and "a government that meets the will of the people." However, after protestors blockaded the financial district of the capital, Manama, the government asked the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC: Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, UAE, Qatar, and Oman) to send security forces to protect key sites (Katzman: 2016, 2-3). On March 14, 2011, these soldiers and police took up positions at key locations and the King declared a three-month state of emergency. Bahrain's security forces collaborated with the GCC forces to clear the Pearl Roundabout. They also demolished the Pearl Monument on March 18, 2011 (Katzman: 2016, 2-3).

The government's violent response to the protests continued to resonate both within the country and internationally. In Bahrain, some 2,500 people, who were believed to have connections with the protests, were fired from work at public sector and private companies closely related to the government. The University of Bahrain dismissed 200 students and took away government scholarships from those connected to the protests. (BICI Report: 2011; Human Rights Watch: 2012; and Katzman: 2016, 5-6).

Foreign allies, in particular the US and Britain, pressured the government to examine its behavior and to find ways to avoid violent repression. The Royal Family set up the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI), a review commission to examine how it responded to the 2011 civil conflict (BICI: 2011). The report examined the reasons for the government's actions and found the security services had a "culture of impunity" (Department of State: 2015, 2). Although the government promised to implement many of the report's recommendations, some five years later,

the Department of State and outside observers concluded that the Royal Family implemented only a few of the Commission's recommendations and few perpetrators have been punished. Bahrain continues to have a culture of impunity (Department of State: 2015, 2; Interview with Brian Dooley: 2016; and Human Rights Watch: 2015).

Since 2011, Bahraini protestors have continued to sporadically protest, while the state has returned to using violent repression. Bahrain Watch reports that more than 25 individuals have allegedly died as a result of police violence, improper use of tear gas, and restrictions on access to medical care since November 2011.⁷ Moreover, one can see evidence that the Bahraini state is taking steps to bolster the Sunni population through incentives to Sunni immigration. The government is also deporting Shia and in so doing altering the demographic mix in Bahrain. Finally, the government uses concerns about Iran (a Shia-led republic) to justify its repressive actions against its own citizens.

II. Who are the Repressors and how do they use repression today?

The repressors in Bahrain include the Royal Family, the military, security forces, and even the judiciary, which is not always even-handed. The King, the Crown Prince (the King's son), and the Prime Minister make the bulk of decisions. The King and his son have told senior US officials that they are advocates of reform and accommodation with Bahraini Shiites. However, others in the Royal Family, including the Prime Minister, assert that concessions to the Shiite majority will cause the Shiites to ask for even more economic and political power; hence, the government should not appease them (Katzman: 2016, 2; Interview with Kenneth Katzman: 2016; and Interview with Brian Dooley: 2016).

The Royal Family controls top posts in the Kingdom.⁸ Hamad Bin Isa has been the King of Bahrain since 1999.⁹ His brother, Ali Bin Isa, is the Minister of Royal Court Affairs.¹⁰ The King's other brother, Mohammed Bin Isa, is the Commander of the National Guard.¹¹ The King's uncle, Ali Bin Khalifa, is at the helm of the Cabinet and Transport Ministry.¹² The Crown Prince of Bahrain, Salman Bin Hamad, is the Deputy Supreme Commander of the Bahrain Defense Force.¹³ Other members of the Al Khalifa family hold such positions as the CEO of Bahrain Olympic Committee,

⁷ Bahrain Watch, "Government Inaction in Implementing the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry." <https://bahrainwatch.org/bici/>

⁸ House of Khalifa, Royal Family of Bahrain, News and Information, Family Tree. <http://houseofkhalifa.com/family-tree/>

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Bahrain, New Agency, "Bahrain leadership congratulated by HM the King's brothers and sons of Shaikh Mohammed bin Salman," 12/15/2013. <http://www.bna.bh/portal/en/news/593359>

¹² House of Khalifa, Royal Family of Bahrain, News and Information, Family Tree. <http://houseofkhalifa.com/family-tree/>

¹³ Ibid.

Board Chairman of Mumtalakat Holding Company (a sovereign wealth fund), Interior Minister, and Minister of Foreign Affairs.¹⁴

The decisions made by the Royal Family influence practices in the Bahraini security forces, police and educational systems. According to the US Department of State, the Interior Ministry is the lead government agency charged with detecting and preventing acts of terrorism and arresting suspects in terrorist-related acts, with the Bahrain National Security Agency (BNSA) providing intelligence support. The Bahraini Coast Guard also contributes to the counterterrorism mission by monitoring and interdicting the seaborne movement of weapons and terrorists into and out of the country. The Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs (MOJIA) tried to counter radicalization to violence and violent extremism by organizing regular workshops for clerics and speakers from both the Sunni and Shia sects. The MOJIA also undertakes an annual review of schools' Islamic Studies curricula to evaluate interpretations of religious texts (Department of State: 2015b).

The US Department of State also notes that the government uses counterterrorism as a rationale for arresting dissenters. "In December 2015, the Council of Representatives – Bahrain's elected, lower chamber – approved a royal decree amending provisions of the 2006 terrorism law, allowing security forces to detain suspects for longer periods of time without charging them...Terrorism-related acts, a broadly-defined category, are treated as criminal cases, with prescribed penalties spelled out in the Anti-Terrorism Law of 2006 and Articles 155 and 168 of the Penal Code" (Department of State: 2015b).

III. The Role of Impunity in Bahrain

As recognized in the BICI report, Bahrain has a culture of impunity that facilitates and perpetuates human rights abuses. In fact, some people argue that the situation has gotten worse since the 2011 protests (Interview with Dooley, 2016; Human Rights Watch: 2015; and Kizer and Payne: 2016).

Outside observers have tracked the government's actions since November 2011, when the BICI report was released. They found that the Royal Family did make some changes to how they governed in the wake of the protests and the BICI report (Katzman: 2016, 7). For example, the BICI stated that several government agencies committed arbitrary or unlawful killings in 2011, including the Ministry of Interior, the Bahrain Defense Force (BDF), and the BNSA. King Hamad amended the BNSA charter to revoke the agency's arrest and detention authorities (Department of State: 2011b and 2001, 2). The BICI also noted that the security forces rarely include Bahraini Shia, and those working for the government in administrative positions (Dooley: 2014). Hence the Commission also recommended that the government integrate Shia into the security forces. However, the government did not provide these opportunities for Shia, signaling distrust in the majority of its own citizens (Human Rights Watch: 2014). In 2012 the State Department declared that the Bahraini government had implemented only five of the recommendations (Katzman: 2016, 7).

¹⁴ House of Khalifa, Royal Family of Bahrain, News and Information, Key Figures.
<http://houseofkhalifa.com/key-figures/>

Government impunity perhaps is best shown by the government's continued reliance upon violent repression and failure to stop its use by security forces. The government established a bureaucracy to hear complaints, but these organizations are neither effective nor trusted by individuals asserting torture. According to the Department of State, in 2010, "the Office of the Inspector General of the Ministry of Interior received 246 complaints between January and October. Nineteen cases were referred to the Ministry's legal affairs directorate for further action. The ministry maintained a hotline for citizens to report police abuses; however, many in the Shia community believed the government condoned police misconduct and, therefore, did not report allegations of abuse. In practice, the ministry responded to allegations of abuse and public complaints by establishing temporary investigation committees, which did not issue public reports of their findings" (Department of State, 2010, 4).

Two years later, according to the Department of State, the government established the Special Investigations Unit (SIU) in the Office of the Public Prosecutor to investigate and refer cases of security force misconduct to courts. In October 2015, the government reported the SIU had investigated 227 incidents, of which eight cases had gone to court; the rest were either still under investigation or were closed. Of those that went to court, one case was acquitted, and the SIU appealed the verdict. The Ministry of Interior reported as of year's end, 32 police officers were in jail, including 22 convicted in the security court and 10 convicted in civilian criminal courts. Another 21 officers awaited trial. Many human rights groups asserted that investigations into police abuse were slow and ineffective (Department of State: 2015a, 9 and Human Rights Watch: 2015).

The BICI report also suggested that the government establish an ombudsman to ensure that police and security forces act in a responsible manner. So the Bahraini government set up the office within the Ministry of Interior. The Government of Bahrain has tasked the Ombudsman with investigating instances of violent repression such as torture, informing the Ministry of Interior, and advising the public prosecutor in the cases that constitute criminal offenses. The office also is supposed to update both the complainant and the defendant about the steps taken to investigate the complaints and the conclusions of the investigations. Anyone may make a complaint to the Ombudsman regarding the behavior of "any civilian or public security personnel in the Ministry of Interior for alleged criminal offense because of, during, or as result of their scope of responsibilities." The Ombudsman is also supposed to visit prisons, juvenile care centers, and detention centers to ascertain the legality of the procedures, and that inmates, prisoners and detainees are not subjected to torture or inhuman or derogatory treatment (Bahrain: 2016). However, according to HRW (2015) and Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB), the office did not fully investigate misconduct or consistently act to protect victims, in particular victims of torture. The Ombudsman reports resulted in no convictions, and suspected abusers were transferred to administrative positions instead of suspended from active duty. The Ombudsman claims that the office has achieved growing trust among the population; but ADHR found only distrust because of the office's lack of results.¹⁵ Given this continued failure to hold

¹⁵ Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain, "Ombudsman Report Continues to Sidestep Key Human Rights Issues," June 29, 2016, <http://www.adhrb.org/2016/06/ombudsman-report-continues-sidestep-key-human-rights-issues/>

officials to account, the Department of State reported that in 2015 “impunity remained a problem” (Department of State: 2015a, 9).

Human rights organizations have also concluded that the government has made inadequate progress towards addressing the problems of impunity and bias against Shia. In 2012, the Project on Middle East Democracy found that the Government of Bahrain “has fully implemented three of the BICI report’s 26 recommendations...The government has made no meaningful progress toward...accountability for individuals responsible for torture and severe human rights violations, the release of political prisoners, prevention of sectarian incitement, and the relaxation of...controls on free expression” (POMED: 2012, 2-3). In 2014, Joe Stork of HRW concluded, “Bahrain’s problem is not a dysfunctional justice system, but rather a highly functional *injustice* system” (Human Rights Watch: 2014). Senior officials allow, condone, and encourage bad behavior and a lack of accountability for that behavior. Physicians for Human Rights asserted in 2014 the Bahrain’s culture of impunity enabled gross violations of medical neutrality – the principle of noninterference with medical services in times of armed conflict and civil unrest – including detainment, arrest, and torture (Teodoro: 2014). Finally, according to Bahrain Watch, “an independent organization that seeks to promote democracy, equality and social justice in Bahrain”, the BICI report did not assign responsibility for torture and other human rights violations to senior government officials; did not investigate the Army takeover of the medical sector; nor examine the use of aired forced confessions and the clearly identifiable officials behind them. Bahrain Watch also wondered why the BICI did not examine the role of the King, Crown Prince, and the Prime Minister, find out who decided to invite the GCC and in particular Saudi troops, and finally examine how the long history of systemic repression affected the treatment of the protestors.¹⁶

Since not meeting the recommendations, Bahraini officials have ignored or downplayed public concerns about its use of state repression. The international community, while vocal, has not been effective at changing the government’s behavior. In 2014, 46 governments issued a statement at the Human Rights Council regarding their concerns about the human rights situation in Bahrain; and some 35 countries signed a similar statement in 2015 (Amnesty International: 2015). The UN Special Rapporteurs, independent experts on human rights working with the UN Human Rights Council, have issued 60 communications to the government detailing and protesting the Bahraini government’s repression (Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain: 2016, 5). Members of the European Parliament issued a resolution on July 7, 2016, condemning the decision to suspend Al-Wefaq, the country’s biggest opposition group; misuse of anti-terrorism laws; misuse of tear gas and anti-riot equipment; and reliance on revoking citizenship as a means of political pressure.¹⁷ On July 8, 2016, Federica Mogherini, the European Union’s High Representative and Vice-President, stated, “We are witnessing a series of worrying developments...which point to increasing polarization of society in Bahrain. The sentencing of 9 years on appeal against its Secretary General Ali Salman, as well as the re-arrest of Mr. Nabeel Rajab and measures preventing activists from travelling abroad can only represent an obstacle to the national reconciliation in the

¹⁶ <https://bahrainwatch.org/bici/limitations.php>

¹⁷ Index on Censorship, “European Parliament adopts resolution condemning Bahrain’s human rights abuses,” 7/8/2016, <https://www.indexoncensorship.org/2016/07/european-parliament-adopts-resolution-condemning-bahrains-crackdown-on-civil-society-and-political-opposition/>

Kingdom” (Mogherini: 2016). However, she did not call for sanctions, instead encouraging the EU to continue dialogue with Bahrain.¹⁸ The US Department of State has responded to Bahrain’s denial of political rights by asserting in 2016, “We remain deeply troubled by the Government of Bahrain’s practice of withdrawing the nationality of its citizens arbitrarily, the overall precedent that this case could establish, and the risk that individuals may be rendered stateless. Above all, we worry that this case, as well as other recent actions by the Government, will further divert Bahrainis from the path of reform and reconciliation” (Kirby: 2016).

Many human rights observers have concluded that the government is unwilling to change its behavior or hold officials to account for human rights abuse (Dhanvanthari: 2015; Human Rights Watch: 2014; Ali: 2013; Dooley: 2016; Amnesty International: 2016; Americans for Democracy; and Human Rights in Bahrain: 2015). Moreover, according to HRW, the government has made it harder for outsiders to investigate human rights violations in Bahrain because it has banned many journalists and human rights operatives (Interview with Nick McGeehan: 2016 and Human Rights Watch: 2015). However, scholars have a different take on why the government continues to repress. According to Justin Gengler of Qatar University, “the prevailing interpretation of politics in the Arab Gulf - the so-called rentier state paradigm - holds that the regimes can buy the political acquiescence of the citizenry through judicious distribution of oil revenues.” Bahrain’s rulers fit that model - they use both subsidies and employment to keep the Sunnis loyal (especially those in uniform), and that in turn allows them to keep their power (Gengler: 2012).

The Bahraini government justifies its use of repression by fears of a Shia “fifth column,” which will undermine the State. They note that Iran’s leadership has called for an “Islamic Revolution” in Bahrain (Hammond: 2012 and Nashashibi: 2016). Moreover, the Royal Family can make a case to their allies that some local Shia are plotting against the government. According to the US Government, in 2015, the Bahraini government interdicted several smuggling operations and seized sizeable caches of military-grade explosives, shaped charges, and sophisticated detonators. These raids ensnared several militant cells and significantly eroded militant attacks on police. In October, the government announced it had charged 24 individuals – seven of whom were in detention, and the rest of whom remained at large in Iraq and Syria – with forming an ISIL cell that plotted suicide attacks in Bahrain and recruited fighters for the organization. In December, however, the Public Prosecutor released four of the detained suspects for lack of evidence. Department of State reported that Shia militants used homemade devices to target security services, but these attacks left no casualties (Department of State: 2015b and 2015a, 2). Consequently, Senator John McCain stated, “Bahrain’s decision to ban and dissolve the moderate opposition party al-Wifaq [Al-Wefaq] and re-arrest human rights activist Nabeel Rajab in July 2016 is an alarming diversion from the path of reform and national reconciliation.” However, “Bahrain has legitimate security concerns, and I strongly believe that the United States must continue to work closely with Bahrain to defeat ISIL and resist Iran’s aggression in the region” (McCain: 2016).

¹⁸ Focus News Agency, “Mogherini: Situation in Bahrain not just a HR issue but also a geopolitical,” 7/9/2016, <http://www.focus-fen.net/news/2016/07/09/409143/mogherini-situation-in-bahrain-not-just-a-hr-issue-but-also-a-geopolitical.html>

Thus, Bahraini government officials may continue to act with impunity because they perceive that key allies are willing to accept repression at home for cooperation in fighting Islamic terrorism (Interview with Nick McGeehan: 2016).

IV. What Factors Led to Civil Conflict in Bahrain in 2011? Why will civil conflict continue?

Civil conflict in Bahrain is derived from three sources:

- First, the country run by Sunni Royal Family, while the majority population is Shia. The Royal Family run the country like it is a family business rather than a state comprised of citizens (Ulrichsen, ND, 1).
- Secondly, Shia's have long been frustrated, although the great majority of Shia in Bahrain have used peaceful means to encourage reform. According to Brian Dooley of Human Rights, many Shia feel that the government is designed to prevent them from translating their majority into political control. (Interview with Brian Dooley and Katzman: 2016, 4).
- Thirdly, since the Iranian revolution, the Royal Family, along with leaders of other majority Sunni Gulf Nations including Saudi Arabia, have painted Iran as a threat to regional stability. Bahrain's leaders use their concerns about a rising Iran to suppress Bahraini Shias' demands for economic and political liberalization.

A. Who were the protestors in 2011? Who are the protestors today?

In 2011, the protestors were mainly Shia but included some Sunnis who were equally concerned about corruption and inadequate governance. However, today, Bahraini society is increasingly polarized –Sunni and Shia rarely collaborate to achieve reforms despite their shared interest in better governance (Gengler: 2012 and Human Rights First: 2016, 2). That said, based on analysis by human rights organizations and scholars, it seems likely that Sunni citizens could again join the protests given widening divisions between the elite Sunni and the broader population as the economy shrinks.

According to Kenneth Katzman of the US Congressional Research Service, although some Sunni joined the protests in 2011, today most Sunnis see their Shia fellow citizens as a threat to Bahrain. Many of the Sunni population are also oppressed and have little control over their destiny (Gengler: 2012). These Sunni citizens remain concerned about corruption, economic mismanagement, and inadequate governance but with government propaganda and fears of increased violence, these individuals have become less willing to collaborate with Shia groups to address these problems (Gengler: 2012). As a result of years of demagoguery and allegations that the Shia are fomenting terrorism, most Sunnis see the Shia as inherently violent and interested in destabilizing their country (Interview with Kenneth Katzman: 2016; Interview with Nicholas McGeehan: 2016; and Matthiessen: 2015). However, as we will show later, some Sunnis are not optimistic about their government's policy choices (Stein, Loewen, and Ladhani: 2016).

The Shia protestors live in both rural and urban areas, and include young and old, as well as women and men.¹⁹ However, today, the violent protestors are often younger men. In 2010, before the massive street protests, antigovernment demonstrations occurred regularly in numerous Shia villages throughout the country. Groups of Shia youth burned tires and trash, and threw Molotov cocktails and stones at riot police. Police often dispersed demonstrations with tear gas and rubber bullets (Department of State: 2010, 11).

The government's failure to engage effectively and consistently with moderates since the 1970s has empowered more radical elements among the protestors. According to Toby Mathiessen, an Oxford University scholar, the moderates did not want to boycott elections. However, Shia hardliners have long pushed for a boycott and are effectively committed to overthrowing the regime by any means necessary. Hence, because the moderates did not gain any concessions from the government, the government has effectively empowered more radical Shia elements (Mathiessen: 2014).

Shia women are actively involved, and often lead the protests. For example, the Al-Wefaq society has a Women's Affairs Unit that publishes information on the importance of women in politics.²⁰ Maryam and Zainab Al-Khawaja, daughters of prominent Shia activist Abdulhadi Abdulla Hubail al-Khawaja, are well-known Bahraini female activists who have gone on hunger strikes and been arrested for their attempts to protect human rights in Bahrain. Zainab al-Khawaja was arrested in March 2016, after she tore up pictures of the King, an act of free speech. Her sister Maryam is trying to get her freed and to get Westerners to pay attention to the "chronic problem in Bahrain of systematic use of arbitrary arrest and systematic use of torture and unfair trials."²¹

V. Types of Repression used by Bahrain's leaders

Bahraini officials have long relied on a changing mix of political and violent repressive tactics, including torture (Department of State: 2010). More recently, the Bahraini government has revoked the citizenship of many Bahrainis as a means of harassing individuals for their criticism of the government (Department of State, 2015b).

¹⁹ American for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain, "The role of women in the 2011 Bahraini uprising," 07/02/2016. <http://www.adhrb.org/2016/07/role-women-2011-bahraini-uprising/>

²⁰ Al-Wefaq Society, "Al-Wefaq's Women Affairs issues a statement on the struggling Bahraini woman day," March 18, 2013. <http://alwefaq.net/cmsen/2013/03/18/18426/>

²¹ Al Jazeera, "Bahrain arrests top human rights activist," 08/31/2014.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/08/bahrain-arrests-top-human-rights-activist-20148312565870398.html>; and AP, "Bahrain detains activist Zainab al-Khawaja and her one-year-old son,"

The Guardian, 3/14/2016,

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/mar/14/bahrain-detains-activist-zainab-al-khawaja-and-one-year-old-son>; and Robert Siegal, "All Things Considered, Bahraini Activist Urges U.S. To Pay Attention To

Country's Rights Abuses," 3/22/2016, <http://www.npr.org/2016/03/22/471474738/bahraini-activist-urges-u-s-to-pay-attention-to-countrys-rights-abuses>

A. Political Repression

Both before and after the 2011 protests, Bahrain frequently relied on various types of political repression. Although the constitution provides for freedom of speech and the press, Bahrainis often do not feel free to speak their minds. For example, in 2010, the US Department of State found that some individuals were arrested because of their political or human rights activism (Department of State: 2010, 4). After the 2011 protests, the security forces investigated professors and required university students to sign loyalty pledges to the King and to pledge not to organize or participate in outside events if they wanted to continue to receive government funded education (Department of State: 2011, 14-16 BICI: 2011 and Mitchell: 2012).

The government also limited the ability of domestic and foreign media to report on developments in the country. For example, journalists were often harassed, arrested, or attacked. The attacks continued throughout 2015 (Department of State 2012 and 2015a, 15). The government used its libel law to undermine freedom of the press and has occasionally sued foreign newspapers for libel. In 2011 and 2012, University students were required to sign loyalty pledges to the King, pledging not to organize or participate in outside events. (Department of State: 2011, 14-16). In February 2014, the government issued an amendment to the penal code that increased penalties to no less than one year and no more than seven years in prison, plus a fine for anyone who "offends the monarch of the Kingdom of Bahrain, the flag, or the national emblem" (Department of State: 2015a, 15).

The government did not protect freedom of association and threatened individuals who tried to organize political, labor, or civil society groups. The government required all groups to register with government agencies (Department of State: 2015a, 20). It also seems to view religious and civil society organizations as a threat. On July 17, 2016, a Bahraini court dissolved Al-Wefaq, the country's largest opposition group. Shiite cleric Ali Salman, who leads the bloc, has been jailed since 2014; his term was doubled in May 2016. According to the Bahrain News Agency, the High Civil Court found that Al-Wefaq had violated constitutional rights and Bahraini law. The court also accused the group of "inciting violence and encouraging demonstrations and sit-ins which could lead to sectarian strife in the country."²²

Civil society groups were also often monitored and challenged by government agencies. Many NGOs and civil society activists asserted that government agencies exploited their oversight role to stymie the activities of NGOs and other civil society organizations. In accordance with the law, the Justice and Interior Ministries must vet funding from international sources, while authorities sometimes did not authorize it (Department of State: 2015a, 19).

The government did not provide adequate due process for individuals arrested and detained. In 2011, Department of State reported that police did not always get an arrest warrant from a judge

²² NA, "Bahrain dissolves opposition Al-Wefaq group," *Deutsche Welle* 7/17/2015, <http://www.dw.com/en/bahrain-dissolves-opposition-al-wefaq-group/a-19405935>; NA, "Bahrain Court Extends Prison Term for Shiite Opposition Leader," *Deutsche Welle*, <http://www.dw.com/en/bahrain-court-extends-prison-term-for-shiite-opposition-leader/a-19292765>

before arresting an individual. Arresting authorities entered homes forcibly and destroyed personal property, while terrorizing members of the household. Many detainees in 2011 were held for weeks without access to the outside world and, in particular, to lawyers. Military courts often tried them and the presiding judge often dismissed claims of torture (Department of State: 2011, 9-13). In 2015, Department of State also reported that although the constitution provides for an independent judiciary, it remained vulnerable to political pressures, especially in cases involving political opposition figures. Moreover, it did not appear fully independent. Royal Family members and foreign judges often adjudicated cases (Department of State: 2015, 12-13).

B. Ethnic Discrimination and Repression

Bahraini police and security forces have engaged in repression based on religious affiliation, denying some of those who were tortured access to medical care. UN Special Rapporteurs wrote to the Bahraini government that they were concerned about suppressing the rights of individuals to peacefully protest because of their religious affiliations and associations (High Commissioner for Human Rights: 2011).

In July 2016, the government stated that Shia spiritual leader Sheikh Isa Qasim and other religious figures will be prosecuted over charges relating to their freedom of religion. The Ministry of Social Development closed the Al-Risala Islamic Society and the Islamic Enlightenment Society, which are the two remaining organizations serving the Shia Muslim community in Bahrain (Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain: 2016b).

C. Economic Repression: Denial of State Benefits to Various Groups

According to the BICI, the main beneficiaries of the Bahraini economy tend to be Sunni, and many Shia are poor (BICI: 2011). Theodore Karasik, director of research and development at the Dubai-based Institute for Near East and Gulf Military Analysis, told Deutsche Welle in 2011, "While the Sunni minority has access to the good jobs and most of the country's wealth, the Shiite majority lives in poor conditions. You basically have a system of apartheid in Bahrain" (Deutsche Welle: 2011).

The BICI reported that Bahrainis, particularly those with lower incomes, rely upon state subsidized housing allocated by the Government of Bahrain. It noted that many Shia "have criticized government housing policies for what they consider to be favoritism and delays in the distribution of housing units." Furthermore, many Bahraini citizens from underprivileged backgrounds, who live in poorer suburbs and outlying villages and who have access to public housing, complain of inadequate infrastructure and public service, including water and sewage services." The BICI also criticized the government's strategy for land distribution, noting that more than 90 percent of the newly created land was transferred to private hands and 90 percent of the coastline became luxury large-scale real estate projects (BICI Report: 2011, 30-31).

The BICI report also stressed that the Shia were rarely the beneficiaries of economic growth. Instead, it noted the beneficiaries were Sunni or expatriates (who are often Sunni). Much of the nation's job growth has been in the construction and services sectors, both of which overwhelmingly rely on expatriate labor. As a result, some Bahraini citizens believe that

expatriates take a disproportionate share of the fruits of the national wealth. Moreover, as the government tried to encourage economic growth in newer sectors, such as banking and real estate, again, the benefits accrued to individuals active in real estate and financial services who tended to be Sunni elites (BICI: 2011, 14-16).

After the protests in Egypt in 2011, Bahrain's ruling family increased food subsidies and social welfare payments. The King also ordered a payment of 1,000 dinars (about \$2,650 in today's dollars) to each Bahraini family (Deutsche Welle: 2011). Shia citizens received these benefits just like their Sunni counterparts. However, the Shia feel unable to take advantages of opportunities and believe that the housing, water, and public services they often receive are inadequate (BICI: 2011 and Gengler: 2012).

D. Denial of Medical Care as a Repressive Strategy

Bahrain's constitution prohibits harming an accused person physically or mentally (Department of State: 2011, 3). Yet, during the 2011 protests, Bahrain Watch asserted that after the army captured the hospital, it denied injured protestors access to medical care and soldiers beat patients on hospital beds. The BICI noted that the failure to treat the wounded in turn led to a "state of fear that led many wounded people to avoid hospital treatment."²³ The Bahraini government has continued to deny some individuals it holds medical care, although such instances are rare. In 2015, HRW found an instance where an individual was beaten and denied access to medical benefits (Human Rights Watch: 2015). We have not heard of further cases of denial of access to medical care.

E. Denial of Citizenship and Efforts to Alter Demographics

In September 2006, Dr. Salah Al Bandar, a Sunni and Senior Advisor to the Royal Family, distributed a report detailing a plot to suppress the rights of Shia in Bahrain. He asserted that the Royal Family was secretly trying to "manipulate the results of coming elections, maintain sectarian distrust and division, and to ensure that Bahrain's Shias remain oppressed and disenfranchised" (Bahrain Center for Human Rights: 2006). According to The New York Times, the documents indicate that \$6 million was spent to plant articles in Bahraini newspapers, organize counterdemonstrations when Shiites held protests, set off cellphone text-message campaigns against opposition figures, and even support a program to convert Shiites into Sunnis. The government responded by stating that the report was a fabrication and deporting Mr. Bandar to the UK (Fattah: 2006).

The leaked documents led to a scandal called Bandargate, of which the documents are available at Wikileaks.²⁴ The 216-page report contains almost 200 pages of evidence including checks, receipts, letters, bank statements, and accounts sheets to support this claim (Bahrain Center for Human Rights: 2006). Mr. Bandar is also the secretary general of a group called the Gulf Center for Democratic Development, a human rights NGO. He said that he began investigating the accusations, enlisting the help of accountants and the government whistle-blowers to piece together a picture of a web led by high-ranking government officials (Bahrain Center for Human Rights: 2006). According to the National Public Radio (NPR)'s Peter Kenyon, the government had little to say

²³ <https://bahrainwatch.org/bici/limitations.php>

²⁴ https://wikileaks.org/wiki/Censored_Bahrain_Bandargate_report_2006

about the Bandargate affair. However, “privately Bahraini officials don't deny that payments were made, but they suggest the conspiracy allegations are overblown” (Kenyon: 2006).

However, Bandargate was not the only instance where the government seemed to engage in secret efforts to undermine local Shia's right to self-determination. In 2011, the Guardian reported that Bahrain recruited non-native Sunni Muslims from Syria, Jordan, Iraq, and Pakistan to the security forces as part of an attempt to swing the demographic balance against the Shia majority. The Guardian also reported that the government could get away with this strategy because the naturalization system is not transparent (Black: 2011). Many Shia continue to worry about these efforts. In August 2014, after nine individuals were convicted of terrorism, thousands of Shiites protested in Bahrain against attempts by the Sunni authorities to tip the Kingdom's demographic balance in their favor by naturalizing foreigners and simultaneously denaturalizing local Shia (Yahoo News: 2014).

In 2015 Bahrain's courts stripped some 72 individuals of their citizenship, including doctors, journalists, political activists, and a human rights defender. Authorities did not explain why these individuals lost their citizenship and did not notify these individuals, who learned about the decisions from press reports. By the year's close, Bahraini authorities had revoked the citizenship of at least 208 people, showing no distinction between activists, average people, and actual terror suspects (Kizner and Payne: 2016 and Department of State: 2015a, 22). Bahrain continues to expel foreigners and its own citizens who are Shia and are politically active (Curdy: 2016).

F. Violent Repression

The Government of Bahrain continues to engage in violent repression, including torture. In 2010, the Department of State reported that both Bahraini and foreign NGOs such as Human Rights Watch claimed that security personnel had tortured more than two dozen detainees. Detainees claimed that they had been beaten, suspended in painful positions, forced to stand for long periods, deprived of sleep, and subjected to electric shocks (Department of State: 2010 and Human Rights Watch: 2015).

After the 2011 protest, the security forces often arrested Shia, beat them without interrogation, beat them after interrogation, harassed and intimidated them, and released them when “any visible wounds or signs of mistreatment had healed.” Children were also subjected to such treatment (Department of State: 2011a, 4-5). In 2015, the Department of State acknowledged that torture had not stopped despite the government's promise to implement reforms. Some domestic and international human rights organizations, as well as former detainees, reported instances of torture, abuse, and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment. Human rights groups reported prisoner accounts alleging that security officials also humiliated them in front of other prisoners, deprived them of sleep and prayers, insulted them based on their religious beliefs, and subjected them to sexual harassment, including removal of clothing and threat of rape. Officials reportedly kept some detainees in solitary confinement, sometimes in extreme temperatures; poured cold water on them; and forced them to stand for long periods. Human rights organizations also reported that authorities prevented some detainees from using toilet facilities, withheld food and drink, and denied medical treatment to injured or ill detainees and prisoners. Detainees also

reported abuses and torture committed by security forces during searches and/or arrests at private residences. Most detainees alleging abuse were Shia. In response to these allegations, the Bahraini government reported that it had equipped all interrogation rooms with closed-circuit television cameras, monitored at all times so torture could not occur (Department of State: 2015a, 3-5). Nevertheless, clearly, the security forces could use torture in other rooms outside of these cameras.

In 2015, HRW was not able to visit the country, but did an extensive examination of government efforts to implement the BICI recommendations regarding torture. It found that “although the Government had set up new offices to monitor the interrogation, arrest, and treatment of protestors, the new offices have failed to fulfil their mandate; and that Bahraini security forces continue to torture detainees using methods identical to those documented by BICI investigators in 2011, and by HRW in 2010. In fact, these offices investigated only one incidence of torture. More recently, according to HRW, “Bahraini security forces also allegedly used torture to exact retribution against inmates in Jaw prison, many of whom were political prisoners... One prisoner described how security forces made inmates strip to their underwear and exercise while shouting support for King Hamad. Another described how officers broke an inmate’s collarbone then left him without medical attention. Security forces allegedly took a group of inmates accused of encouraging the riot to a building where they severely beat some inmates in toilets, where there are no CCTV cameras and administration rooms” (Human Rights Watch: 2015).

HRW noted that the Government is unwilling to let outside observers, such as the UN Special Rapporteur, journalists, or human rights NGOs, examine the situation. Moreover, no security officials have been prosecuted for using torture. Hence, one can conclude that these institutions have not done enough to tackle what the BICI report described as a “culture of impunity” among the security forces (Human Rights First: 2015 and Interview with Nicholas McGeehan: 2016).

G. Online Repression

Bahrainis are active Internet users - some 90 percent of Bahrainis are online. However, the Bahraini government significantly limits Internet freedom - which the US defines as an open platform on which to innovate, learn, organize, and express oneself.²⁵ The government has learned how to censor the web, threaten netizens, and use malware to monitor communications (Freedom House: 2015, Citizen Lab: 2012).

For example, the government arrested and charged bloggers with terrorism (Department of State: 2010, 10 and Department of State: 2015a, 17). In 2013, the Ministry of Communication blocked 70 websites in accordance with laws passed following parliament’s recommendations. In 2015, the government’s Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) ordered service providers to block Internet users’ access to certain sites, as well as the web sites of opposition leaders, media outlets, and human rights NGOs. The government sometimes blocked the websites of the BCHR, the online newspaper Bahrain Mirror, and the social forum Bahrain Online. The government also reportedly blocked sites that provided proxy or anonymity tools (Department of State: 2015, 17).

²⁵ Department of State, “Internet Freedom,” <http://www.state.gov/e/eb/cip/netfreedom/index.htm>

VI. The Role of corruption and Inadequate Governance

Although Bahrain is neither a failed state nor an incredibly corrupt country, corruption is a major problem that is stimulating unrest. Some observers describe Bahrain as a kleptocracy where the Royal Family and its allies steal all the wealth (Chayes and Matar: 2013; Matar: 2014; Henderson: 2011; and Al-Haddad: 2015). Moreover, the country does not have strong anti-corruption counterweights and even these institutions appear to getting weaker. Bahrain does not rank highly on the Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI), which measures the quality of governance (see table below). The Management Index, which ranks countries by the “leadership’s political management performance,” declined from 4.86 in 2006 to 3.86 in 2016. The Status Index, which measures the “quality of democracy and market economy,” decreased from 6.21 in 2006 to 4.96 in 2016.²⁶ Moreover, as noted above, the government does not tax its people to fund its operations and hence is not directly accountable. Instead, it uses revenues from oil to buy the loyalty of some (mainly Sunni economic elites) and to subsidize housing, education, water, and energy of the broader population. In this regard, the Royal Family treats its people as “subjects” rather than citizens (Al-Haddad: 2015).

Bertelsmann Transformation Index BTI, Bahrain
(1 – lowest, 10 - highest)

	Ranking Status Index	Status Index	Ranking Management Index	Management Index
2016	83	4.96	100	3.86
2014	75	5.34	100	3.94
2012	56	5.89	91	4.18
2010	51	6.05	85	4.36
2008	56	6.01	78	4.66
2006	45	6.21	59	4.86

Source: Transformation Index BTI, Management and Status Indices, Bahrain, 2006-2016. <http://www.bti-project.org/en/index/status-index/> and <http://www.bti-project.org/en/index/management-index/>

²⁶ The Bertelsmann Stiftung’s Transformation Index (BTI) analyzes and evaluates whether and how developing countries and countries in transition are steering social change toward democracy and a market economy. Country experts assess the extent to which a total of 17 criteria have been met for each of the 129 countries. Countries are rated on each criterion on a score of 1-10 (1 – lowest, 10 - highest).

Sarah Chayes, a Senior Associate at Carnegie Endowment notes that the “core element” of corruption in Bahrain is not oil, but land (Chayes and Matar: 2013). In 2002 the King proclaimed himself the only one responsible for distribution of public land (Chayes and Matar: 2013). In 2011, protesters called these land deals “expropriation of public assets”(O’Muchu and Kerr: 2014). As the section on economic repression (p. 14) notes, the BICI report describes these deals as fomenting public concern that the government is not working to meet the peoples’ needs but to serve the connected (BICI: 2011, 30-31).

According to Matar Ebrahim Ali Matar, a former member of the Al-Wefaq party, approximately one-quarter of Bahrain’s public landmass is either missing from public records or officially transferred to members of the ruling family and their allies. However, such findings cannot be categorized under corruption when the state is structured as a “criminal organization” and the state is organized to benefit the ruling family (Matar: 2014). The government also uses fear - sectarianism and human right crimes as well as incentives (monopolies and subsidies) to sustain its control of the kleptocracy (Matar: 2014).

The country is unable to fight corruption effectively because it does not have a transparent and accountable system of procurement. Some 30 percent of Bahrain’s public spending is allocated on defense and security, yet all Bahraini military procurement is exempted from public tender, and it has no defined process for acquisition planning. Transparency International Defense and Security places Bahrain in Band F, “the highest risk category for corruption in the defense and security sector” in the Government Defense Anti-Corruption Index. Moreover, it notes that “information on military procurement can only be shared with the Supreme Defense Council composed of senior members of the Al Khalifa family and the King.” Thus, there is no oversight mechanism (Transparency International Defense: 2015).

Like many resource-rich states, Bahrain is relatively opaque and has weak anti-corruption counterweights.²⁷ Although Bahrain has established some government agencies to fight corruption, it will not be effective unless it can improve governance together with a system of accountability (Novelli: 2016).

VII. Public Opinion Regarding Repression and Reconciliation

Because of the political situation in Bahrain, Bahraini citizens may be reluctant to state their opinion. Hence, it is difficult to survey Bahrainis and to get a representative sample of opinion. The few polls we could find show strong divisions of opinion regarding the future and governance in Bahrain.

In 2009-2011, Gallup interviewed some 1000 people in Bahrain. They asked respondents to grade on a scale of 0-10, where they saw their standard of living (SOL; see table below). The respondents were generally less optimistic about the economy over time. In 2010, 49 percent thought the

²⁷ US Department Human Rights Report 2005. <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2005/61686.htm>

economy is getting better, but in 2011, only 24 percent thought it was improving (Gallup: 2012, 13). Thus, the poll reveals declining optimism about the future in Bahrain.

Standard of Living in Bahrain

(0 – lowest, 10 - highest)

Bahraini Views of SOL	2009	2010	2011
Men	6.3	6.7	5.9
Women	6.7	6.6	6.2

Source: Gallup, 2012. "After the Arab Uprisings: Women on Rights, Religion and Rebuilding,"

The 2015 World Values Survey (WVS) asked some 1200 Bahrainis about their government’s respect for human rights; the results were surprising. Bahrainis surveyed said that they consider individual human rights are respected in the Kingdom (24.7 percent - "a great deal" and 43.7 percent - "fairly much," yielding a total of some 68 percent).²⁸ Moreover, those polled have relatively high confidence in the government (72.1 percent), parliament (72 percent), courts (71.7 percent), and police (70.9 percent).²⁹ We could not ascertain if the surveyors distinguished among Sunni and Shia in their sample. Nonetheless, this survey revealed greater optimism and support of the regime.

The University of Toronto surveyed voters online in 2015 and 2016. The researchers stated that because they used an online survey, their sampling frame covered some 91 percent of adults in Bahrain and hence is generalizable. They sought to better understand the Sunni-Shia divide in a time of controversy, after Saudi Arabia executed a leading Shiite cleric, Nimr al Nimr. In January 2016, the researchers found that while 71 percent of Shia thought the country was going in the wrong direction, only 27 percent of Sunni concurred. Some 53 percent of Shiites under 35 were more likely to believe the country is heading in the wrong direction than the 40 percent of Sunnis recorded in the poll (Loewen, Stein and Ladhani: 2016). Clearly, Bahraini Shia are much less optimistic than Sunni about their future.

VIII. The Economic and Political Consequences of Repression

A. Economic Consequences

²⁸ World Value Survey, Wave 6, 2010-2014, "How much respect is there for individual human rights nowadays in this country." <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSONline.jsp>

²⁹ World Value Survey, Wave 6, 2010-2014, "Confidence: The government (in your nation’s capital)", "Confidence: The Police", "Confidence: The Courts", and "Confidence: The Parliament." <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSONline.jsp>

The repression civil conflict dynamic has had economic spillovers. First, the country has high levels of debt. If the price of oil continues to decline, policymakers will find that debt may be hard to service unless they can quickly diversify the economy. The Bahraini government does not have a strong track record on diversification.³⁰ Secondly, investors and credit rating agencies see the country as increasingly risky. Country risk covers the downside of a country's business environment including legal environment, levels of corruption, and socio-economic variables, such as income disparity. According to the Organization for Economic Development and Cooperation (OECD), the nation's country risk rating increased from a 2 in 1999 to a 4 in 2014, on a scale of 0-7 (7 - the most risky).³¹ On another measure of country risk, Bahrain ranks 85 of 152 nations on the 2015 version of the Basel Anti-money laundering and terrorist financing list.³² Meanwhile, foreign investment declined from \$257 million in 2009 to negative 1,463 in 2015 (net inflows).³³ These metrics reveal that foreign and domestic investors are not optimistic about the country's macroeconomic management and future opportunities.

Meanwhile, although Shia protestors have long focused on changing the political system, they now also target economic interests. In 2014, Oxford scholar Toby Mathiessen noted that "activists have started to target the economic infrastructure of the state and of pro-regime businesses, burning down banks and shops, and attacking government institutions. The shiny ads of Bahrain that wants to be Dubai do not reflect this reality" (Mathiessen: 2014). In 2015, Al-Wefaq called for a two-day long economic boycott of private and public banks to protest the trial and imprisonment of its leader Ali Salman (Sputnik: 2015). ADHRB submitted a complaint to the OECD, alleging that the Formula One Race had breached the OECD guidelines on responsible business, because it had done nothing to prevent the Bahraini government launching a bloody crackdown on protestors in the run up to the 2012 and 2013 races, in which one protester died and hundreds were injured. The OECD guidelines provide a means to investigate the human rights responsibilities of business. The firm said it would practice due diligence and the race was still held. However, the protestors were able to use the race to gain attention (Clarke: 2015). They are likely to continue such tactics.

B. Domestic Political Consequences

Bahrain is inherently unstable, unless the leaders find compromises with the Shia majority. In 2012, the WVS carried out a poll on human rights, confidence, and corruption in 2010-2014. Bahrainis believe that corruption is widespread both in the government and in business in the Kingdom: 81.8 percent and 80.6 percent of the respondents ranked the country's corruption level

³⁰ Al-Wefaq Society, "Corruption strangles Bahrain amid falling oil prices," 10/11/2015. <http://alwefaq.net/cmsen/2015/10/15/44965/>

³¹ OECD, Country Risk Classifications of the Participants to the Arrangement on Officially Supported Export Credits. <http://www.oecd.org/tad/xcred/cre-crc-historical-internet-english.pdf> and <http://www.oecd.org/tad/xcred/crc.htm>

³² Basel Institute on Governance, "Basel AML Index 2015 Report," August 18, 2015, pp. 1-2. The Basel AML Index provides an annual risk rating of money laundering and terrorist financing. It is based on the assessment of the quality of countries' anti-money laundering and countering the financing of terrorism (AML/CFT) frameworks and related factors such as financial sector standards and public transparency. https://index.baselgovernance.org/sites/index/documents/Basel_AML_Index_Report_2015.pdf

³³ World Bank Database, Foreign direct investment, net inflows. http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.KLT.DINV.CD.WD?locations=BH&name_desc=false&view=chart

from 5 to 10, where 10 is “high corruption.” Despite a quarter of the interviewees thinking that the government is doing enough to fight corruption, 53.3 percent responded that the government is “trying but could do more” and 21.5 percent disagreed saying that the government is not doing enough to tackle corruption.³⁴ Indeed, 80.4 percent view the level of corruption in the country as higher than five years ago (5-10 points, where 10 is “level is higher”).³⁵

C. International Political Consequences

Bahraini domestic and foreign policy reflect a fear of Shiite power both within the country and externally. At the same time, the government’s actions towards its Shia population are perpetuating instability, creating a vicious cycle of repression and civil conflict. Government officials at the national and international level have tried to alter the cycle, to no avail.

After Bahrain banned the Al-Wefaq political society on July 19, 2016, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon warned Bahrain that the government was further exacerbating tensions among Sunni and Shia inside and outside the country.³⁶ The UK and US protested the decision and urged the government to work with the Shia political groups. Nevertheless, the Foreign Ministry of Bahrain responded, “Such statements and positions are unacceptable interference in the internal affairs of the Kingdom of Bahrain, and in the decisions of the Bahraini judicial process, which provides all necessary standards of justice, fairness, transparency, and independence. The statements are unjustified and only give encouragement to groups which support extremism and terrorism.”³⁷ So the Royal Family and its allies justified their actions by both saying they meet global human rights norms in situations of terrorism.

Bahrain’s actions abroad may also inflame tensions at home. In 2014, the Houthis, a Shia group, overthrew Yemen’s internationally-backed president, raising Saudi fears that the group’s allies in Iran were behind the move. Saudi Arabia and its allies view the Houthis as a proxy for Iranian power in the Arab world, something Iran and the Houthis deny.³⁸ The Saudis organized a military coalition that bombed Houthi rebel targets across Yemen in March, killing many civilians in an already ravished country. The Bahrainis joined the coalition. The Saudis claim they are conducting the Yemen campaign not only to preserve security and promote regional stability, “but as the leader of a multi-national coalition to defend the internationally-recognized and democratically-elected president, Abd Rabbuh Mansour Hadi, from an Iran-backed Houthi rebellion. Further, the Kingdom itself has been attacked by these rebels and is in part exercising its right to self-defense. Finally, the

³⁴ World Value Survey, Wave 6, 2010-2014, “Government of your country is doing enough to fight corruption.” <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSONline.jsp>

³⁵ World Value Survey, Wave 6, 2010-2014, “Level of corruption in this country than it was five years ago.” <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSONline.jsp>

³⁶ NA, “U.N. chief: Bahrain's closure of main opposition bloc risks escalation,” July 19, 2016,

³⁷ NA “Bahrain Snubs Western allies' condemnation of opposition ban,” *Middle East Eye* <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/bahrain-rejects-us-and-uk-condemnation-opposition-ban-517968328>

³⁸ NA, “ Bahraini jet taking part in Yemen war crashes in Saudi Arabia: coalition,” *Reuters*, 12/30/2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-yemen-security-bahrain-idUSKBN0UD0LK20151230> and

Iran warns of bloodshed as Saudi-led forces bomb Yemen, *Al Jazeera*, 3/26/2015, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/03/iran-warns-bloodshed-saudi-led-forces-bomb-yemen-150326103728438.html>

destabilization caused by this rebellion has allowed Al-Qaeda and Daesh to flourish, representing a clear threat to the region and to the international community. Thus, Saudi Arabia considers it vital to address and remedy this destabilization as an integral part of the war on terrorism.”³⁹ A United Nations panel looking into the GCC actions in Yemen concluded that there had been “widespread and systemic” attacks on civilian targets, which violated international humanitarian law. In response, investigations have been called for, lobbying groups are now pressuring the British government to stop buying weapons from the Kingdom, and the European Parliament has called for an arms embargo. The UK, which has advisors working for the GCC, supported a UN Human Rights Council Resolution that requires the Yemeni government to investigate the incidents.⁴⁰

However, because the bombing killed many innocent civilians, the GCC had to admit mistakes and make a better case for its actions against the Houthis. Prince Mohammed Bin Nawaf Bin Abdulaziz, Saudi Arabia's ambassador to Britain, noted, “Ultimately, Saudi Arabia is seeking a political solution in Yemen. Its objective is not to completely eradicate the Houthis or perpetuate an endless state of war. The Kingdom realizes that more can always be done to protect civilians from the targeting errors that are endemic to war.”⁴¹ The GCC has not admitted that it is perpetuating regional instability. Toby Mathiesson asserts that Saudi Arabia and the UAE “regard the security of Bahrain’s ruling family as part and parcel of their own domestic security policies, and quickly sent significant troop detachments to Bahrain to help quell the uprising. Any criticism, or possible sanctions, would have been considered by these two states as an attack on themselves as well” (Mathiessen: 2013).

The US, the UK, and the EU have not been able to develop an effective strategy that accomplishes three goals. First they want to maintain their alliance with Bahrain, which is especially needed given ISIS. Secondly, they want to encourage the Royal Family to respect human rights, reduce repression. Finally, they want the Royal family to allow moderate Shia to engage in the political process. One key area of leverage is arms sales. The State Department said that from 2000-2013, the US sold some \$1.4 billion in weaponry to Bahrain. After the protests, the US suspended all arms exports, although some of these exports were gradually lifted in 2013 and 2015.⁴² In 2015, Bloomberg reported that the U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry promised the foreign minister of Bahrain that the U.S. would work to lift its four-year ban on delivering weapons to the Gulf kingdom. An anonymous White House source said that weapons would not be sold to the ministry of interior, which is implicated in most of the human rights abuses. The US would also include language to assure that Bahrain continues its path toward reform and makes efforts to reduce the

³⁹ Louisa Loveluck, “Yemen 'already looks like Syria after five years of war,” *The Telegraph* August 19, 2015, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/yemen/11813169/Yemen-already-looks-like-Syria-after-five-years-of-war.html> and Mohammed bin Nawaf bin Abdulaziz, “Saudi Arabia is Bombing in Yemen to Bring Peace and Stability,” *The Telegraph*, 2/29/2016, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/yemen/12176705/Saudi-Arabia-is-bombing-in-Yemen-to-bring-peace-and-stability.html>

⁴⁰ Mohammed bin Nawaf bin Abdulaziz, “Saudi Arabia is Bombing in Yemen to Bring Peace and Stability,” *The Telegraph*, 2/29/2016, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/yemen/12176705/Saudi-Arabia-is-bombing-in-Yemen-to-bring-peace-and-stability.html>

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Email Brian Dooley to Susan Aaronson, 7/25/2016.

repression of those who oppose the kingdom's policies. However, it is hard to verify end use and end user (Elliott: 2013; Arms Control Association: 2012; and Rogin: 2015).

The US Department of State must reconcile several competing demands. First, it wants to maintain close relations with the GCC to mollify their concerns about the Iran nuclear deal (where the US promised to reduce sanctions against Iran in return for abandoning its nuclear enrichment program). The US also wants to maintain its leverage regarding the GCC war in Yemen and to encourage Arab Gulf states to continue to fight the Islamic State. Bahrain is also working with the US against the jihadists inside Iraq and Syria (Zughi: 2012; Kirby: 2015; and McGovern: 2015). Finally, Bahrain is also home to US Naval Forces Central Command (CENTCOM) and the US 5th Fleet.⁴³

The UK and European Union are also struggling with their policy towards Bahrain. The UK is building a naval base outside Manama. The UK initially revoked some arms exports licenses to Bahrain after the first shooting of protesters, but it also resumed sales from 2012 onwards. Meanwhile, the EU did not categorically ban arms sales to Bahrain (Mattheison: 2013). The UK also wants good relations with the GCC and to encourage Bahrain to continue fighting ISIS.

In recent years, the Bahrainis have rejected demands to resume dialogue with moderate Shia groups from human rights organizations or democratic governments. For example, in 2014, after he came to discuss human rights, Tom Malinowski, Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, was demanded to leave the country. They also refused entry to US Congressman Jim McGovern (Human Rights First: 2016, 4). Given the deteriorating situation, lawmakers including Senators Ron Wyden and Marco Rubio, introduced a bill to ban sales of weapons and riot control equipment to Bahrain until the country launches reforms (Dooley: 2016b and Wyden: 2015).

Given these diverse pulls and tugs, the US and Britain are in a bind, given the immediate objective of fighting terrorism and the longer term goal of advancing stability and human rights. As Nick McGeehan of HRW notes, "The international community was had" after BICI report but "international community was also complicit" because the government was never intent on mediating its differences with the Shia majority (Interview with Nick McGeehan: 2016).

IX. Will repression continue? What does that mean for civil conflict?

Repression will continue unless the government perceives the costs as less than the benefits. According to Brian Dooley, "although the scale of mass arrests and torture the government used to suppress the uprising in March, April, and May of 2011 has diminished, and there have been some largely cosmetic reforms introduced since then, arbitrary arrests and torture in custody continue (Human Rights First: 2016, 2). The government recognizes it can act with impunity because its

⁴³ On US Naval base, http://www.cnic.navy.mil/regions/cnreurafswa/installations/nsa_bahrain/about/history.html. On Britain and participation in war against ISIS, NA, "Bahrain Snubs."

democratic allies need its help given increased terrorism, recent events in Turkey and Syria, and concerns about Iran's intentions in the region.

Bahraini Shia are also likely to continue to engage in civil protest. Polling data shows that many Bahraini Shia have given up hope, they are not optimistic about the future for their children and feel they live in a situation of apartheid. Finally as noted earlier, growing numbers of Sunni citizens are not benefiting economically and as the economy shrinks and spends more on defense, they are likely to become disaffected. The US should weigh this carefully, given the stakes both for the base and Bahraini assistance in the fight against terrorism. The US must find a way to encourage reform and maintain its relationship with Bahrain's leaders.

X. Bahrain Repression, Civil Conflict, and Leadership Tenure: the Bahrain Case Reveals

Q1. Do Bahrainis respond differently when confronted with political repression, violent repression, or a mix of repressive tactics?

In general, the protestors, who tend to be Shia, respond to violence, peaceful, and a mix with peaceful protest. Nonetheless, some Shia have radicalized and a growing number are willing to rely on violent means. They see a government unwilling to work with moderates or any Shia and they see the reforms made by the government as inadequate. However, the great majority of Shia activists rely on political means and are outraged by the state's continued attempts to silence dissent.

Q2. Do officials use different types of repression in response to different types of civil conflict?

Bahraini officials rely on a changing mix of political and violent repression, depending on the domestic situation and foreign attention. They tend to use violent repression in response to violent protest, but they have also relied on expulsion, use of malware, and banning of political parties (political means). Nonetheless, it is important to note that for some 40 years, the government has relied on violent repression and believes violence, including torture, is an essential tool to keep the majority Shia in line.

Q3. Does the use and type of repression (whether political, violent or some combination) increase the likelihood that rulers retain power?

Bahrain has a history of periods of reform, where the Royal Family flirts with greater democratization and periods of high repression. The Sunni leaders seem determined to maintain their control over the Shia populace and their use of repression seems likely to maintain their power in the short run. However, we see three reasons why the Royal Family risks a major civil war and could lose power. First, the Sunni are unlikely to become the majority despite efforts to increase the number of Sunni by importing workers from other countries. Secondly, as the oil runs out, the Royal Family will be less likely to be able to provide benefits (either monopoly rents to their allies, or subsidized education and housing to the broader population) to keep the population quiescent. . Corruption and inadequate governance increasingly frustrate many Sunni. Moreover, many of the new jobs are taken by

foreigners, not locals. Finally, given the violence in the region and the sheer numbers of Shia, it seems unlikely that Sunnis can maintain control without also resorting to violence. Furthermore, Iran and Bahrain are engaged in a verbal war as well as a proxy war in Yemen. Iran has threatened to bring that war to Bahrain (McCurdy: 2016). The Bahraini leadership refuses to engage in dialogue because it believes it can only maintain control with brute force.

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