



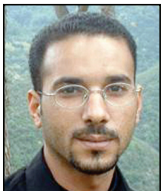
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Bahrain.. The Strategic Report 2013

15 Jan 2012



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Introduction

The Bahrain Center for Studies in London (BCSL) is introducing: Bahrain... The Strategic Report of year 2013, an in-depth analytical read to a side image of the Bahraini situation in 2012, and its prospects in the years 2013 and 2014.

This report will be published by BCSL in Arabic version, and another in English that will include most elements of the report (see the index to identify materials that are published in English only).

The report is not an archive and does not cover the entire scene, or else its size would have been multiplied many times, but it is selecting data and information, and is also linking events through a detailed analysis.

Overall, this report attempts to answer a number of questions concerning the reality of the situation and explore the following: Who are the actors in the scene? What are their positions? What are their significant steps or actions over the past year? What kinds of policies are used by the actors? Is it clear or unexpected policies? Or is it fixed and unchangeable policies? To what extent can these policies be subject to competition or practical risks? What are the initiatives made by the actors in context of their work? Did these policies yield results? What are they? What are the main problems and challenges facing the actors? What are the near and the distant future of these policies and the results?

The report does also contain nine papers divided into five chapters, and are contributions of five of researchers known for their substantive and in-depth writings.

In the first chapter, Abbas Al Murshed, a Bahraini researcher writes on the political forces, saying that “The division between the political forces

controlling the major joints of the political scene is having a negative impact on the completion of the democratic transformation required. Although a valid floor to make the transition exists, the bet on winning the round with zero outcomes was a master position for the political opposition and pro forces. Due to the political division based on sectarian lines, a state of imperfect legitimacy was generated in all parties, making them subject to loss of comprehensiveness and assimilation of all components of the society”.

In his approach to the field movement, Al Murshed notes that “Demonstrations in the capital were still a line of contact between the opposition and the regime, and the most influential power is the dominant who governed control of the capital, which makes the regime’s policies rigidly extreme in its siege of the protest events held in Manama. At the same time, this strategic situation makes the events of the opposition outside the perimeter of the capital within the limits of the political game. However, some of these events are affecting the regime with continuous hysterical conditions making it lose the rules of political engagement”.

In the second chapter: Chronic Problems, the Bahraini researcher Nader Al Matrook writes in the media crisis which is living a dispute over truth. He stated “media has presented a reflective image of those effects, and those media materials have become a reference of approach to the general conditions that the country experienced since the outbreak of the uprising. The official media during this period cemented the usual stereotype, so it introduced the “official” tale purely and kept away from giving spaces of any other views. The government media body shifted to an “influential” tool in promoting the repression on the existing political protests”.

Al Matrook believes that “the media work distribution between citizens and media anonymous is seen as positive point that secured the conti-

nunity of the opposition media and protected it from targeting. However, the disintegration of efforts and lack of strategic coordination made the opposition media lose appropriate opportunities to achieve media goals at the appropriate times”.

On the housing issue, Al Matrook sees that “the acute conflict on the housing crisis interferes on the most two important axes in the existing political strife in Bahrain today. First is the land axis, and the second is the population axis. The regime baptized to control the power outlets on the ground, so it managed the border deployment, and acquisitions. On the other hand, the regime worked on the nature of the population, through establishing mixed population groups, which leads to a dominant effect in influencing the management of the housing crisis on the one hand, and to prevent the transition to living most benefits on the other”.

In the economic dimension, Chapter 3, Bahraini former MP and economist analyst Dr. Jassim Hussain asks whether the GCC Marshal “is an alternative for political and economical reforms, due to an aspiration to take advantage of the Gulf money to address some of the hot non-political files, especially those related to the provision of a decent level of welfare for citizens in Bahrain. In other words, it is worrisome that the Gulf Marshal becomes a substitute for fundamental democratic reforms, if using the want and need of some people for decent housing and a job in order to provide a decent living, at the expense of demanding democratic reforms”.

On the subject of the public debt, Jassim Hussain notes “in light of the repeated occurrence of increase of the tolerable public debt on an ongoing basis within several years from only one billion to two billion Dinars and then 3.5 billion Dinars in 2011. The new limit for public debt, which was approved in the second half of the year 2012, is about 5 billion Dinars”.

Hussain believes “In short, and in the absence of constitutional institutions that are able to rein the public sector’s appetite for spending, it is a concern if the public debt went out of control with all the accompanying negatives on the economic situation of the country and the lives and the future of people”.

The Saudi researcher Dr. Hamza Al-Hassan addresses in the fourth chapter, the GCC and Arab position from the Bahraini crisis, and records that the “Arab countries and regional positions such as Turkey and Iran has been marked with stalemate throughout the year 2012. And perhaps this was a major cause of the political deadlock witnessed in the case of Bahrain. Although the attitude toward the revolution in Bahrain is varied, a shift in policies and attitudes did not occur. Arab States and the Gulf and regional countries did not score any serious initiative to reach a political solution between the Bahraini regime and the opposition, which tells the fact that the Bahraini subject for the majority of these countries is either deferred and preceded with more important and sensitive files (like the Syrian, for example); or that it is deliberately ignored and neglected by major players in hope of deceasing the Bahraini revolution slowly. Moreover, it might be in hope that the regional and international conflict in the Middle East will lead to the emergence of an appropriate circumstance that contributes to reduce the size of waiver by the regime for the opposition in Bahrain”.

Bahraini journalist Abbas Busafwan explores Possible Scenarios of Settlement in 2014 in the fifth chapter of the report, as follows: 1. The scenario of displacing the King collides with the Dispersion of the opposition and the weakness of the Crown Prince, 2. The opposition’s consideration of the Minister of the Royal Court as a king eliminates the option of his removal, 3. Opportunities of constitutional compatibility is non-existent as long as the King sees offending the constitution as offending him in person, 4. The One-sided Reform scenario, an unrewarded cost, 5. The

scenario of a new Bahraini “Oslo” Bahraini that shall be back-breaking for the public movement and adversely Al Wefaq society”.

Busafwan sees the probability to reach a settlement, given that it happened in 1923, 1973 and 2001, and the participation in the 2006 and 2010 elections. It is likely for the settlement to be fragile or temporary (a new Bahraini Oslo), rather than agreed upon nationally. In the sense, it is difficult for the forthcoming settlement to be permanent or historical, and the chances of not reaching to a settlement at all are more probable than reaching to a historic settlement. That does not help but to say that the Bahraini land will continue to be a tensed scene, which will only be overcome with a “solid” and historical settlement that is based on national consensus.

Editorial Board
15 JAN 2013

Chapter I

The Political and Field Dimension.. The Crisis of Loyalty and National Consensus

1- The Political Forces.. The Wandering Loyalty and the Human Rights Opposition

2- The Field Movement.. Illegal Challenges (Published in Arabic only)



Abbas Al Murshed
(Bahraini Researcher)

1- The Political Forces.. The Wandering Loyalty and the Human Rights Opposition

First: Loyalists and the problem of loyalty to the state

Second: Political Societies: the domination of the human rights dimension

Third: February 14 Youth Coalition: The Sledgehammer

Fourth: National Consensus is the Key

Fifth: National Consensus is the Key

The Political Forces..

The Wandering Loyalty and the Human Rights Opposition

Abbas Al Murshed

First: Loyalists and the problem of loyalty to the state

During the past year, loyal-to-the-regime political forces' ability of creating a political loyalty to the state was indistinct, in contrast to the particular loyalty rewarded to the royal family. This has formed an unresolved deep dilemma on belonging and loyalty in the grassroots classified ideologically as (Sunnis).

Where there is always the Gulf belonging, particularly Saudi, next to belonging to the state borders itself. Additionally, there is the national belonging next to religious/ sectarian belonging, besides, the loyalty to the regime next to the political loyalty to the homeland.

These political forces have tried to bring back their political position and search for a status within the Bahraini political track, where they raised Al Fateh document in order to keep up with Al Manama document issued by the opposition for its democratic vision of Bahrain. Nevertheless, Al Fateh document did not resonate from within, as in internally and with the regime, nor with the parties concerned in the political crisis in Bahrain. This was considered as failure in achieving its political function and being transformed only into amass elements kept by the regime to fight against the opposition forces or for talks with international and regional parties.

In terms of the public mobilization, the late period of last year has revealed the inability of loyal forces to build and mobilize a crowd both for topics and issues that had been essential to them and the structural construction of some of those forces.

Dr. Abdul Latif Al Mahmood has declared to a local newspaper that the National Unity Gathering is incapable of establishing mass gatherings due to the lack of human resources and weak economic budget that establishment of such gatherings requires.

The annual conferences of these forces including the National Unity Gathering also highlighted the dwindling attendance and the difficulty of achieving a quorum to hold these conferences. This was a situation observed after the split of the units governing these forces as in the case of Al Menbar Islamic Society (Muslim Brotherhood) and Al Asalah Society (Salafists). Where the members of these two societies resigned from their posts to enter into the National Unity Gathering, however, split from it later on to establish the Youth of Al Fateh Gathering whose strength faded after that as well.

These loyal forces have benefited from the regime's political and economical support, and from the absence of a real democratic system, which left the door open to the members of these forces to meet the characteristics of favoritism, approaching the center of power and having an access to social and professional benefits. Especially in senior positions within government institutions by creating new high positions for them. As a result, the loyal forces had to face a decline in its political performance represented in several aspects:

1- Lack of ability in building public crowd after being pushed into the National Unity Gathering which later on got endangered by disintegration and division.

2- Lack of an independent political vision separated from the regime's vision and its agenda. The report of the first Conference of the National Unity Gathering has reflected this reality through its interpretation of the political path adopted by the loyal forces since 14 February 2011, which resulted in the explicit and public use of these forces by the regime.

3- Its mass interaction opportunities were clogged without the government protection and support.

4- Getting occupied with fighting against political opposition forces and encouraging the regime to impose more severe penalties on political opposition leaders who are imprisoned or not.

Second: Political Societies: the domination of the human rights dimension

The official opposition includes 8 political societies which Al Wefaq and the Democratic Action Society Waad make up its political backbone. These political societies did not build February 14 movement and were cautious in dealing with the call on day of rage, except for the Democratic Action Society Waad who took on a positive attitude openly toward this call. However, these societies got engaged in this movement later on after it got intensified, where they also put on all their cadres to engage in the activities of the revolution, yet, in their own way.

The political societies' project is based on the principle of fundamental democratic reform, which means to move from an absolute constitutional monarchy to a restricted constitutional monarchy with devolution of power and an elected government rather than a government appointed by the king.

The political societies adopted a strategy of peaceful field movement as the best available options and they have condemned violence wherever it comes from, in light of the complexity of the internal situation and ferocity of the security body and its growing strength.

With the announcement of the formation of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry BICI and under pressure from major embassies, the political societies agreed to engage in dialogue sessions of national

consensus. However, Al Wefaq withdrew from the dialogue in the first days rejecting its outputs, as the rest of the political opposition societies did, including the Democratic Progressive Tribune.

Although there are many differences between the political opposition societies in their ideological orientation, and even deeper differences in their political solutions formats such as the conflict on the type of the elected government and hunkering down to religious symbols, they were all able to eradicate their political differences in a political document called Al Manama Document, a policy framework that combines the political opposition forces. These political societies who signed on Al Manama document called on the civil society institutions and human rights organizations to sign the document, but they unexpectedly have not got much of a positive response in regard.

Yet, the regime and its loyal forces ignored Al Manama document, considering it as a political vision for the opposition forces only, and not a ground for a national dialogue that must begin without conditions and without any political requirements. The political opposition societies' position toward the dialogue has developed with the development of the political scene. Their discourse now is in more harmony with the unconditional dialogue discourse after they were promoting for the 7 principles of the Crown Prince, Al Manama Document and the BICI report. Nevertheless, these transformations did not receive an acceptance of the ruling parties, where the regime practiced security attacks and arbitrary crackdown on the work of the political opposition societies, in order to push them to sit on a fake dialogue table without a timeframe agenda or a clear ground for dialogue.

The regime took advantage from the need of major countries such as the United States, Britain and France to end the Bahraini case in order to devote themselves to the Iranian nuclear and the Syrian issues. There-

fore, the regime exercised greater pressure on the opposition forces to accept political settlements that do not end to an elected government and to postpone it to a later coming stage. It was only natural that such settlements shall fall due to the lack of equivalency in the opposition street and also due to its low level compared with the lower ceiling of the democratic demands.

What is worth mentioning is that the official opposition remained confirming its adherence to an unconditional dialogue and rejecting violence as a means of political pressure. Its emphasis on what some call “a peaceful movement” has led to being subjected to some social criticism, especially with regard to condemning the acts of protest that are only dead set against to the regime’s violence and its security bodies, as well the fatwa of (crush him) stated by Ayatollah Sheikh Isa Qassem.

The official political opposition has remained still in its political positions and did not resort to any political escalation. This has led to transferring the case demanding democracy to a case of human rights, emphasizing the movement’s rights the reports of the BICI and Human Rights Council in Geneva and other human rights reports. Therefore the political opposition societies did not fully succeed in making the political case on the list of issues and priorities in the Bahraini file.

Fourth: February 14 Youth Coalition: The Sledgehammer

Outside the frameworks of the authoritarian political regime and outside the official political forces, stand the opposition political forces demanding the overthrowing of the regime and the right of self-determination rather than political reform and a constitutional Kingdom.

The February 14 Youth Coalition is seen as the leading force among all the forces where it leads the confrontations in the field on a daily ba-

sis. Moreover, it now possesses human force geographically dispersed in many parts of Bahrain, including the island of Muharraq, which offers to it a variety of field leadership. The February 14 Youth Coalition also depends on the coordination between the effectives of the movement and sympathizers in the villages and cities, both in terms of the slogan raised, or in terms of the type of tactics of confrontation with the security forces.

From a political point of view, the coalition sees that the existing regime has lost its legitimacy since March 17, 2011 and there is no leeway for any reconciliation or dialogue round with the regime and its symbols. Therefore it continues to depend on confrontation and political and field escalation as the means and mechanisms for its movement and daily struggle. Since July 2011, the Coalition adopted the slogan of self-determination as a political slogan, which is seen as a bridge between the spectra of the already divided opposition on the overall demands between a constitutional monarchy and a republic. Even though the coalition has its own political vision, mentioned in the Pearl Revolution Document that is based on the idea of overthrowing the regime as the basis for any fair political solution.

Due to the nature of its field work, the Coalition has been carrying out many events entitled to support the imprisoned political leaders or political issues that are agreed upon between all the opposition political forces. Thus, it represents its framework as a hammer which must break down the corridors of the regime and dismantling its authoritarian power. On the other hand, the regime kept ignoring the existence of the Coalition and holds its consequences on the shoulders of Al Wefaq and its religious authority. This is confirmed by the absence of indictments submitted to the Public Prosecution -more than five thousand indictment- of charges of the affiliation with February 14 Coalition, replacing it with smaller and separated charges such as bombings, targeting security patrols or cutting roads.

Fifth: National Consensus is the Key

The division between the political forces controlling the major joints of the political scene is having a negative impact on the completion of the democratic transformation required. Although a valid floor to make the transition exists, the bet on winning the round with zero outcomes was a master position for the political opposition and pro forces. Due to the political division based on sectarian lines, a state of imperfect legitimacy was generated in all parties, making them subject to loss of comprehensiveness and assimilation of all components of the society.

As a result of this fractious and conflicting situation of the political forces, came an empty space enabling the regime to escape whenever horizons of solutions and compromises narrowed. Furthermore, the political division, whatever its causes were, has given the regime a chance to promote itself as being bumptious of differences and political divisions. And that it is waiting for political forces to achieve an agreement on understandings- as in the official language words- where achieving unanimity or a national consensus among political demands and democratic transition formula is a key element to the solution to the deepening crisis since February 14.

2- The Field Movement... Illegal Challenges (Published in Arabic only)

Abbas Al Murshed

Chapter 2

Media and Housing.. An Expression of a Deeper Crisis

3- Media... The Dispute over Truth

First: the Official Media... Insuring Loyalty and Sources of Jamming
Second: the Opposition Media.. Inconvenience and Revocation of Accusations

4- The Housing Crisis.. The Land and Population Crisis (published in Arabic only)



Nader Al Matrook
(Bahraini Researcher)

3- Media... The Dispute over Truth

First: the Official Media... Insuring Loyalty and Sources of Jamming

- 1- The Information Affairs Authority IAA
- 2- Samira Rajab, Minister of State for Media Affairs
- 3- Bahrain TV
- 4- Local newspapers and publications
- 5- Al-Arabiya News Channel (Mohammed Al Arab)
- 6- The online media

Second: The policies

Third: The results

Fourth: Challenges and scenarios

First: the Official Media... Insuring Loyalty and Sources of Jamming

Nader Al Matrook

1- The Information Affairs Authority IAA

The official media policy in the period of October 2011 to September 2012 is not different than the previous periods. The Information Affairs Authority IAA is considered a government body that is responsible of the official media, and is in charge of overseeing various types of media.

It was formed by a royal decree as of 8th of July 2010, after detaching it from the Ministry of Culture, and establishing it under the chairmanship of Shaikh Fawaz bin Mohammed bin Khalifa Al Khalifa. According to the Authority's literature published on its website; a set of general objectives are set as its priorities, including achieving "the best interest of the nation, and preserving the unity of the community", all are deprived from standards adopted by the Authority itself. Standards like "serving the reform process, political development and democratization, economic and social development, and the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms"⁽¹⁾.

The Information Affairs Authority IAA tops the list of actors in the government media, and it has gained additional strength with the new arrival of a character related to the hardliners in the ruling family. The stiffness of Shaikh Fawaz is unfolded from his previous administration in sports bodies -where he used to be the head of the General Organisation for Youth and Sports GOYS- since he was known for his acute behavior in dealing with clubs administrations and sports media. Following appearances and statements issued by the Authority, Shaikh Fawaz appears as a key influencer in making the official tale, giving it all what it needs from tricks to wiles.

The Panorama of the Media Authority

Shaikh Fawaz praised in 2nd of September 2012 the word of the king of Bahrain, which called for the advancement of media. The king touched in his speech the government's desire to "improve the living and professional conditions of journalists". The President of the Information Affairs Authority IAA Shaikh Fawaz considered this Royal speech a guarantor for providing "the best ways to express opinion freely, safely and independently"⁽²⁾. In August 14, 2012, he promised to issue a "modern and liberal press law", with the involvement of the Bahraini Press Association. And he made sure, as for the period covering this report; to pay tribute to the writers and journalists whose names have been associated with media anticipation, anti-opposition initiatives, and those who write in favor to the official policy of violence to confront the protesters.

The Saudi magazine (Al Majalla) conducted (3 July 2012) an interview with Shaikh Fawaz that reflects the most important features of the "tricky" media policy presented in the Information Affairs Authority IAA and its institutions. The President of the Information Affairs Authority IAA went on repeating the same language used in the media provocation and writings in the stage of the national safety, where he described the events of February and March 2011 as "a terrorist plot to overthrow the regime". He persisted on accusations that were not yet definite according to the state's courts and judiciary system, using a language in his usual talk like the "occupation of a government hospital" and the "formation of an alliance for the establishment of a sectarian, Iranian-style Republic".

At the end of September 2011, the Information Affairs Authority IAA published an "important" statement that referred to the "violations" of the Bahraini medical staff, and went on "recording their confessions that

reveal the size of the plot they have made”. The statement was issued in the context of the authority’s role in “showing and presenting facts”, and “repelling the coup plot” facing the country, in a complete harmony with the language continually used in the statements of the Authority and its President Shaikh Fawaz. Subsequently, this statement confirms the testimonies provided by victims imprisoned, saying that the staff of the IAA including the Bahraini director Ahmed Yaqoob Al Moqla have taped these confessions after those victims were subjected to torture.

Thus, the President of the Information Affairs Authority IAA welcomed the report of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry BICI (23 November 2011), however stated together with this welcome that “the Authority’s mission in the last period was to report the facts on the ground, and deliver it to the Gulf public opinion”.

This comes in context with another policy adopted by the official media of cutting facts. As after the issuance of the BICI report (known by Bassiouni Report) Bahrain News Agency BNA (the official news agency) broadcasted a statement merely including the part in the report which said that there was no evidence of “speech replete with hatred” in the state media. And avoiding referencing what the same report said in criticism to the national television and the media’s absolute subordination to the regime.

2- Samira Rajab, Minister of State for Media Affairs

Samira Rajab produced an effective part in passing the information and media policy of the regime. She was the favorite for getting exciting statements, and an essential face for the regime, where she became its option for representation in the foreign media appearances. Rajab is considered a fine asset for the regime, being descended from a well-known Shiite family, also having an old record in promoting the same

justifications used by the official media of suppressing the public protests, more than ever talking about the Iranian tide in the region and the opposition's dependency on foreign agenda.

In a press conference on August 18, 2012⁽³⁾ Samira Rajab has consented the government on the action taken against human rights activist Nabeel Rajab, and confirmed the integrity of the legal position of the regime, that Nabeel Rajab was granted all his rights after being accused for inciting for "illegal" assemblage.

It is interesting that the minister reiterated at the conference the most important statements adopted by the regime against human rights activists, who she sees them as practicing "political acts". She also showed resentment from the international organizations' position toward the human rights activist Nabeel Rajab, and stressed that these organizations "suffer from accumulations from the total reliance on misinformation" delivered by those -who she called vandals- who continue to "spread lies and deliver false information to the media abroad".

Samira Rajab's appointment in her ministerial post (April 2012) came as result of her frequent media appearances, where she continuously and strictly backed the official tale toward the current ongoing events, with a total disregard to the hostility and negative criticism she receives. Accordingly, she has gained great respect among those loyal to the regime that looked to her as a model for a free "Shiite" who deserves absolute honoring.

3- Bahrain TV

Bahrain TV went along the official policy pursued by the authorities in dealing with the events and protests, and it provided media materials to "corrupt the protesters reputation" and "talking in a humiliating man-

ner” as stated in Bassiouni report⁽⁴⁾, which concluded that “Bahraini media means were biased to the government of Bahrain”⁽⁵⁾.

For example, one of these leading television programs are “The Observer” , “An Open Dialogue” (Saeed Al Hamad), and “The Final Word” (Sawsan Al Shaer) . The first show mastered broadcasting a security-nature episodes using systematic defamation, and introduced sequential episodes that dealt with several professional sectors for the purpose of instigating, accusing its employees of participating in political protests. This show offered direct help in getting many arrested, and it was ran immediately after the entry of the Peninsula Shield forces on March 17, 2011, and lasted until the end of April of last year.

Moreover, Saeed Al Hamad represented one of the intense cases filled out with defamation against opponents, where he later on discomfited the officials in the television having them to stop his show with the advent of the Bassiouni Commission. Al Hamad continued his program through other channels specialized in inciting sectarianism. He also used contempt media language, and relied on security and intelligence information to engage in his show. It is no different with Sawsan Al Shaer, who refuses any rapprochement with the opposition, and devoted her television show and written press to accuse the opposition. Furthermore, she did not hesitate to accuse and put charges of treason against the oppositions. It was interesting that she hosted Saeed Al Hamad in her show, in a move seemed to celebrate in his own way of disinformation.

4- Local newspapers and publications

Seven daily newspapers are issued in Bahrain; all represent the official position, except for Al-Wasat newspaper. The newspapers are keen to provide materials almost in complete congruence with the official media policy. “Al Watan” newspaper, in particular, provides a media approach

forsaken in a professional level, by focusing to disseminate news and reports derogatory to the opposition in order to distort their demands through sectarianism. The official newspapers have lost the usual standards of any news editorial, and are overshadowed by the inflammatory rhetoric. This unprecedented disorder of the local press is shown in the systematic attack against Sheikh Issa Qassem, addressing him with derogatory words.

5- Al-Arabiya News Channel (Mohammed Al Arab)

The Reporter of Al Arabiya News Channel (Saudi Arabia) Mohammed Al Arab –Iraqi of a Palestinian origin and a newly naturalized Bahraini – is in a straight line with the security body in Bahrain. He has prepared his reports and coverage in accordance with the policy of the Saudi channel, and through the permanent coordination with the Bahraini intelligence body. Not only Al Arab did convey events using the official version of the tale, but also sought to add “media interpretations” involving blatant slander and insult to the opposition, which also has been recorded in Bassiouni report⁽⁸⁾. By observing the media behavior of Al Arab, and what he publishes in the channel and its website; it is clear that his utmost significant objective is to acquit the regime of using excessive force and present an angelic example of the security men on the one hand. On the other hand stick charges of terrorism and violence to the protesters⁽⁹⁾.

6- The online media

Regime loyalists took on spreading hatred and incitement to violence through social networking feeds. The official online media did not record an influential presence on the scene of events, except for paying attention to the loyalists. The regime adopted an implicit support to websites and online accounts specialized in excavating and targeting the opposition, since these websites have been active in the National Safety. At the

time, Bahrain Forum has witnessed a severe sectarian escalation, and responded to the defamation and cleansing processes that culminated at the time. Among the influential characters at this level, emerged the account of “7areghum” in Twitter, which showed a great deal of hatred and incitement to violence, as Bassiouni report believed⁽¹⁰⁾. The data indicate that the account in question is associated to high officials in the Information Affairs Authority IAA and the Ministry of the Interior. Worth mentioning is that the officials in the IAA follow and retweet for “7areghum⁽¹¹⁾”.

Second: The policies

By monitoring data and attitudes of the Information Affairs Authority IAA and media under its control; it is apparent that the government media body; expressed intense awareness and need of the arrival of new rhetorical literature, concentrated on the freedom of media and journalism. As well as showing interest at the “propaganda” of the recommendations that came out of the BICI (Bassiouni Committee) and Bahrain National Dialogue. However, the official media practice did not witness concrete positive changes, and the Authority relied on a dual strategy, where it emphasizes on glamorous titles in the area of transparency, objectivity and openness, yet, implements media policies that contradict with the very essence of these titles.

The official state media relied on tossing allegations and accusations, through employing various media tools to expand the scale of charges, and highlighting it as final facts that cannot be refuted or denied. The official state media also considered the other media as a provider of misinformation and lies. In turn, the newspapers continued to only report the government’s position, and were closed in the face of opposition or any writings that might criticize the regime. Contrary to the official data, the official newspapers did not witness a diverse mobility of views and

attitudes, and the common point among them all is the fellowship to the official tale and cheering for it.

Third: The results

The actors in the official state media and the pro-regime bodies were influential on the level of internal Media objectives (gaining presumed supporters). This media style was able to ensure to keep loyalists in the government side, and to provide justifications in order to accuse the opposition by treason and employment for foreign agendas. This has -gradually- (and quickly) resulted in hardening the sectarian barricade. Yet with limited exceptions, some loyalists did not show total submission to the government media, and voices rose against some of the informational materials published by the government for the purpose of incitement and packing charges against the oppositionists.

Fourth: Challenges and scenarios

The Official media had lost its professional credibility on large scales. It presented a major role in the blackout, spread of rumors, and countersteering the public opinion. The Information Affairs Authority IAA has not achieved anything of its stated objectives, and was seen performing on the contrary. Based on the performance, which is still ongoing until the preparation of this report, the state television is unswervingly connected to the security plans carried out by the regime. The producers and the presenters have undertaken specific task, which is summed up in blessing the authorities, and reaching ultimate harm to those seen as opponents.

It is not expected that the government media body shall give up on this approach unless in the event of a dramatic change in the official policy and an absolute reform of the entire political situation, thus far, a decision that does not seem shimmering in the prospect.

3- Media... The Dispute over Truth

Second: the Opposition Media... Inconvenience and Revocation of Accusations

- 1- Loulou TV channel
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Second: the Opposition Media.. Inconvenience and Revocation of Accusations

Nader Al Matrook

The “sovereign” media and journalists who do not follow the regime have suffered great distress after the announcement of national safety ⁽¹²⁾. This situation has continued in the period before the arraival of the investigator Bassiouni and during the issuance of the report. However, the opposition protest imposed new levels of anti-regime media, and it was noticeable that the “oppositionists” experimented media function in clear levels of professionalism in comparison to the media performance of the government and its loyalists. The presence of professional journalists among the Bahraini opposition; provided a conducive atmosphere to the achievement of quality and creativity. That presence was met with the requirements of credibility and direct field coverage, which are specifications characterizing the opposition’s media and has created ample ways to confront the official state media, despite the substantial disparity.

1- Loulou TV channel

The channel defines itself as an independent Bahraini channel, broadcasting from the British capital city, London since July 2011. The channel specializes in conveying Bahraini affairs, and is keen to provide coverage close to the current realities on the ground, making it subject to interference and jamming by the Bahraini authorities. Its media discourse responds to the demands of democracy advocated by the citizens, with remarkable maintenance of professional provisions.

2- Arab and foreign channels

With the launch of protests on February 14, 2011, events in Bahrain

received extended coverage from Arab and foreign stations, and some special reports prepared from the inside won prestigious international awards⁽¹³⁾. Documentaries prepared on Bahrain featured balance, and the unbiased version of the story that is not adopted by the official position, shedding light on the nature of the current events, and giving space to explain the point of view of the opposition.

Some Arab channels have adopted the protesters' demands, and devoted daily coverage on Bahrain, including "Al Aalam" TV channel that has clearly taken the side of the public. It has created a gap in the monopolistic media, and as a result the regime has launched several campaigns against it, and demanded to stop its broadcast and expel it from the Arab States Broadcasting Union ASBU.

In the same context, "Al Masar" TV channel provide views per day to follow political and field developments in Bahrain, using a media language close to the revolutionary movement there. The channel presents an exposure to the ongoing day-to-day realities in Bahrain, keen to broadcast the escalating pace of the public anger of the increasing crackdown. As well as conducting interviews with Bahraini opposition politicians and journalists.

3- Al-Wasat newspaper

Al-Wasat newspaper is classified as the only sovereign newspaper of the daily newspapers issued in Bahrain. Since the protests began, the newspaper has taken the obvious position of supporting the democratic demands filed by protesters, but distanced with the development of events. As a result, the newspaper and its employees were targeted by the regime and its loyalists. Its offices and printing press suffered an attack in mid-March 2011, and the Information Affairs Authority AII issued a suspension against it on 2nd of April of the same year, after that the

state television broadcasted a special episode against the newspaper and its editor, Mansoor Al Jamri, accusing it of publishing false news. Al Jamri was forced to resign in order for the newspaper to keep working, and Obaidli Al Obaidli was imposed to replace him. Although it did not last long, but this experience has later on given Al Wasat and Al Jamri a doubling capacity to influence the public opinion.

4- Bahrain Mirror

Bahrain Mirror <http://www.bahrainmirror.org> was established in May 2011, and is one of the most important opposition online media developments. In a short period of time it could take an influential position within the informal media networks that emerged after the revolution of February 14. The regime's annoyance from the online newspaper was an indication of its unexpected success. An important snapshot of targeting that faced the newspaper was in the recognition of its superiority over the government media body, as expressed by journalist Aqeel Swar in an interview on Bahrain TV.

In addition, "Bahrain Mirror" is characterized as a compilation between professional journalism, and new media functions. More arguably, it could be said that Bahrain Mirror is the very extract of all opposition media so far, of course not without errors or first stages biases.

It has been recorded that it did provide more than an apology when implicated unintended mistakes, yet obviously it has benefited from its mistakes quickly. And more importantly, it has learned the online lesson intelligently when it abandoned excessive claims, and took into account the emerging realities. With the passage of time, Bahrain Mirror abandoned prior censorship, and flexibly dealt with different opposition demands, and its media approach was based on the follow-up of events and actors, in isolation from its media policy.

5- Websites

YouTube: Social networking sites represent open space for oppositionists in Bahrain. In an early stage, protesters benefited from these sites in communicating their goals and demands. Familiarity with the nature of the official media, and the way information is produced eased the way for the citizens to employ online gadgets in producing their alternative opposition media. The published media materials in the cyberspace do not only prove the “official state lies”, but also play other roles.

In “YouTube” the opposition was keen to submit events directly. The live full image transmission was a part of a critical mission exerted by online media persons, and it caused the revocation of the policy propaganda for the government media.

Confrontations are made in an ironic manner at times⁽¹⁴⁾ and in serious professional manner at other times. This media is aimed to derail the state media, and inoculate the public from its psychological effects and political countermeasures. The opposition worked to provide media materials that work in all these directions, and they succeeded in achieving their goals, despite the absence of systematic planning and lack of full commitment to the media principles.

Additionally, security forces targeted photographers in the field, and the published movies and clips reveal that special security teams are in charge of monitoring camera holders during demonstrations, and deliberately and directly shoot at them⁽¹⁵⁾. Media professionals who protest did not miss this targeting, and documented dozens of movies that show security forces firing on cameras and media professionals in the field. Professional reporters were not safe from harm either, and that was a form of severe conflict between the cameras of security forces and the cameras of the protesters.

Twitter: Twitter found its true birth with the start of the protests in February 2011. It made progress over Facebook for the opposition media. The first shifted to a dynamic space, which advanced in all fields and resided in the hottest grounds. In twitter protesters and supporters of the revolution struggle for broader media coverage. They share breaking news, and comment on developments in the events. It contains solidarity campaigns and coordinating the activities of democratic protest. It is the opposition’s favorite place to express different views and confront with symbols of the regime, its officials and loyalists. Twitter is present with the most prominent and rapidly effective faces of the new media in Bahrain, where Egyptian human rights activist Gamal Eid commented that “Twitter speak Bahraini”⁽¹⁶⁾, which is confirmed by some of numbers and figures that talk about the advanced presence of Bahrainis in “Twitter”.

Twitter combines features of new media, giving its media role more perfection and more comprehensiveness. The regime deliberately went on jamming on the opposition twitter media by recruiting so-called “trolls”. Where those went on spreading hostile atmosphere for oppositionists in Twitter, tried to organize campaigns to spam and shut down some accounts, and cursed and used treason language against them. However, they did not succeed in their mission, and the opposition could continue to sit on the throne of Twitter. Recently, the regime resorted to targeting these media users through trial on charges of insulting the king, like the human rights activist Nabeel Rajab who has been tried because of his tweets on twitter.

Blogs and forums: Bahraini blogs had declined in the Bahraini opposition media scene. Add to security reasons, the bloggers found in the new means of communication a broader expansion of proliferation and influence. Despite the limited retreat, the online forums maintained its activity, and privacy in providing interactive dialogue, including “Bahrain Online” website. In general, these websites continued its outlined

mission, as an information channel that is not interested in the ongoing commitments and covenants between politicians and actors in the real scene. These online channels established their usual incitement to quit on all agreements and final conclusions.

6- Bahrain Press Association

The association was founded in London, in July 2011 by Bahrainis journalists and media professionals who went in exile after the invasion of the Peninsula Shield forces and the evacuation of the Pearl Roundabout. The association establishment came in response to the monopoly of representation, which is claimed by Bahrain Journalists Association that is government-backed. It is in this sense an important media event. The association issued statements and reports that are not subject to official policy, including the report on the occasion of World Press Freedom Day, and its annual report for the year 2011 which monitored the violations against journalists who are not affiliated to the government media. The association's reports presented extensive documentary material that reveals breaches and major impediments to free journalism in the country, and took the initiative to provide recommendations for revitalizing the freedom of the press and protection of journalists from targeting and killing.

7- Media and press appearance

Opponents appeared in non-Bahraini newspapers and foreign channels by their writings, articles and analysis. They presented the other opinion, and refuted the government point of view, and were keen to show the democratic demands advocated by the protesters. In addition to the emergence of politicians and activists, writers and journalists had their special presence, especially in journalistic writings that presented a different picture than the picture published in the official newspapers. "Al

Akhbar” Lebanese newspaper provided open cooperation in this area, and many Bahraini writers, journalists contributed in the preparation of influential reports and files, such as its special report of choosing Bahrain as the capital of Arab culture, which presented a critical sight of the political and cultural system in the country .

Second: Policies

The opposition media was interested to provide the absent image of the events and was interested to be a multifunctional alternative media. That required entering into and investing in different areas of information. Opponents got active in social networking sites, and developed the electronic potential for the establishment of a professional online media, as well as the influential presence in the Arab and foreign press scene. Not only diversity was found in media tools, but also in media styles, depending on the tasks required.

This policy has succeeded in delivering the other voice, and other picture, which disturbed the government, and made it resort to double its counter-propaganda campaigns at home and abroad. Information Affairs Authority IAA has filed lawsuits against foreign newspapers like (The Independent) and responded to others like (The Economist).

Third: Results

Despite the domestic media restriction and the government’s policy in building a wide public relations network abroad, opponents have achieved tangible media power. Samira Rajab, Minister of State for Media Affairs has recognized this by describing it as government’s media insufficiency, and felt that the opposition is characterized by an actively “strong” and “abnormal” media (The “Complete Picture”, On TV channel, on October 7, 2012).

With continuous practice in covering the events, the opposition and protesters turned into media professionals mastering the art of documentation. And that achieved certain predominance against the state media, which relied on the power of proliferation in spreading its side of stories of the events. The crucial result is that media documentation does not require huge material and technical potential, where the presence in the fields or monitoring the ongoing event is enough to get the desired excellence.

Fourth: Challenges and scenarios

The period monitored in this report carries a summary of the critical effects experienced by the kingdom after the popular uprising in February 2011, where media has presented a reflective image of those effects, and those media materials have become a reference of approach to the general conditions that the country experienced since the outbreak of the uprising. The official media during this period cemented the usual stereotype, so it introduced the “official” tale purely and kept away from giving spaces of any other views. The government media body shifted to an “influential” tool in promoting the repression on the existing political protests, and provided the appropriate atmosphere for straining public opinion and provoking resentment among citizens. More specifically, the state media went on creating potential justifications for the policy of violent repression to face the protest movement, and that was done through a series of media programs and materials full of incitement against all of the environmental protest.

Nevertheless, “non-governmental” and opposition media could not keep pace with the government media, due to lack of adequate financial support. Yet, it presents a well capacity in showing the other opinion, and countermands the regime’s story, and that has directly contributed to the abortion of the government investment in security solution.

It is expected from the civil media to clearly define its objectives, and quit taking reactions, for getting occupied with accusations lead to giving in to a limited media agenda. There is no need for a central unified media for the opposition; as the distribution of media work between citizens and media anonymous; a strength point that secured the continuity of the opposition media and protected it from targeting. However, the disintegration of efforts and lack of strategic coordination made the opposition media lose appropriate opportunities to achieve the media objectives at the appropriate times.

Fifth: Conclusion

No free media would ever exist under a non-democratic regime and talks otherwise are propagandas or attempts to prove the impossible. This provision cannot be denied in a Gulf country that is witnessing, since 14 February 2011, a non-stop series of political protests with bloody events, which the international reports encounter as violation of the human rights. These reports showed a tremendous amount of “political persecution” according to the Human Rights Commission, Pillay , which had made the country into a “graveyard” of human and his rights as the description used by Al Wefaq Society, the largest opposition societies at home.

McCarthyism is a proper description to the media performance of the government. Opponents have built a well-established media that presents a lot of injustice, authentication and documentation, and yet little appropriate correspondent in convincing the contemporary public opinion.

footnotes

1- Website for Information Affairs Authority <http://www.iaa.bh/ar/aroverview.aspx>.

2- In an interview with Bahrain's Al-Ayyam newspaper, published on 23rd of October 2012, Shaikh Fawaz, the President of the Information Affairs Authority IAA mentioned that "the Bahraini media is living its golden era, thanks to the King openness toward media freedoms and the rights of journalists (...)." He also welcomed criticism against the government only when it implies with "the reform project of the king", a condition intended to fully submit to the ongoing official policy <http://www.iaa.bh/ar/arnews-details.aspx?id=362>

3- Bahrain News Agency BNA <http://www.bna.bh/portal/en/news/521349>.

4- According to a report of the BICI - Arabic version - (on 23 November 2011), Bahrain TV misused this media outlet and participated in a behavior, perhaps, involved in defamation. P 506, paragraph 1630.

5- Report of the BICI, Arabic version, p 508, paragraph No. 1640.

6- See search results for "The Observer" in the YouTube site. Among those who announce the program was Mohammed al-Sheroogi, who quitted Bahrain TV to join other sectarian TV channels. In his Twitter account @ malshurouki, he adopts a language of treason against the opposition, and uses derogatory language against political and religious symbols, in an almost identical performance with "7areghum" on twitter.

7- It is interesting that Bahrain TV, and on the Authority's website, introduces the show of "Final Word" in this way: "Media veteran Sawsan Al Shaer provides her daily press wrtings in the form of a TV show featuring dialogues on a round table, where this weekly show hosts a group of specialists in public affairs in order to discuss local and regional issues". It is known that the daily column for Al Shaer is published in "Al Watan" local newspaper, which is classified as one of the newspapers specialized in sectarian incitement. The newspaper is one of the outcomes of the report known by "Al Bandar," a report issued by the breakaway government adviser Salah Al-Bandar, where it included a detailed scheme of the radical forces in power in order to create chaos in the country.

8- The BICI report, p 507, paragraph No. 1635.

9- See, for example, his latest coverage on Al Aker village in Bahrain, during the siege forced by the police, where he prepared a report to discredit the siege, and confirm the regime's version of the story. Compare between: Al Arab report on "Aker" http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=90PBeTat_P0&feature=related And another report conveys the testimonies of the people of Aker during the siege <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z97jmbjv0oI&feature=related> As well as his "security" coverage on what is known as Adhari tunnel, and the tale of weapon stores belonging to the protesters in there. The Bahraini authorities have sent him to Geneva to attend the human rights meetings in September 2012, and he has been given a specific task to mock and provoke the civil delegation, and he was sent off the meetings due to that.

10- The BICI report paragraph No. 1629.

11- On October 23, 2012 Yusuf Mohammed, Director of Press and Publication in the Information Affairs Authority IAA, retweeted for "7areghum". "7areghum" account is active until the date of preparation of this report, and publishes the same sectarian content, and incites violence and hatred. a report published on 26 October 2012 on "Al Fateh News" website has revealed the personal identity of that who manages the account, Mohammed bin Salman Al Khalifa <http://alfatehnews.wordpress.com>.

12- See: Report of the BICI, chapter 10 and the Bahraini Press Association reports, and Reporters Without Borders, for example.

13- The documentary of "Al Jazeera" English Channel (Bahrain... Shouting in the Dark) won a variety of prizes, including the International George Polk Award. The documentary almost blew a crisis between Bahrain and Qatar, where it was described by the Bahraini Foreign Minister Sheikh Khalid bin Ahmed Al Khalifa as a «double-dealing», he added via his account on Twitter: "It is clear that in Qatar there is who do not want good for Bahrain. And this double-dealing film in Al Jazeera English is nothing but a good example of the incomprehensible hostility". The ambassador of Qatar in Bahrain Sheikh Abdullah Al Thani in his account on Twitter stated later on: "He exploits passion to increase spreading his poisons, and do not hesitate stating that there are who harbored bad in Qatar. (...) I respect Bahrain, its king, government, crown prince and people who I lived with for 11 years (...) I learned a lot in it with all due respect. But those who insult Qatar and its symbols, I shall clarify the facts with respect, and I do not care about those who are foolish". The press was very keen to cover this skirmish, until it suddenly subsided.

14- Bahrain TV in November 2011, broadcasted through Sawsan Al Shaer's show, a tape claimed it shows protesters engaged in sabotage <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q0kgALZCOno> and since it was full of loopholes, opponents replied in a sarcastic manner <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q0kgALZCOno>.

15- The young man, Ahmed Ismail was killed in March 2012 during the filming of one of the protests in Salmabad. He was a media activist who covers rallies and demonstrations with his personal camera <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v6y1lq7a6qw>.

16- Qassim Hussain Article, Al Wasat local newspaper, No. 3508 - Sunday, April 15, 2012 <http://www.alwasatnews.com/3508/news/read/656011/1.html>.

17- Al-Akhbar Lebanese newspaper, number 1632, 11 February 2012, pp. 10-11, file titled "Manama, the capital of Arab McCarthyism 2012". The Lebanese Arts magazine published a dossier entitled "Bahrain uprising" in the summer of 2012 contributed by Bahraini writers.

4- The Housing Crisis... The Land and Population Crisis (Published in Arabic only)

Nader Al Matrook

Chapter 3

The Economy.. The Implications and Profit

5- The GCC Marshal: The Alternative for Political and Economic Reform

6- High Severity and Seriousness of the Public Dept



Dr. Jassim Hussain
(Bahraini Former MP)

5- The GCC Marshal: The Alternative for Political and Economic Reform

First: Political money

Second: Kuwait in the Forefront

Third: Financing the Infrastructure

Fourth: Numerous Benefits

Fifth: Boosting up the economy or the security option

The GCC Marshal: The Alternative for Political and Economic Reform

Dr. Jassim Hussain

What is really disquiet about the GCC Marshal, which provides financial grants for each of Bahrain and Oman is it to be seen as an alternative for the implementation of a comprehensive political reforms. With respect to Bahrain, talks from behind-the-scenes are being circulated of an aspiration to take advantage of the Gulf money. It began from financial assistance from Kuwait to address some of the hot non-political files, especially those related to the provision of a decent level of welfare for citizens in Bahrain. These files focus on the living issues, for instance, housing and infrastructure development such as electricity, the development of the road network and the development of health and educational facilities in different parts of the kingdom.

In other words, it is worrisome that the Gulf Marshal becomes a substitute for fundamental democratic reforms, if using the want and need of some people for decent housing and a job in order to provide a decent living, at the expense of demanding democratic reforms.

First: Political money

Going back in time, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) agreed in 2011 to provide \$ 10 billion for each of the Kingdom of Bahrain and the Sultanate of Oman, in order to help the two GCC members to adapt to the causes and consequences of political protests broke out in the first quarter of 2011. Bahrain was the first State and member of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) experiencing popular uprising in the wake of the Arab Spring to achieve democratic demands, especially demanding the partnership in decisions-making and addressing the challenges facing the country. As well as the elimination of all forms of discrimination between citizens and ensure equal opportunities.

It was understood from this non-binding decision, that the other four GCC countries, which are relatively rich, and specifically Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar and Kuwait shall bear the financial burden equally, meaning \$ 2.5 billion out of \$ 10 billion each. Even though, currently it is not as vital to know when and will the other three countries participate in the provision of aid to Bahrain, whether by cash or other means.

Second: Kuwait in the Forefront

As a matter of fact, it was not surprising at all that Kuwait took the lead in the Gulf initiative to provide financial aid to Bahrain in view of the historical links between the two countries at all levels, both official and public. Yet, it is known that Kuwait is committed to provide periodical aid to Bahrain, mainly focused on development projects, with a focus on the field of education, and in particular the establishment of model schools, as well as the development of the health sector such as the construction of health centers.

The Kuwaiti government has agreed in June to allocate an amount to Bahrain from its fiscal year budget 2012-2013. The fiscal year in Kuwait starts in April and ends in March and thus the amount has been allocated from this year. In addition, it was not expected from the legislative authorities to get in the way of the final approval of the financial allocations to Bahrain, due to the well-established relationship between the two countries.

In line with the agreed Gulf trend, the amount of \$ 2.5 billion will be distributed over 10 years, as in \$ 250 million annually. This is considered proper, because it is important to know that the funds are being distributed on the development projects after subjecting those projects to extensive studies. In addition to assuring the capacity of local markets to absorb these funds and activities, and therefore, ensuring an energy absorbing aptitude.

It is commonly known that these kinds of aids enquire sustainability in the entry of new funds in the Bahraini economy for a relatively lengthy period. This reminds us of the principle of (Few yet permanent, is better than many yet sundered). On the other hand the entry of huge and quick funds would only be injurious and will cause inflation, an undesirable condition in every case. Where there is almost an agreement among economists that inflation is considered a significant enemy for any economy, because it affects the people's purchasing ability.

Third: Financing the Infrastructure

The details of the first phase of the Kuwaiti aid of \$ 250 million includes the spending on infrastructure such as the development of the road network for two housing projects, and other streets, besides the expansion of a plant for the sewage treatment as well as funding part of the electricity transmission network. Additionally, part of the funds will be allocated for infrastructure development projects in Salman Industrial City northern of the capital Manama, plus the creation of disability complex and another for social services. Therefore, the given plan goes to important and critical developments within the country.

Reflecting on allocations of the first consignment, part of the aid will be employed for the establishment of 6,600 housing units in the north and west of the capital Manama, thus contribute to the solution of a thorny issue in Bahrain.

Noteworthy that a large proportion of the citizens in Bahrain depend on government housing projects to solve their housing difficulties due to the hard living conditions of citizens represented by limited incomes. Where, buying or building a house is seen as the hardest decision to be taken for the people in general, where it can in no way be compared with buying a car, for example.

Interestingly, the vast majority of houses to be constructed are located in Muharraq province, and not the northern or the capital provinces. More specifically, the financing will cover the construction of 4,500 housing units in Eastern Hidd (Muharraq Province), on the contrary to 2100 housing units on the island No. 14, in Northern Province, where the worsening housing crisis is located and which in turn hosts the highest percentage of citizens gathered among all five provinces in the Kingdom. Yet, what is reassuring is the allocation of 45 percent of the expenses of the first phase of the Kuwaiti financial aid for housing projects.

In regard to the streets to be developed in the context of \$ 250 million, there are the roads leading to the northern city, the western road, the coastal road, as well as the development of Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah road (the former emir of Kuwait).

The project also includes part of the fourth phase of expanding Tubli Sewage Treatment Station, besides financing some of the project development of the electricity transmission network voltage 400 kV, and the electricity transmission network voltage 220 kV.

Regarding the electricity sector, our research shows that the total cost is about \$ 800 million, where Kuwait decided to carry \$ 250 million of the total amount. It is implicit, that the other three countries (Saudi Arabia, UAE and Qatar) are supposedly to bear the rest of the funds, yet, the picture about the financial aid is not as clear as in the aid coming from Kuwait.

It is expected to allocate a larger amount of the Kuwaiti financial aid for electricity project, possibly in 2013 and 2014 where the project is scheduled to be completed within three years. In other words, a greater allocation of the Kuwaiti financial aid will be spent for the electricity sector in the future. The development of the electricity sector will contribute

to almost eliminate the crisis of power cuts on one hand, and endorsing the availability of enough energy for housing, industry and other vital sectors on the other hand. And it may be understood from assigning the Ministry of Electricity portfolio to Dr. Abdulhussain Mirza, the government's desire to benefit from its expertise to oversee this important sector for the development projects in general. It was until recently, minister Mirza was the responsible minister of other portfolios such as oil.

It was also decided to allocate a sum of \$ 23 million from Kuwait in order to support the establishment of a modern complex of disability in A'ali area that includes all entertainment and educational tools. This project is expected to be completed within two years.

On the other hand, the development of Salman Industrial City would contribute in solving the impasse of providing adequate job opportunities for citizens. The industrial sector is considered vital where it has the ability to provide a large number of jobs, one of the most important issues in the country.

A broad sector of the people in Bahrain has the desire to work in the industrial field, as is the case with the aluminum industry as well as the oil sector.

Fifth: Numerous Benefits

Strikingly, in this regard, is that the two parties signed a framework agreement that has not been announced with full details up till now. However, it was revealed that a Kuwaiti approval and supervision has been asked on all the details of development projects, for making sure that this financial aid will have direct beneficial returns on citizens, such as housing, infrastructure, health, education, youth care and various other things.

Fourth: Boosting up the economy or the security option

The amount of the Gulf financial support of a \$ 10 billion is considered relatively huge compared to the economic reality of Bahrain, where the size of the GDP of Bahrain is no more than \$ 26 billion based on the principle of current prices, and less based on the concept of fixed prices after excluding the high prices of oil. The value of expenditures for the fiscal year of 2012 is less than \$ 9 billion, mostly spent on the ongoing expenses such as salaries rather than development projects.

The expenses associated with the Gulf financial support is mainly to contribute to the promotion of an economic growth in Bahrain which is a matter of importance in view of the unsatisfactory results for the year 2011. As according to the Economic Development Board EDB, the body authorized to draw economic policies, a real growth after neutralizing an inflation factor of only 2.2 percent in 2011 was recorded. According to the same source an economic growth of 4 percent in 2010 was achieved.

In contrast, the International Monetary Fund estimated GDP growth by about 1.8 percent in 2011, so, lower than the Bahraini official estimates. Also, according to the International Monetary Fund, a Bahraini economy grew by 4.1 percent in 2010 (Please note other research on the decline of the relative importance of the Economic Development Board EDB in the wake of the democratic movement in the country).

The Kuwaiti financial grant would put an end to the growing phenomenon of the public debt, estimated at \$ 11.6 billion, or 44 percent of the GDP (Please note other research on Public Debt).

Generally, it is expected that the amount of GCC financial support will contribute in promoting the economic activity through what is known

as the variable of (Income Multiplier), where every dinar is doubled or more in the economy through the exchange of hands. It will also benefit the private sector based on the principle of “goodness prevails”. Meaning, there will be a shift of purchases of various types of products and services at the establishment of schools and centers and the development of road networks. With the strengthening of electricity production it will ensure delivering and reaching this service to those in needs, especially the industrial and trade sectors.

Kuwait’s approval to provide a relatively large sum of money for Bahrain in the context of what is known by (the GCC Marshal) will create a quantum leap in the process of economic integration in the Gulf system, where rich countries are to help those relatively poor. A fact to say, the Saudi economy is the largest of its kind in the Arab world, and Qatar’s per capita income is the highest of its kind ever.

Nevertheless, in the time that we welcome the GCC financial support we must emphasize on a fundamental issue, this financial support shall never be seen as a substitute or an alternative for overcoming the political dilemmas facing Bahrain, where it is unwise to mix between the two.

6- High Severity and Seriousness of the Public Dept

First: An inclination towards traditional and not Islamic financing

Second: Concern of losing control

Third: The absence of the economic strategy

High Severity and Seriousness of the Public Debt

Dr. Jassim Hussain

Contrary to what was the case several years ago, the public debt in Bahrain, which is tagged along the government, became a source of concern for observers due to many fundamental grounds. It is important to point out the occurrence of the high volume of public debt to new levels every now and then in a precedent in the modern economic history of the kingdom.

In short, the accompanying table shows the increase of the volume of public debt to more than 6 times in 10 years from about 600 million Dinars in 2002 to nearly 4 billion Dinars with the second half of 2012. The actual increase of the public debt began in 2008 in the wake of the global financial crisis which started from the United States in what was known as the mortgage crisis.

A table showing the size of increase in the volume of public debt within 10 years

year	Million Dinars
2002	597
2003	591
2004	585
2005	617
2006	679
2007	617
2008	705
2009	1350
2010	2440
2011	3170
2012 July	3943

Source: Ministry of Finance (Bahrain), quoting Al-Wasat Newspaper

The global response was that the public sector should bear its responsibilities by pumping money into the local economy in order to ensure the business continuity and sustainability, against the reluctance of some private investors to spend in general.

It is popular that the investors of the private sector look forward to the public sector to play the major role during the crisis and consider increasing the government spending as evidence on the government's interest in economic affairs. Add to that the repercussions of events that began in Bahrain in early 2011 might have imposed itself on the issue of public debt, where the need for funds in order to be expended within the domestic economy. The public movement came in order to achieve demands of democracy within the frame of the Arab Spring.

The authorities probably saw an urgent need to rise public spending, including salaries of employees in the public sector in order to satisfy the commercial sector, as well as a broad sector of the government employees, together with retirees.

In 2011 and among other things, the authorities took economic steps with political dimensions, such as an increase to the salaries of employees in the public sector as well as those included in the retirement program. All that came with a cost of 324 million Dinars annually, in addition to an annual increase of 3 percent of the salaries of employees and retirees, which eventually means an increase in the overall costs.

All things considered, the expenses related to salaries and other related to supporting Gulf Air, as well as the replacement of some of the finished bonds pushed for issuing sovereign bonds worth 567 million Dinars in the global markets. This mainly explains a surge in the size of the public debt of 3,170 million Dinars in 2011 to 3943 million Dinars at a time of the year 2012.

First: An inclination towards traditional and not Islamic financing

On the other hand, changes in public debt tools are noted in favor of the traditional financing rather than Islamic, unlike the trend in the region. According to the latest statistics available when preparing this paper, the traditional tools such as banking facilities, bonds and treasury bills formed nearly 60 percent of the public debt tools, which can be calculated as 2.4 billion Dinars from more than 3.9 billion Dinars.

It is up dramatically to the issuing of sovereign bonds worth 567 million Dinars, or \$ 1.5 billion in global markets in 2012.

It seems that the financial authorities resorted to the option of sovereign bonds in order to obtain long-term funding sources extended to 10 years, and thus make room for employing those funds in development projects without concerns of meeting the payment obligations in a short period.

Furthermore, issuing bonds in the international markets rather than domestic markets would maintain the liquidity in the domestic markets under unfavorable conditions of a political challenge in the country.

Maturities of the development bonds extend between two to ten years in the event of an international issuance, while maturities of treasury bills range between 3 months, 6 months and 12 months. In contrast, Islamic debt tools are characterized by being short-term, especially for instruments of peace which mature after 91 days, when a period of several years is extended for leasing instruments.

Going back several years only, it is seen that Islamic debt tools formed about 85 percent of total public debt, but declined to 69 percent in 2009 and then to 40 percent at the beginning of 2012.

Second: Concern of losing control

As mentioned, objective circumstances are available to raise the level of public debt in the Kingdom in view of its limitations and the needs of the national economy to promote expenditure. The best proof of this is that the public debt, which is in the range of 4 billion Dinars, forms nearly 42 percent of the GDP of Bahrain in 2011. The value of GDP of Bahrain range about 9.5 billion Dinars.

What matters in this regard, is the lack of collision of the level of public debt in Bahrain with one of the conditions for the GCC Monetary Union Project, which began in early 2010 with the participation of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain and the absence of both the UAE and Oman. The GCC Monetary Union Project requires no rise in public debt for more than 60 percent of the GDP.

Noteworthy in this regard, is the mutation of the relative importance of the public debt due to the continuous increase in the recent times. The weight of the public debt has reinforced from 20 percent and then 25 percent to finally 42 percent of the GDP within a few years, no more.

No doubt that it is not a mistake to raise levels of public debt in the case of proper use of the raised funds through spending them on development in all its forms, and to record the best economic growth rates in order to achieve noble economic goals such as providing better employment opportunities for citizens and developing vital sectors such as the economy.

The authorities had done well in recruiting part of the money in developing the infrastructure, especially the road network which serves the interests of the people and traders. And perhaps, visitors to the country noted a bang in the road network development within several years in

Isa Town, Um Alhassam and North Manama. However, it cannot be considered a developmentally-correct option to take funds from international markets to increase salary levels.

Third: The absence of the economic strategy

It is true that the State is obliged to return the borrowed money with interests. Rising the public debt would restrict the options granted to the financial community in the future, which may include belt-tightening due to the need to reduce expenses and pay for the debt service. Press reports in 2012 have confirmed Bahrain's willingness to accept to pay additional interests because of the credit rating problem of any risk factor.

Bahrain has a credit rating of (BBB) by Standard & Poor's Company, which is identified among the rating agencies by conducting an assessment of the states after receiving information from the official authorities.

This assessment is considered the lowest of its kind between the categories allocated for investments and suggests the ability of interpolating the financial obligations, yet with the premise if the country had bad economic conditions. It seems that Bahrain bore the brunt of paying interest of 6.15 percent for the bonds that have been issued in the year 2012, which is impressively higher than those issued at the same time and same maturity of 10 years.

Moreover, if what happened in the past few years can be considered an evidence and indicator, it is likely to record a higher rise of public debt in the absence of a clear national and economic strategy. We say this in light of the repeated occurrence of increase of the tolerable public debt on an ongoing basis within several years from only one billion to two billion Dinars and then 3.5 billion Dinars in 2011.

The new limit for public debt, which was approved in the second half of the year 2012, is about 5 billion Dinars, after the issuance of international bonds that exceeded 3.5 billion Dinars.

In short, and in the absence of constitutional institutions that are able to rein the public sector's appetite for spending, it is a concern if the public debt went out of control with all the accompanying negatives on the economic situation of the country and the lives and the future of people.

Chapter 4

The Gulf and Arab Position of the Bahraini Crisis

7- The Gulf Position.. A Self-Victory (Published in Arabic only)

8- The Arabic Position.. A Blind Subordination (Published in Arabic only)



Dr. Hamza Al Hasan

(Saudi Researcher)

Chapter 5

Bahrain 2014

9- Possible Scenarios of Settlement



Abbas Busafwan
(Bahraini Journalist and Writer)

9- Possible Scenarios of Settlement

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Possible Scenarios of Settlement

Abbas Busafwan

Introduction

The year of 2014 represents a significant milestone in possibilities of finding potential solutions to the issue of Bahrain, which seemed “insurmountable” on one hand. On the other hand these solutions are in fact deferred, so not to say forgotten, in a world that believed the Syrian affairs, and other affairs, were top events with high priority.

The Bahraini affair is deferred due to the fact that Saudi Arabia, the “official” sponsor of the Khalifi rule, offered a lot of facilities and power to the United States and Britain in order to protect itself and its eastern island Bahrain from falling before an unprecedented Bahraini spring. Especially after almost losing its southern part Yemen, if it had not managed to restrain change and distort it in Sana’a.

Certainly, Saudi Arabia has no longer own all the cards of the game in Cairo and Tunisia, as it used to, where now it is struggling for a foothold in Damascus, under a strict principle of: own Damascus or burn it! This was the same belief adopted by Riyadh in its relationship with Iraq after Saddam Hussain, who was about to spend by Saudi-backed bombers.

Perhaps the destruction scenario is likely to occur in Bahrain in the event of the majority of the opposition (Shiite usually) reached to a political power, where excluding the arrival of a Bahraini-version “Zarqawi” will be insane. In this case also, the Saudi slogan (and the Khalifi) will remain in effect: own Bahrain or burn it!

In fact, the Bahraini authority waved scenario of civil war, during February and March 2011, and conducted several rehearsals, where it fos-

tered a rift between Shiites and Sunnis that could violently explode if democracy happened to be, and the Shiite majority became a major party in power.

However, the year of 2014 may seem a possible milestone for a settlement in Bahrain, and it is more likely that it is being planned for by several entities, including various local, regional and international parties concerned in the Bahraini affairs. These parties are the United States, Britain, Iran and Saudi Arabia, as well as the local conflicting parties: the royal family and its adherents, and the political opposition societies.

I am unsure that the loyal groups, especially Sunnis, will be rested for any sober, fair and right settlement, where these groups considered any Khalifi-Shiite rapprochement is detriment to their own interests⁽¹⁾. And some of its parties -including some actors in the Al Menbar Islamic Society (Muslim Brotherhood) and Al Asalah (Salafists)- have mastered roles seen by some as provocative, not only opportunistic, to increase the Khalifi-opposition congestion.

A settlement in 2014 looks like a standing scenario even in the absence of possibilities of a historic settlement in the Syrian case, even with an uncertain end to the Iranian-western conflict that is extending from more than thirty years. Where year 2014 is mainly related to a Bahraini internal merit, as Manama will witness elections of the Representatives Council, the fourth since the re-consideration of it in 2002, after an enforced absence since 1975, when the first elected board was dissolved in 1973. This election was seen then as a historic event, but was quickly destroyed under the inherited dictatorial desire of the ruling family.

This very desire has fueled the outbreak of the Lebanese civil war, which broke out in April 1975, about four months prior to the dissolution of the National Council in Bahrain (August 1975), and the subsequent deci-

sion of transforming Manama into a headquarter of the Saudi cash, and intercontinental money.

The Islamic Revolution in Iran came after nearly four years of this (February 1979) to confirm the need of a Bahrain within the Western influence only. There are no evidence that the elected parliament, as in the Kuwaiti way, would turn land of Dilmun (the historic name of Bahrain small Islands), to an antagonistic camp to Washington and London.

The elections of 2014 could form a valuable opportunity for the ruling authority, also for Western countries allied to the Khalifi ruling family, to accomplish what sounds to lobby the moderate and reformist opposition, which have already participated in the parliamentary elections in 2006 and 2010. The opposition boycotted the elections in 2002 in protest against the issuance of the Kingdom of Bahrain Constitution (2002), which ruined the formalist democracy granted by Constitution of the State of Bahrain (1973).

According to the former constitution, the legislative institution was made up of two-thirds elected members, and a third appointed who are Ministers. Where the parliament formed in accordance with the new constitution consists of equal elected and appointed members, which means an advert of any legislative authority from the popular will.

The formation of the government in both constitutions seems like an absolute right of the head of state, even while assuming that the constitutional text does not say the prime minister to be of the ruling family. Theoretically the king may choose a prime minister not from his family members, yet that seems not to refute, in light of the absolute Khalifi takeover on the political decision, national wealth, and sovereign and non-sovereign positions. To an extent where the state and the ruling

tribe melt in each other, making the king prefer calling Bahrain the “Khalifa Kingdom”, where perhaps he –the king- hoped to use that name officially.

Why 2014?

The authority and opposition do not find themselves in rush, and Michael Posner, the Assistant Secretary of the US for Human Rights noted in August 2012 that “both the government and the political opposition see that time is still in their favor”⁽²⁾.

That does not mean that political initiatives will be non-existent, but several parties will aim, every now and then, to measure the parties’ position and willpower.

As for the authorities, they will find in the year up to 2014 an opportunity to try to contain the movement according to a “political formula” this time, within broader security strategy, for several reasons clarified respectively.

It appears that the authority does not prefer to resolve the current parliament elected in October 2010 which Al Wefaq opposition (18 seats out of 40) resigned from in February 2011 supportive to the uprising of February 14, and an expression of disapproval of the bloody attack on the Pearl Roundabout at the dawn of 17th February. That attack came hours after Bahraini King apologized for the killing of two young men in 14 and 15 February 2011 at the hands of security forces, which is made up mostly of foreign staff from Pakistan, Yemen, Syria and Jordan.

The dissolution of parliament raises a question when talking about the solution in Bahrain, because any political settlement will be necessarily followed by parliamentary elections is supposed to be participated by Al

Wefaq and the rest of the official licensed opposition.

As the current parliament filled its seats after the complementary elections in September 2011 to fill the vacant seats of Al Wefaq⁽³⁾, the dissolution of parliament and making way for new elections for the opposition to participate in is seen by some official political actors as submission to pressure. As if that confirms the fact that the parliament cannot be complete nor enjoys legitimacy but in the presence of the opposition, specifically Shiite opposition. This is a problematic issue that the authorities do not want to promote further as a political reality, after it had suffered from its effects during the first legislative term (2002-2006), when Al Wefaq and the overall opposition boycotted the elections and the resulting effects on the parliament.

In another aspect, the King repeatedly noted that he will not resort to the dissolution of parliament, as his father did in 1975. Meaning that the presence of the appointed cabinet (Shura) within the legislative institution is a safety valve for preventing the elected cabinet (Representatives) from crossing the lines.

Although the dissolution of the parliament seems a minor point, compared to the substance of the settlement required, some of the authority's parties adheres to what it calls the "prestige of the power", and does not want to give the opposition a significant victory -even if illusory- by dissolving the current parliament.

However, it remains a marginal issue to dissolve the parliament. And what hampered new parliamentary elections after the constitutional amendments announced by King Hamad in May 2012, was that such amendments seemed minor and fragile, and not resonating on both local and international levels⁽⁴⁾. any parliamentary elections if carried beyond were to be meaningless, because the opposition will boycott it

refusing the announced amendments, and that will assure that the constitutional dilemma is still intractable, which is indeed.

The Authority says that the amendments to the Constitution were built on the “Bahrain National Dialogue “, which was conducted in July 2011 and described by the Swedish Foreign Minister as a government monologue. its findings were rejected by the Alliance of the 6 opposition societies: Al Wafaq and Amal societies (Islamist Shiites), Waad (leftist), National Assemblage (Ba’ath), Al Ekha (Islamist Shiites of Persian origin), Unitary National Democratic Assemblage (Nasserite), in addition to the Progressive Democratic Forum Society (communists), which pulled out -under the authority’s pressure- of the opposition alliance that was consisted of seven forces during protests at the Pearl Roundabout (February-March 2011).

Furthermore, the dialogues conducted from time to time between the Minister of Justice Khalid bin Ali Al Khalifa and other parties in power and the opposition groups fulfill the purpose of public relations, buying time and crisis management. In addition to the regime’s ability in this case to probe the depths of opponents, the ground on which they stand and the extent of change in their positions. It also achieves the purpose of exploration for the opposition who are also interested to understand –constantly- the government plans and options to get out of the bottleneck.

Some parties in the regime assume that in 2014, the room for maneuver may be reduced when the opposition and its street, which is still characterized by its enthusiasm and withstanding performance against the brutality of the regime.

And according to estimates by these parties, with more time, and under the heavy burden of security approach it will become clear for the

opposition societies their inability to achieve a historic accomplishment through current local, regional and international equations.

Indeed, the opposition societies abandoned a number of its conditions to deal with the dialogue initiative announced by Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa on March 12, 2011⁽⁵⁾.

And it no longer adheres to request of the dismissal of the current government headed by Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa (the king's uncle) for more than forty years, and the election of a constituent assembly to write a constitution. Since the authorities took back the Pearl Roundabout (Bahrain's Tahrir Square), the opposition has been welcoming the dialogue without any preconditions, which it usually responds to any phone call for loose and slack dialogues.

The authority hopes the continued opposition's abandonment of a set of its aspirations, as it also count on repeating the scenario of limited choices and powerlessness characterized the performance of the opposition in the period following the boycott of the 2002 elections. A similar scene is to be repeated with the elections approaching in 2014.

Until then, the security solution will remain prevalent, which means the continuation of human rights violations, torture, imprisonment, extrajudicial killings, and arbitrary dismissal. In addition to the continued denial of employment, and increase the pace of the terrifying political naturalization, where it changes the balance of the public power -if the current average rate of demographic change continues- and natives (Sunni and Shiites) turn into an unimportant figure in the national equation.

The series of sectarian discrimination will also continue, which already has increased its pace on a terrible way since the boom of February 14. Amongst 198 royal decrees and ministerial decisions published in the

official paper, 296 officials has been set in high-ranked positions, where the share of Shiite citizens came at 42 positions only, as in 14% of the total appointments, according to a report prepared by Al Wefaq Society for the period between 14th February 2011 and 15th August 2012⁽⁶⁾.

In fact, the series of sectarian discrimination intensified during the reign of King Hamad, who wanted to extend his act in establishing a Bahraini army free of Shiite citizens⁽⁷⁾ as well as all state's service bodies. As well as proceeding with besieging the Shiite community through systematic procedures detected by Salah Al Bandar⁽⁸⁾, former adviser in the Royal Court. So I firmly believe that King Hamad is fully responsible for the current crisis faced by Bahrain, and not his uncle, the prime minister, as alleged by the international media⁽⁹⁾.

Facing this situation, the opposition resorted to the option of peaceful movement and withstanding against the official oppression. As well as reducing the clash with the security, monitoring human rights violations, carrying out media campaigns, and communicating with some of the international community parties (specifically the US and Britain, where it does not find it the perfect timing to communicate with the Russians, for example!) to confirm that the political crisis in Bahrain continues.

The opposition is capitalizing on its stand on the right track of history, where the history of the national struggle and its old age of more than a hundred years never recorded the opposition giving up and raising the white flag, even if it bargained on an ongoing position.

Scenarios of settlement

The best option for obtaining stability in Bahrain is to turn it into a democratic system of a western-style! And through resolving the political conflict in it using ballot boxes.

However, this solution is unacceptable to the ruling regime, and cannot be translated into action and reality unless the opposition forces managed to impose a real threat to the regime, much more severe than the case during February and March 2001. That the regime of Al Khalifa is very much similar to Mubarak's regime in Egypt and Ben Ali's in Tunisia, for refusing to hand compromises on the level of restructuring of the ruling establishment. Sometimes it seems more or less like either to break or get broken.

The "Saudi approach" prevailing in Manama, backed by the Gulf and the west rejects the scenario of a democratic transition, where Iran seems to be aware of these complexities, and calls for a settlement that takes into account the challenges of the local and regional reality⁽¹⁰⁾.

So what options are available to the regime and the opposition? And what are the expected scenarios in order to contain the crisis? I will try in the following to present a series of scenarios, and read the possibility of their recurrence in the light of past experiences between the regime and the opposition, as well as the current given facts.

1- The scenario of displacing the King collides with the Dispersion of the opposition and the weakness of the Crown Prince

In 1923, Britain decided to overthrow the ruler of Bahrain, Sheikh Isa bin Ali Al Khalifa, and replacing him by his eldest son, Sheikh Hamad, due to Shiite citizens' complaints of human rights violations, and rampant corruption by the state ruling party.

This change was opposed by the main parties in the ruling family, as opposed by the Al Dawaser tribe who were classified as a major Sunni influence, fearing that this displacement could be the beginning of Al Baharna/Shiites influence and power.

Britain resorted to the appointment of Sheikh Hamad (I) as a governor, and made some administrative changes that were considered important at that time.

When discussing the possibility of repeating the scenario in the twenties, replacing the king of Bahrain with his son the Crown Prince to be a way out of the current crisis, several points can be recorded:

First of all, it can be said that there are important sectors demanding the removal of King Hamad, and possibly bring down the entire regime. However, the main difference between the past and the present is the absence of a total consent of the opposition and Shiites on the removal of King Hamad. Where in the twenties of the last century the whole Baharna/ Shiites refused Shaikh Isa bin Ali to remain in power in the letter handed to the British Political Resident in Bahrain Colonel A.B Trevor during their meeting in December 1921. They have also rejected the petition Sheikh Isa asked them to sign in support to his rule⁽¹¹⁾.

The current Shiite opposition forces (Al Wefaq, and the Alliance for the Republic) do not pose the idea of replacing King Hamad with his son the Crown Prince. Al Wefaq (the major opposition society) calls to reduce the powers of the king, while the Alliance for the Republic (consisting of Haq movement, Al Wafa party, and Bahrain Freedom Movement) calls for stripping the entire royal family from decision-making power and authority. Obviously there is a big difference between only reducing the powers of the governor and his total departure, where also the biggest difference is between the departure of the only the governor and the entire family.

This situation is even more fragmented with the presence of Shiite families, though few in numbers, loyal to the regime and is part of its bureaucracy. Waad Society, the main ally for “Al Wefaq”, and some of

its members, such as leading figure Dr. Munira Fakhro, consider talking about regime change damaging to the public interest. That means that the leaders of Waad Society mixed between its Sunnis and Shiites members, stand out against any talk for the overthrow of the monarchy, and does not propose to replace the King with his son as an option of any settlement.

The lack of consensus in the opposition's aspiration and vision increase the dispersion and confusion between its bodies, and increase the volatility between the masses and deepen their differences. As it does also expand the room for maneuver with the regime and its regional and western supporters, where they can fully play on the strings of variations that are thought to be unessential, yet important.

Because unity among factions of the opposition in the phase of the national struggle to achieve a historic achievement is crucial, knowing also that the experience of the establishment of a Council for coordination between the bodies of the opposition at home and abroad ended with an utter failure.

To sum up, if the opposition itself does not present the option of the twenties as the beginning of change, the ruling family and its supporters are more likely to ignore such scenario.

Second of all, the Crown Prince Salman does not enjoy alliances within the ruling family that would qualify him to persuade them to be a substitute for his father in order to save the current situation.

The crown prince did not win the family conservatives who are led by the Prime Minister, and who view him as westernized member of the family. However, that is only the surface, as the war between King Hamad and Prime Minister Shaikh Khalifa was resolved by the first through

converting all economic powers to his son Salman⁽¹²⁾, and this is what led to the involvement of the latter in a brutal war with the Prime Minister, merchants lobby, and their Sunni allies, who –generally- opposed the economic reform projects adopted and launched by the Crown Prince in 2003 to reform the labor market⁽¹³⁾, which is now far away from its main objectives that have been proposed initially.

It seems also surprising that the Crown Prince often suffer from marginalization by the lobby surrounding the King, which controls the palace led by Shaikh Khalid bin Ahmed Al Khalifa, where complaints of Salman and those close to him were for so long a hot material for political gatherings.

The Royal Court Minister fears that the Crown Prince will pull the rug from him, and he always tried to involve Nassir bin Hamad, the Crown Prince half-brother, to appear in major events as the closest person to his father, and perhaps the best person able to manage the country after his father.

Maybe it seems surprising to many to say that if there is no Western ally (U.S-British) supporting Salman reign after his father and the militant appearances of his brother/rival Nassir during the recent events, as well as allegations of torture which are attributed to him- Nassir, perhaps we found Nassir serving as the Crown Prince. This scenario remains probable at all times, especially if things restored to the king and ended the protest movement.

The disadvantage of the Crown Prince in the system of governance weakens the idea of copying the experience of the twenties replacing the father with his son. It is not seen as an input to resolve the royal family inherited rule, and the people's aspiration to become the source of power and authority.

Third of all, the absence of the king in participating in decision-making during being a Crown Prince (1969-1999), where the prime minister was the real ruler of the country, helped in blurring his –the king- image in the public opinion and leaders.

This has enabled the king to pass his political undemocratic project in a resounding and successful way in 2001 (98% in the vote on the National Charter).

The King's absence from the public view during being a crown prince includes the absence of his crew, who currently runs the country. As the Minister of the Royal Court Khalid bin Ahmed was not known by the public opinion before Sheikh Hamad came to power in 1999, and the army commander Khalifa bin Ahmad (the Royal Court Minister brother) operates like a professional defense minister who does not throw himself in the clutches of politics.

The current Crown Prince and his advisers are immersed until the soles of their feet in the current policy. Since 2005 the main adviser of the Crown Prince Mohammed bin Isa Al Khalifa presided the interface of any economic event, and served as CEO of the Economic Development Board (Controlling the economic resolution), and also chaired the board of directors of "Tamkeen" (concerned in supporting the private sector and qualifying Bahrainis to engage in the labor market, operating under 116 Million Dinars in 2013).

He also chaired Bahrain Polytechnic, which FSA report of year 2011-2012 noted having suspicions of corruption in many aspects of its work. Moreover, he chaired the Board of Directors of Bahrain Development Bank. All are initiative projects of the Crown Prince to maintain the economy, which includes three sides: economic reform, labour market reform, and education reform.

Mohamed Ben Isa left in March 2012 his post in the Economic Development Board EDB, and was appointed as an adviser to the Crown Prince for political and economic affairs, in a belated attempt to mimic the model of his father with the Minister of his royal court Khalid bin Ahmed. However the Crown Prince team still manages files of the economy and oil.

Kamal Ahmed is in charge of the Ministry of Transports managing Gulf Air (daily estimated loss about half a million Bahraini Dinars⁽¹⁴⁾), Bahrain International Airport and the telecommunications sector. He also is the Chief Executive Officer of the Economic Development Board EDB since March 2012, and is responsible before the Parliament for Bahrain Mumtalakat Holding Company (a Bahraini sovereign wealth fund/ the investment armrest of the Government of Bahrain in the non-oil sectors), which manages a \$ 8.8 billion investment portfolio.

And Mahmoud Al Kooheji serves as CEO of Mumtalakt, who also heads as Chairman of Aluminium Bahrain (Alba) (a major Bahrain company), which fell by profit during the first half of 2012 to around 57 million dinars, compared with a profit of 102.88 million dinars for the same period of 2011, a drop of 44.63 percent⁽¹⁵⁾.

Zayed Al Zayani heads the board of Bahrain International Circuit BIC that has recorded consecutive annual losses (more than 8 million in 2011), since its inception in 2004. It was built at a total cost of \$ 150 million, not for any economic consideration but for the Crown Prince's passion for cars and races.

Tasks of the Ministry of Finance are assigned to Ahmed bin Mohammed Al Khalifa, after the removal of Abdullah Hassan Saif, who is close to Prime Minister in January 2005 in a blow to the influence of the prime minister in any economic decision⁽¹⁶⁾.

The Minister of Finance had been assigned in July 2012 on the oil and gas affairs as well, in light of fears of the repeated failure in other projects sponsored by the Crown Prince⁽¹⁷⁾.

The unsuccessful experiences of the Crown Prince in reforming the economy (labor market, Formula One, Bahrain Mumtalakat Holding Company, and Gulf Air) aborted the hope of liberal elites and moderate opposition of Prince Salman bin Hamad to be a reformist project of good governance.

Fourth of all, the Crown Prince has failed to form strong relationships with the traditional social fabric (popular families), in contrast to his father, who managed through four decades of the army formation to build a crowd around himself.

With the absence of the king from public view during being a Crown Prince, the chances of having animosities against him amid the public opinion have decreased when he first came to reign. The Crown Prince Salman accumulated huge mistakes in managing the economic file, and he could be seen as a tyrannical figure, when the Economic Development Board headed by him enjoys not being questioned by the parliament, which is already fragile. He could also be seen as a sectarian administrator when the team working around him consists of only one sector (Sunni).

Even though it seems that the opposition is taking a positive attitude toward the Crown, it is not without its helplessness and poor choices, where it does not know who to ally itself within the ruling power, as they could not find a partner inside. It is a stand that carries a lot of courtesy, in the hope that the Crown Prince tops the political scene through practical situations supporting his calls for dialogue. It is the very same call for dialogue he mastered, and presented him as a moderate and open

character. However, by repeating his boring terms of calling for dialogue without any effective actions, has harmed in the end his already-fragile “alliance” with the opposition. The opposition has described his political conduct as being closer to the public relations of the ruling family. Where some opposition parties accused him for working as a defender of the government’s tyrannical approach using a liberal attitude. Furthermore, he is seen as a person who can be turned into a tool in the hands of the military and extremists, as it appeared when the big companies run by his team dismissed about two thousand employees for supporting the opposition in the current uprising.

The loss or win of the Crown Prince to the opposition, did not enable the Crown Prince to win the Sunni loyal groups who view him as an ally of their opponents, especially when he presented the seven-point plan (March 2011) during the sit-ins at the Pearl Roundabout. His plan theoretically proposed a shift to democracy, including what that could mean of prospects for the establishment of Shiite impact in the power, which is usually feared by the main Sunni groups.

The bottom line is the sporadic position of the Shiites on overthrowing King Hamad, and the rejecting position of the main opposition toward any scenario of this kind, whether or not put as an option and a way out of the crisis. In addition to the weakness of the Crown Prince in the system of governance, the weakness of his alliances with the loyal groups, and the opposition’s distrust in his abilities, all make the idea of overthrowing King Hamad a non-popular idea for the supporters of the Khalifi rule (Britain and America). Where such a scenario is outside the range of the Saudi patron, even with Saudi King Saud removal in 1963, when it felt the need to do so.

Yet, when the royal family needs to offer a scapegoat to save its rule, and when overthrowing the weak Prime Minister or the influential Minister

of the Royal Court Khalid bin Ahmed aren't seen as enough to rescue the Khalifi rule, the overthrow of King Hamad is difficult to remove from the negotiation table.

However, it is worth recalling that the overthrow of Sheikh Isa bin Ali in the twenties had strengthened the Khalifi rule and its alliance with the West on the one hand. On the other hand, it dumped the Shiite congestion that saw what happened as a British victory for them! But the fact was that the Khalifi control continued and increased, because the ruling establishment was not re-structured, but changed its faces. And that enabled Al Khalifa to continue to monopolize the political decision and national wealth, while the British continued to tell the Baharna/Shiites: "We've won for you and made you a favour!" And the truth was that they have won for the Khalifa family, and helped them establishing themselves as rulers. Yet, this is also due to the Shiite/ Baharna seeing themselves as only "locals", and did not see in themselves a substitute to govern, as well as not having a military and financial force enjoyed by Al Khalifa and Al Dawaser tribe.

2- The opposition's consideration of the Minister of the Royal Court as a king eliminates the option of his removal

Between 1954 and 1956, Bahrain has witnessed an unprecedented public uprising, led by the National Union, which was formed by election in October 1954, divided equally between Sunnis and Shiites, led by Abdul Rahman Al Baker, to contain the events of a sectarian nature. However, this uprising became a historical political movement, raised demands of reform, including: the election of a legislative council, judicial reform, the reform of the security services, allowing the formation of trade unions, free elections in the area of health, education and municipalities. Besides, a general amnesty for prisoners and deportees as well as prosecuting those accused of shooting citizens⁽¹⁸⁾, in addition to the dismissal

of the influential adviser of Bahrain government Charles Palgrave. Aspirations that is not much different from the demands of the February 14, 2011 movement.

After nearly three years of active political action, and negotiations with the local government and the representatives of the colonial British authorities, the union did not achieve the demands brought to the governor. But it did not reduce the pride of the Bahrainis of this experience, particularly in terms of standardization the two communities in raising national demands.

The fifties movement ended up with prosecuting the leaders of the national movement, sending them forcefully into exile outside the country, and referring Palgrave to retirement after being the actual ruler of the island.

When approaching what happened then, and studying the possibilities of its repeat as a platform to get out of the current crisis, the following can be noted:

First of all, the authorities will continue to work to contain any Shiite-Sunni rapprochement, and prevent claims in the consolidated list. The regime has succeeded in moving more than that, to mobilizing the Sunni street to be against the demands of the general national reform.

In fact, since the fifties experience the authorities has started to implement policies that contribute to the division of citizens along sectarian lines, and Iran's Islamic Revolution came in the end of the seventies to give the government divisive approach additional pretexts. These policies have turned scattered in the eighties, which were characterized as a reaction in the nineties, turned in the first decade of the new millennium to a systematic action plan directly sponsored by the Royal Court

and his influential minister Khalid bin Ahmed Al Khalifa, where its major joints was revealed in Al Bandar report. Al Fateh gathering formed on February 21, 2011 was seen as a test to measure the success of creating a Shiite-Sunni divide, and perhaps it recorded a resounding success more than the government had expected, when thousands of loyalists Sunnis gathered chanting “the people want to remove the roundabout” (Pearl Roundabout).

The movement of 14 February inherited the failure of the opposition in the eighties and the nineties of the last century in developing a strong national coalition, and preventing the acquisition of the authorities to the Sunni public opinion. This division strengthened in the past decade when Al Wefaq National Islamic Society rejected to provide a national electoral list in 2006, and 2010, and their refusal to nominate historic leaders such as Abdul Rahman Al Nuaimi and others like Ebrahim Sharif within the available seats of the society.

Second of all, the authorities will continue to conduct formal dialogues with some opposition parties, without coming out with meaningful outcome. And it will continue to take a number of superficial measures that help in managing the crisis and buying time, in order to be ready to seize upon the movement and contain it.

Perhaps the most prominent of these formalities, is the sequential and loose talk on the implementation of the Bassiouni recommendations, and forming a body and Minister responsible for following-up. Yet, that does not change that this implementation will remain incomplete, while the fact says that a true implementation of these recommendations will lead to the dismantling of the state system of dictatorship⁽¹⁹⁾. So expecting its application is not based on a logical position.

Third of all, when you search for a character who exercises, at present,

an influence similar to the influence and power of the Advisor of Government of Bahrain Charles Palgrave, I would not choose the Prime Minister Sheikh Khalifa, who is outside the decision system, contrary to what some opposition parties and the international media promote. And I would choose without hesitation the Minister of the Royal Court Khalid bin Ahmed Al Khalifa, the right hand of the king, and the one who can be regarded as the actual Prime Minister, or viceroy. It is very true that he is the second man in the State, if he talks / does / order it shall be conceived as the king has done so.

Is it possible to remove the Minister of the Court and refer him to retirement as Palgrave was referred? And will this lead to an important change in the political life?

First of all, it seems surprising that the official opposition in Bahrain (Al Wafaq and its five partners) avoid criticizing Khalid bin Ahmed and also the king, and perhaps you find some criticism to the king, like Sheikh Ali Salman, the Secretary General of Al Wafaq stating that there is no royal will to reform, but you will not easily find any criticism to his first minister.

While searching for excuses for the opposition avoiding series of criticisms to the king that could lead to a rupture with the head of state who holds a major part of the solution, it may also be understood that the opposition sees Khalid in the same way in sees the king, where criticizing him means criticizing the king.

Second of all, the opposition societies lived a negative and bitter experience at the level of the king's abandonment of his two major assistants. Since September 2006 the opposition has been demanding the resignation of Ahmed Atiyatallah (nephew of the Minister of the Royal Court) from his post as Minister of Council of Ministers Affairs, in the wake of

former adviser to the Royal Court Dr. Salah Al Bandar exposing a government cell led by Atiyatallah to dwarf the opposition and the Shiite community.

Unlike the expected, the influence of Atiyatallah has extended since 2006 and gained arms like an octopus, and became a Minister with extra qualities by supervising on the agenda of the Council of Ministers, and chairing the Central Information Directorate, the Civil Service Bureau, and election administration. Besides, secret tasks given to him by the secret cell, as exposed in Al Bandar report, which includes multiple arms, including intelligence, financial and third with a missionary nature (as in to convert Shiites to Sunnis). As well as a fourth on the establishment and management of civil society organizations affiliated to the authority, in addition to a media arm that oversees Al Watan newspaper, the Public Opinion Center and E Media.

The king was compelled to dismiss Atiyatallah on February 25, 2011, ten days after the start of the uprising on February 14, within a very limited cabinet reshuffle in order to absorb the public storm.

It is perhaps not surprising when the King resets Atiyatallah to become the Minister for Follow up Affairs at the Royal Court on the sixth of April, 2011, after that the authorities broke up the set-in at the Pearl Roundabout with Saudi and Emirati military support.

Third of all, if the King dealt with the problematic issue of Atiyatallah in such way, imagine how it will be dealing with the closest version to him (Khalid bin Ahmed). However, what happened means that the King sacking those close to him will be improbable if this action will strengthen the position of the regime before the public movement. Yet, the action of this kind will be only in compelling circumstances, it also will not necessarily neglect the person being retired, which may remain an active

actor in the back scenes. In the sense that the change will not bring a significant shift in the political life, unless the king invested it to take deep institutional reform measures.

It is interesting that in the last period of the movement of the fifties, the National Union pulled out its demand of removing the influential advisor Palgrave in an expression of apology to the Government of Bahrain and the British authorities. That came after that the British Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd was assaulted during a visit to Manama in the 8th of March 1956⁽²⁰⁾. This does not mean that the opposition fears to repeat that scenario, where its demand of removing the Minister of the Royal Court makes its offer an apology for such a demand!

The bottom line is that the removal of the Minister of the Royal Court is not an option on the table. So, as long as it does not represent a demand of the position, and replacing him means the king throwing unnecessarily paper, the king is before another option which offsets his uncle Sheikh Khalifa as prime minister. In order to build a harsh road for gradual reforms, that does not force the king to hand over the helm of the decision to an elected parliament and government, nor ignore the facts of the uprising on February 14 and the Arab Spring dues.

The offset of Sheikh Khalifa finds support of the West and all Gulf states except Saudi Arabia, as it is not opposed by the main Sunnis aligned to the king, unlike the rumors about their adherence to the Prime Minister. The official opposition (Al Wefaq and its partners) consider the offset of the Prime Minister as a first step toward reform.

Nevertheless, it ceded this demand as a condition to step forward into a dialogue to open a new page, and such an inconclusive position puts question marks on whether the authorities must take in considering changing the prime minister as a necessary option or not.

During protests at the Pearl Roundabout (February- March 2011) the demand of changing the prime minister turned into a power show of the opposition demanding to appoint another person of the ruling family who is not considered as “a symbol” and is allowed to be questioned. Where the regime was afraid that the change of Sheikh Khalifa could repeat what happened in Tunisia and Egypt of dramatic changes.

Nevertheless changing Sheikh Khalifa is no longer so perceptive now, as he is already an opponent to the king and has been stripped of all powers in governance. Sheikh Hamad offered on his uncle repeatedly the position of viceroy, a ceremonial position not stipulated in the Constitution, but was rejected by the prime minister strongly; this may be an option in 2014.

The removal of Prime Minister is intended to be a substitute for a historic settlement, and I mean by a historic settlement that agreed upon with the people on the writing of a new constitution.

However, the Prime Minister is nothing but a crust of dictatorship in Bahrain, and his removal is difficult to lead to any transition to democracy, the basic requirement for stability. Unless it was exploited by the King who can give an impression that the Prime Minister is what was hindering reforms, and take substantial measures to restructure the ruling establishment. Yet, this seems as a revolutionary scenario that is incompatible with a conservative area like Bahrain’s.

Finally, the removal of Palgrave was part of a plan to revitalize the British influence in Bahrain, in light of the permanent unrest throughout the years before the 1956 uprising, which means that a Khalifi agreement with their regional and international supporters will be crucial on the need to change the faces of decision makers in the regime, more fully than to respond to the demands of the public or a political reform.

3- Opportunities of constitutional compatibility is non-existent as long as the King sees offending the constitution as offending him in person

The people of Bahrain chose independence of their land and its Arab identity when Iran agreed in 1970 to conduct a poll on independence of Bahrain⁽²¹⁾. Back then, an unwritten agreement was made between the people and Al Khalifa family that following the independence an agreement must come on a constitutional formula that ensures partnership in decision making and national wealth between the parties. Even though that unregulated poll conducted by the delegate of the Secretary-General of the United Nations in March 1970 focused on the Arab identity of Bahrain and independence, not addressing the nature of governance.

On the Independence Day (August 1972) the Constituent Assembly was formed to write a constitution with a majority of 22 elected members and 20 appointed members. The Board approved the constitution, and it was issued by the late Amir Shaikh Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa in 1973, reflecting the partnership in the writing of the constitution and approval. The Constitution of the State of Bahrain is considered the first public legitimacy given to the rule of Al Khalifa family in Bahrain. And it was hoped for it to open the horizon to move from state of permanent tension that characterized the political life since the Al Khalifa arrival to the small island coming from Al Zubarah (located in the north-west coast of the Qatari peninsula) in the year 1873. Also was hoped to fold the Khalifa “conqueror” family culture, which is still considering its seizure of Bahrain as a “conquest”, feats and glories.

Moreover, the royal family insists to use the term “conquest”, because it believes that it granted it a license to possess the land, with its people and property, within the “Islamic” interpretation of the conquests. It has been said that some conquests may be true when Muslim enter “Infidel lands”, and not a state known as one of the first countries submitting to

Islam- Bahrain. Unless, if we consider the citizens of the Shiite Muslims, who represent the majority of the people of Bahrain as infidels!

The consensus on the constitution also recorded a public recognition of the legitimacy of the rule of Al Khalifa, to stop political forces, Shiite especially from talking about the occupation of Al-Khalifa to Bahrain, having Al Khalifa as part of the country, after nearly two centuries of their arrival to the country.

So, the writing of the Constitution and agreeing upon it mean much more than being a unique political event for the democratic transformation in the politically- infertile region. It conveys the conflicting parties in the country on its identity, property, decision and wealth from conflict, to recognition that Bahrain is for all children, regardless of any other considerations.

However, the authorities dissolving the elected parliament in 1975, suspending the constitution, and issuing the State Security Law, have turned the situation to the pre-1970. And the country entered a tunnel until 2001, when king Hamad's political project began, which was promising that "the most beautiful days are yet to come" he said, marking his new reign with great expectations.

When considering the possibility of a repeat of what happened in 1973, and the opportunity of a consensus on the writing of a new constitution a present option, the following points can be stated:

First of all, one of the most important problems experienced in Bahrain in the past decade of the new millennium is the existence of a constitution that is not agreed upon, in the wake of the issuance of King Hamad the constitution of 2002 without consulting the political forces, and a referendum of the people.

Despite the existence of periodic elections (2002, 2006, 2010), and a half elected parliament, the political situation deteriorated in a manner already overcame deep problems, which the country experienced when the 1973 constitution was suspended, between 1975 and 2002.

Perhaps a grave mistake committed by the King is when he flaunts over the public reference, and cancelling the agreed-upon 1973 constitution. A measure that has not been done by the Prime Minister Sheikh Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa, who ruled Bahrain with an iron fist between 1972 and 2000, which is to abolish the Constitution, even if not applied.

The king has broken by issuing the 2002 Constitution a wedge between him and large segments of the population who supported with all honesty and enthusiasm his political project. And through the continuance of other unwise policies, an unprecedented revolution in Bahrain broke in the ninth anniversary of the issuance of the Constitution (14 February 2011)⁽²²⁾.

Second of all, the King considers himself the father of the Constitution, and believes in changing the foundations of the existing constitutional system a violation to his person and his stature.

This personal dimension holds of any opportunities of constitutional compatibility. Where the King seems siren when a talk starts about the abolition of the Shura Council, which is considered by the king one of his ideas, apart from the Shura Council being a safety valve for the regime. However, the king seems more provocative when he hears demands of cancelling the existing constitution, and that talk on an agreement on a new constitution turned into a red line for the regime.

Third of all, the opposition societies' discourse does not seem to address and insist on the formation of a constituent assembly to write the con-

stitution, but adheres the term of consensual Constitution. And it may be committed also to saying that any constitutional amendment must pass through a referendum, which means that the desired Constitution can be the current Constitution, which can bear changes through existing constitutional mechanisms, including the approval of the appointed Shura Council that represents half of the parliament seats, as well as the king's approval.

Some opposition parties say they do not rule out this option to facilitate a political settlement, where it adheres to what it calls the essence of the truth: the people are the source of authority. These opposition parties do not stick to the "people are the source of authority" mechanisms, and without a doubt, to expect issuance of a modern constitution through existing mechanisms is closer to a daydream.

Fourth of all, many almost agree on the Shiites majority inevitability in any fair and impartial election to any constituent assembly. This fact increased the rejection of the authorities and Sunni loyalists to the idea, and even refusing to discuss it or place it on the table of negotiation. Therefore, the initiative of the Crown Prince (March 2011) included items such as a government that reflects the public will, and a full power parliament. But it did not include the idea of electing a constituent assembly, which is a point of contention led -among other points- to delay the positive reaction of the opposition to the initiative of the Crown Prince.

As a solution to the problem of the Shiite majority, Al Wafaq Society suggests to resort to the option of "consensual democracy", a term understood as granting each sect its share in government. As well as a veto right to the Sunni community to prevent the monopoly of power by the Shiite groups (the majority). Al Wafaq also suggests a percentage of 60% votes in the Constituent Assembly on the main articles in the constitution.

Initially the authorities reject these proposals, also because the Shiite citizens still make up more than 60% of the population, in spite of all the tampering in demography and the continuing political naturalization. Perhaps one of the indications is that Al Wefaq parliamentary body got 62% of the electoral bloc in the 2010 elections⁽²³⁾, even though it won only 18 seats, because of the imbalance in the distribution of electoral districts⁽²⁴⁾.

King Hamad does not seem to resort to the Moroccan option, when its king Mohammed VI chose to form a prestigious committee, in March 2011, commissioned to write a constitution that takes into account the Arab Spring dues. As well as expanding the powers of the Parliament and the Council of Ministers, even though the writing of the Constitution was a way to make the Moroccan king the head of state with broad powers.

The rejection is due to the insistence on following sterile mechanisms for constitutional reform through the existing legislative institution. Also because the idea that the Prime Minister is not a member of the ruling family, as is the case in Morocco is not acceptable for Al Khalifa, even if the Prime Minister does not really have powers derived from the people, as in the Jordanian case.

However, the Constituent Assembly that wrote the 1973 constitution included a simple elected majority of (two votes), and did not allow the popular majority to monopolize the writing of the Constitution as it usually is in the classic democracies. As long as the debate here is about the prospects of repeating past experiences in the current crisis, the formation of a constituent assembly similar to the seventies model is not supposed to be a taboo as long as the regime owns a voice in it. But what makes this idea futile is the authority's considering it as a form of breaking the king's constitutional project.

4- The One-sided Reform scenario, an unrewarded cost

After the end of the war to liberate Kuwait, the national movement in Bahrain adopting signing a petition demanding the return of the Constitution of 1973, and the election of the dissolved parliament since 1975. The petition was delivered to the late Emir of Bahrain Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa in mid-November 1992, by what was known as the “Petition Committee”, which included Islamic and leftist figures, Shiites and Sunnis, notably the late Sheikh Abdul Amir Al-Jamri, Dr. Abdul Latif Al Mahmood, who now heads the National Unity Gathering taking pro-government positions and counter to the demands of the latest uprising on February 14.

The Prince refused to respond to the request of the Petition Committee, on the grounds that it does not represent the people. And he issued on December 20, 1992 an order of the appointment of an advisory board, consisting of 30 members, for a four-year period.

In December 1993, the “Petition Committee” decided to hand in to late Prince a popular petition, signed by thousands, to confirm that the restoration of the constitution of 1973 is a popular demand. However, the authorities refused to receive the petition.

As a result of the violent way the authorities dealt with the petitions and its providers, conditions in December 1994 exploded in coincide with the National Day celebrations and the Gulf Cooperation Council summit in Manama. The timing had special significance, where it recorded an influential internal and regional impact.

The security solution dominated the way the authorities handled the popular uprising and it led to the deaths of more than 40 victims during the years of the uprising, and three of its leaders were banished outside

the country, including Sheikh Ali Salman, the current Secretary General of Al Wefaq. Also the leader of the public movement late Sheikh Abdul Amir Al Jamri was imprisoned and tortured, and his two companions Hassan Mushaima and Abdul Wahab Hussain, who are currently imprisoned on the background of the events of February 14 (2011). Mushaima and Abdul Wahab are two key members of the Alliance of the Republic, which calls to overthrow the regime, and they were advocates of reform of the system and the constitutional movement in the nineties.

At the peak of the protests in September 1996, the late Amir issued an order to increase the members of the Shura Council to 40 members, but its powers remained very much formal. This was rejected by the opposition inside the country and Bahrain Freedom Movement, the main interface of the opposition abroad (London).

The tension coupled with violence continued until the arrival of King Hamad in 1999, when political forces considered that it is important to give the new Emir an opportunity to reform, yet, it is also true that the public movement was in a state of atrophy back then.

The last Shura Council was formed with the absence of the 1973 constitution in 2000 by Prince Hamad (before declaring himself a king in 2001), and it included members of reform tendencies. Nevertheless, the opposition rejected this Council, and reiterated its discourse reported to the late Amir that authorities have the right to form any Shura boards or committees, but that is not right constitutionally to be a substitute for the elected council.

The establishment of the Shura Council and “reform” procedures taken by the government since 1992 to contain the demand movement did not achieve its potential. Yet, the political situation worsened after two years of this, and was deepened by the prevailing security solution cou-

pled with a series of political initiatives and dialogues with popular leaders in and outside prison. And through which the government aimed to break the constitutional movement, and hit the credibility of its popular leaders.

The government complex strategy is: judicial and media backed Violence, unreal dialogue, and blurry reform initiatives, in addition to the lengthy use of time of the government supported by Gulf and Western countries. This strategy managed after nearly four years of scaling the popular movement, but it could not create stability, while the legitimacy of the regime remained standing based on the pillars of power alone.

Now, what about the one-sided reform items, and the chances of its success in forming a bridge to safety from the current deepening crisis?

The premise of one-sided reform is existent, and perhaps it would -if occurred- include the following aspects:

First, to modify electoral districts

I do not think that the authorities will carry on significant changes to reform the electoral system, and perhaps it limits some of its procedures in the reform of electoral districts that might reflect the demographic weight of the Shiite citizens.

Currently, the electoral districts are described as uneven, and they are distributed according to a sectarian basis, guaranteeing Shiites citizens to elect 18 members, won by Al Wefaq in 2006 and 2010 elections, where it gives Sunni citizens the opportunity to elect 22 members.

The imbalance seems clear in the failure of these electoral districts to achieve the principle of “a voice for every citizen”. According to statistics

of last general elections in Bahrain (2010) the electoral bloc in the first constituency in the Northern Province (predominantly Shiites) consist of more than 16,000 voters, while the electoral bloc in the sixth circle in the Southern Province (mainly Sunnis) consist of about 800 voters, and in both cases every district is to elect one representative⁽²⁵⁾.

Reforming electoral districts does not mean reforming the electoral system which is not transparent. The executive authorities dominating on managing the entire electoral process may lead to the idea of establishing an independent body for the elections like the Jordanian way. And perhaps the existence of the “independent” would be more appropriate for the authorities from the existence of fair electoral districts, so that the body can only work on the implementation of the existing law, and make sure to eliminate fraud on the election day. As far as we know, the major manipulation occurs on the days before the election through playing with electoral districts, political money, biased media and religious marketing.

However, the day of the election witness blatant manipulation, when military personnel are made to vote in order to tip a party over the other, as happened when the prominent leader of Waad Society and former candidate late Abdulrahman Al Nuaimi was ousted in 2006. as well as ousting prominent opposition faces such as Ebrahim Sharif and Munira Fakhro in 2006 and 2010. All this happens through making military personnel and Al Dawaser/ newly naturalized Saudis to vote for the desired candidate. This polling happens in public polling centers outside electoral districts, which ease the manipulation and fraud practiced by the authorities.

In summary, the authorities may take a number of measures to improve the integrity of the electoral process, but that will not make it lose its ability to guide the direction of the election in favor of government desired candidates.

Second, to create popular legitimacy for the Shura Council

Even with the lapse of the authorities to amend the constituencies to be more equitable, the composition of the legislative institution remain outweigh the opinion of the executive branch with the presence of the appointed Shura Council along with the elected Representatives Council, where both own same legislative functions.

In the sense that to impose a completely fair parliamentary election, the opposition was able to acquire a majority in the elected council, the appointed Council can abort any legislation the government does not want.

Under the authorities' commitment of granting the Shura Council legislative powers equal to the elected Council, the authorities can propose a formula for indirect electing to part of the appointed Council, in an attempt to grant it a public legitimacy.

But the authorities will face a challenge to devise an alternative term for "appointment", so that the mechanisms of "indirect election" or "criteria for appointment" shall remain to give the King the upper hand in the selection of the members of the appointed Council.

Furthermore, the adherence of the authorities to the number of appointed members of the Parliament to be equal to the elected seems like a political intransigent. as well as being a contradiction of democracy in its worldwide definition, so that the Jordanian experience the ruling establishment control the legislative and policy decisions, where the appointed council consist of half of the members of the elected council. And that t did not change the balance of power that continues to be in the hand of the Hashemite royal family. So taking a similar step remains always contained in Bahrain.

Third, to improve the representation of popular faces in the Ministers Council

Such a move would not cost anything in terms of constitutionality. As it does not change the balance of power in the institution of decision making, so such a move will remain looking as formal change, compared to reforming the electoral system, or taking serious action to give the Shura Council a popular legitimacy. Both last steps can be considered a viable promotion to be transferred to a center for propaganda.

A number of other actions can be outlined that might be taken by the authorities of one side. But overall it is difficult to achieve the demands of the opposition of an elected government and parliament, an independent judiciary, fair electoral districts, and security institutions that represent everyone.

Nonetheless, these reform measures may increase Western pressure on the opposition, and may increase the space of dropouts under its wings. They will also reduce supporters in some elite circles, which some want to get out of the neck of the bottle finding themselves stuck in it. As they were not part of the uprising in February 14, but found it a chance to vent for them what is suppressed and they predicted victory. This category seeks the opportunity to change its course, and perhaps the reform steps –even if limited- helps it to do so.

However, the experience of the nineties confirms that any reform of one side that the opposition does not contribute to promote will continue to be a burden on the country, rather than reform. But the opposition, including its radical/ impedance/ revolutionary actors see the lack of dialogue with the authorities an appropriate option, and consider the regime’s formal reform a gain for the public, and not quite worthy to enter into a settlement.

5- A new Bahraini “Oslo” scenario

In 2001, the opposition dealt cautiously with an offer presented by Sheikh Hamad to vote on the National Action Charter in order to start a political reform project taking Bahrain out from the neck of a bottle after a quarter of a century. The opposition expressed its concern that the vote on the Charter would be seen as a green light to the king to make one-sided constitutional changes, and eliminate the Constitution of 1973.

The King Confirmed to the opposition that “the son of Isa bin Salman will not cancel a constitution prepared by his father”⁽²⁶⁾, and official statements to his son Crown Prince Salman were issued confirming the remaining of the Constitution of 1973⁽²⁷⁾. and other statement by the former Justice Minister Abdullah bin Khalid Al Khalifa, who chaired the committee preparing the National Action Charter emphasizing on the limited role of the Shura Council - proposed by the Charter- in non-binding counseling, so the legislation and oversight to be exclusively the prerogative of the elected Representatives Council.

The opposition considered these assurances sufficient enough to vote on the charter, influenced also by the “shock” style practiced by King Hamad, promoting to the public a set of “historic” procedures. While he adopted cancelling the law and courts of the state security, releasing political prisoners, allowing the deportees to return and creating a positive climate for freedom of expression.

The vote on the Charter was an exceptional opportunity to restore respect for the legitimacy of the People and to correct the course of relationship between the people and the ruling family. And it was hoped that citizens would be invited to elect the National Council (parliament) to carry on the constitutional amendments proposed by the Charter, so

the King issues it in accordance with the procedures prescribed by the Constitution of 1973.

But the king surprised the political movement and issued a new constitution in 14 February 2002, contrary to his promises to preserve the Constitution of 1973, and forming the parliament with full legislative powers.

That negatively affected the confidence that was about to be built between the ruling family and the opposition. And now it is difficult for the opposition to believe statements, promises and assurances given out by the king or one of his assistants on reform.

What even deepened the mistrust are the experiences of the last ten years, which witnessed the monopoly of the regime of the public, and the issuance of laws restricting freedoms, as well as breaching of the electoral process. While the prevailing security solution since February 14, 2011 has executed the possibility that the negotiations and undocumented agreements are the way to a new charter and the mechanism out of the current crisis.

The lack of confidence in the King transfers the negotiations file with the opposition to his son, the Crown Prince, where an issuance of a royal decree granted him- the Crown Prince- full authorization (February 2011). Yet, the Crown Prince was already commissioned to follow the national dialogues since October 2004.

The absence of such confidence made the opposition ask the Crown Prince to submit a written initiative for the negotiations to be conducted upon, instead of the oral undocumented talks (March 2011)⁽²⁹⁾.

An important sector of the protesters in the Pearl Roundabout (February- March 2011) demanding to bring down the regime and not enter

into a loose dialogue contributed in not immediately responding to the initiative of the Crown Prince that was already unscheduled.

The impact of breaching on what was agreed upon in the Charter will shade the relationship between the opposition and the ruling family for coming future periods. However, there is another view which believes that such breach will make various parties make greater efforts to reach into standardized formats, though this understanding forget that even in the standardized formats parties can still find loopholes to evade their commitment.

The written consensus cannot be a substitute for good intention, which is supposed to cover the atmosphere of dialogue and the implementation of the agreements. However, some question whether the opposition manages its dialogues with the authorities on the Palestinian way, or the Syrian way? Both were unable to preserve the Arab right! Yet, in the first dialogue turns almost to an end, not a mean, while interim deals are a prominent feature in the Palestinian negotiating style, which led to the stalemate of “Oslo”.

On the other hand, the Syrian negotiator, before the start of the negotiation (and not dialogue) requires leading the negotiations to the withdrawal of the Israeli occupation of the Golan, or else it does not enter into a negotiation path with unknown results.

Neither Palestinian nor the Syrian dialogue managed to restore their occupied land, but the first granted legitimacy to the occupation, and entered a maze that never take to the end of the tunnel, losing a lot of land and ground, while the second still hold on to its discourse and did not yet lose the Golan officially.

Perhaps Al Wefaq entered the maze of a Bahraini “Oslo” through its

participation in the Parliament of 2006, and it may have enabled the authority to make a lot of temporary “Glory” out of it, but it ultimately exposed the authorities, revealed the falsity of its project, and pulled out its popular legitimacy.

The spring of Bahrain has saved Al Wefaq from the “Oslo” tunnel and I’m not sure if that will also save it from getting involved in another “Oslo”. The resignation of Al Wefaq from the Parliament (February 2011) eliminated chances of returning to the legislative institution without changing the rules of the game, and its audience shall continue to asks: What has changed in order to get back to the Parliament?

The parliamentary experience of Al Wefaq between 2006- 2011, was not as successful as hoped in terms of legislative and regulatory achievement. Perhaps the most expressive on Al Wefaq disappointment is its inability to pass formal and secondary constitutional changes (May 2010).

The matter has bypassed that extent to the negative experience with the king, who came loaded with promises, but the first ten years of his reign was dominated by radical political problems.

The official pressures on the supreme Shiite religious clerk in Bahrain, Sheikh Isa Qassem, and leader of Al Wefaq Sheikh Ali Salman seem incapable at all in budging their positions for reform. You will not find in the history of the opposition -throughout hundred years of struggle- moments with lifting of the white flag, but its history without a doubt is full of normalization of conditions characterized with tyranny.

Moreover, the presence of symbols of “objection party” in prison such as (Abdul Wahab Hussain, Hasan Mushaima, AbdulHadi Al Khawaja and others), who contributed to the start of February 14 movement also did

not contributed for the opposition to enter into loose settlements.

It is true that they will not be able under the current circumstances of the imposition of a historic settlement; however, their influence is capable to impose a real veto to any settlement that does not get approved by them.

So far no signs of refraction appear on the two most prominent symbols in prison (Hussain, and Mushaima), after nearly a year and a half of their arrest. And perhaps their presence and others in prison will remain linked to the ability to get compromises out of them in order to force the demand movement to submit to sore concessions.

However, the confusion that the regime would face is that Hussain and Mushaima had gone through negotiations during the nineties uprising known as the “initiative” (1996). The initiative required the popular leaders to calm down the street, followed by political dialogues help to get out of the crisis. And as usual, the authorities did not stand with its promises, and returned the leaders to the prison, including the leader of the uprising the late Sheikh Abdul Amir Al Jamri.

The political dialogues which Hussain and Mushaima contributed in helped to reach to the Charter settlement (2001), where the king has invested that for issuing a new constitution. It was very crucial that Abdul Wahab Hussain and Hassan Mushaima called to boycott the 2002 elections, and then ascend their rhetoric in 2011, in a historic moment, turning towards the demand of turning Bahrain into a Republic.

All this reduces the ability of the moderate opposition and the authority to maneuver, where the Secretary-General of Al Wafaq Sheikh Ali Salman expressed this fact clearly when he said, “The life sentence on Hussain and Mushaima mean the Bahraini crisis to remain forever”. The

situation is even bleaker viewing the experience of Ayatollah Qassem and the Secretary General of Al Wefaq Ali Salman with the King's promises that was never implemented, whether those related to the report of Al Bandar or political reform through the parliament.

Conclusion

Based on the above, the following conclusions can be drawn:

First of all, an access to a settlement is probable, given that it happened in 1923, 1973 and 2001, and when participating in 2006 and 2010 elections. That means to expect that the authorities make concessions that might be considered a red line at the moment. And it also means the possibility of the political opposition societies to contribute in promoting, or understanding the unforeseen settlement, or maybe not even respond to it.

Second of all, the settlement is likely to be fragile or temporary (new Bahraini Oslo), rather than being agreed upon nationally. In the sense that it is difficult for the forthcoming settlement to be permanent historical, but I most likely would say that there will not be a settlement at all than reaching to a historic one.

In the event if the assumed solution was marked by sobriety and permanence, the chances of the authorities' setback would be very probable, as happened in 1973 to suspend the constitution, and in 2002 by issuing a new constitution without a referendum of the people.

Third of all, the current track does not give opportunity to say that the authorities and the opposition will be forced to provide historic concessions, where none of them can force the other to surrender.

Most likely the Cold War in Bahrain is to continue until after 2014, and it maybe be interspersed with periods of hot war, where the regime is hard to reform, and will not make substantial concessions in light of a movement that is unable to access the capital, and does not threaten the decision center.

The opposition has experienced and tasted the repression and the political maneuvers plenty of times, and its street still remains steadfast and adheres to its discourse in democratization. This means that the achievement of “Manama Document” which expresses the aspirations of the opposition in a constitutional kingdom will not be available. And the political game as existed before February 2011 cannot achieve stability and prosperity.

Fourth of all, the moderate opposition (Al Wafaq and Waad Societies, and their partners) are counting on being on the right direction in the history, but this is yet not enough to achieve a historic victory.

The classic parties model (such as Al Nahda of Tunisia, the Muslim Brotherhood Movement of Egypt, Al Wafaq in Bahrain, Justice and Development Party of Morocco, and the Iraqi Da’awa Party) though are opposition parties to dictator regimes for a long time, popularly rooted, institutionally powerful, its regional and international connections, but cannot achieve victory in stifling security conditions.

The “Muslim Brotherhood” has waited eighty years to reach to power thanks to the January 25 revolution, and so is Al Nahda movement that leads Troika in Tunisia after a revolution not expected by its leader Rashid Al Ghannouchi.

The Moroccan Justice and Development Party reached to the prime minister post thanks to a revolution, relatively responded by Mohammed VI

voluntarily. But the Iraqi Da'awa Party came to rule in Baghdad after the U.S. overthrowing Saddam Hussain.

Demanding Al Wefaq (or any other classic party) of achieving a revolutionary victory is like asking pilots to undergo a surgery, where none of the classic parties could ever achieve that. However its important achievement is to refuse to bow to the inevitable and advancing the conflict with cadres, money and political and legitimate cover.

If the classical political ocean does not achieve a historic victory on the dictatorial authorities, the Bahraini "Objection party" shall be in chain, and not owning the tools of change, as it did in February and March 2011⁽²⁹⁾.

Fifth of all, perhaps the model that is capable of fundamental change is the revolutionary movement, similar to that which toppled former Presidents Mubarak of Egypt and Tunisia's Ben Ali. And the one which was prevailed in Bahrain between February and March 2011, and its reactivity, aftershocks, effects and repercussions are still prominent.

The strength of the popular movement on the ground will be critical in the path that is currently being formed, and it may be ready for publicity in 2014. And the continuing popular movement may create a new storm at any moment along the lines of the events of 2011.

It is a moment, however, may lay ahead Bahrain for quite some time unless there was a conviction that even a revolution can be planned in advance. It is not true that a revolution is like an unpredictable earthquake, where I assume it happened can be synthesized through preparing the ground for its launch.

Sixth of all, all this does not mean, necessarily, the immunization of the opposition societies from going to a new "Oslo", for some objective con-

ditions, and other related to the prudent nature of the opposition. So that the current moderation is based originally on gradual settlements to reach to a better result, unless the opposition got an opportunity to pass a penalty kick to achieve an unexpected goal.

Nevertheless a new “Oslo” can be back-breaking for Al Wefaq, and more importantly, it may direct a blow for the popular movement, as the size of the Palestinian “Oslo” which overstrained “Fath” movement.

Seventh of all, the arrogance of the regime prevents it from reading the local and international variables, where the ego of the popular movement prevents it from expecting to break, even though it happened in the fifties and nineties, however this did not prevent its revival. This does help to say that the Bahraini land will continue to be a scene for tension that will only be solved through a solid and historical settlement based on a national consensus.

footnotes

1- Abbas Busafwan, Why Al Fateh Gathering is ashamed of being a pro party, Bahrain Mirror, October 2, 2011.

2- See Al-Wasat newspaper, 3rd of August 2012.

3- These elections witnessed limited popular participation amounted to about 17.5%, due to Al Wefaq and the overall opposition boycotting these elections.

4- Abbas Busafwan, Bahrain: “Fragile” Constitutional Amendments, boosting up the Crisis, and not resonating locally and internationally, Bahrain Centre for Studies in London BCSL, May 2012.

5- For the Crown initiative, see: Al-Wasat newspaper, March 13, 2012

6- <http://alwefaq.net/~alwefaq/index.php?show=news&action=article&id=6817>.

7 King Hamad was handed the responsibility of army building since he was appointed as crown prince in 1969, and his father Prince Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa gave him broad powers to do so. And he prevented the Prime Minister intervention in the affairs of the army, where Sheikh Khalifa monopolized political and economic decision since Bahrain's independence until the arrival of King Hamad rule in 1999. Sheikh Khalifa is no longer own an influential power in making decisions after that he was stripped of his actual powers.

- 8- Bahrain: Demographic Change and Exclusion Mechanisms <http://www.bcsl.org.uk/ar/documents/472-albander-report>
- 9- Abbas Busafwan, Bahrain: a dictatorship with a liberal face, Al-Akhbar newspaper, Beirut, 7 July 2012.
- 10- Abbas Busafwan, Geopolitics and Democracy in Bahrain, Al-Akhbar newspaper, Beirut, 20 October 2011.
- 11- Dr. Saeed Al Shihabi, Bahrain 1920-1971: A read in the British documents.
- 12- See: King and Prime Minister, the public clash, in: Abbas Busafwan, The Structure of Tyranny in Bahrain, A study in the Power Balances in the Ruling Family, the Bahrain Centre for Studies in London BCSL, 11 September 2012.
- 13- For more details about the project, see general questions about the reform of the labor market in the following link: <http://portal.lmra.bh/arabic/faq/category/2>.
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- 18- Dr. Essa Amin, trials of the anniversary of the National Union, a paper presented at Waad Society, 23rd December 2004.
- 19- See: Bassiouni recommendations, a recipe for the toppling of the regime, in: Abbas Busafwan, The Structure of Tyranny in Bahrain: A study in the Power Balances in the Ruling Family, the Bahraini Centre for Studies in London BCSL, 11 September 2012.
- 20- Dr. Essa Amin, the National Union in the British documents, a paper presented at the Democratic Forum, Sunday, October 24, 2004.
- 21- To know more on the backgrounds of independence, see: Yousif Makki, Bahrain’s Independence 1968-1971: the public position and the position of regional and international powers, Bahrain Centre for Studies in London BCSL, 14 August 2012.
- 22- See: A read in the motives of the fall of the Monarchy, in: Abbas Busafwan, The Structure of Tyranny in Bahrain A study in the Power Balances in the Ruling Family, the Bahrain Centre for Studies in London, 11 September 2012.
- 23- Reference with Al Wefaq ratio.....
- 24- For more on the problem of the electoral district distribution, see.....
- 25- For electoral bloc statistics, see the following link <http://www.alwasatnews.com/index.php?plugin=elections&act=read&id=117>.
- 26- see the following link http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-REw_X0xxM4.
- 27- Al Ayam Newspaper, 5th of February 2002.
- 28- Al Wasat Newspaper, 10th of October 2004.
- 29- See: Abbas Busafwan, the Bahraini opposition: the failure of the soft and hard opposition, Al Quds Al Arabi, London, 24 June 2012.

Reserchers



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Dr. Hamza Al Hassan: Ph.D. in Political Science (United Kingdom), is a researcher at the Gulf Issues Center (London), a political activist, and is interested in human rights. He published a collection of books, researches and readings. He is also the founder and former Chief-editor of the Oasis Quarter Journal on the Gulf, and the former Chief-editor of the issues of Saudi Arabia magazine.

Abbas Busafwan: is a Bahraini -based in London journalist and writer who specialize in political and parliamentary affairs. He was the former Chief Editor of Aswaq Economical Newspaper, the former Deputy Chief Editor in Al-Ayam Newspaper, and former Head of local news in Al-Wasat Newspaper. He has participated in dozens of meetings and seminars, and has published several working papers and studies on the situation in Bahrain.



About BCSL

There has been an increasing talk about the Kingdom of Bahrain and the political trends and challenges the country is facing since the increase of the political crisis started on February 14th 2011 when Bahrain emerged as a part of the so called “Arab Spring Revolts” that roiled Arab world in 2011.

This has raised fundamental questions about Bahrain’s sophisticated ever political issues, despite, that Bahrain is located and surrounded by, as described as, conservative and stabilized countries.

The international interest about Bahrain, and at the same time the lack of insightful readily available information, are behind the drive to establish, on the 3rd of May 2012, “The Bahrain Center for Studies in London (BCSL)”, as an independent research centre, aims to, study the case and status of the uprising in Bahrain, its influential factors and expected future affairs.

BCSL will prepare and publish researches and studies and will also organize debating sessions evolving around the domestic affairs of the Kingdom of Bahrain and its strategic aspects related to political, economic and security policies and including its relation at regional and international levels.

BCSL encourages discussions and dialogues in respect of Bahrain, and seeks to increase the interest of researchers, decision-makers, and actors in public opinion and motivate them to address the different aspects of the issues of Bahrain.

BCSL wishes that this will contribute to a sound understanding and insightful of Bahrain case.

BCSL interests:

BCSL is mainly concerned with all issues related to Bahrain within the context of its regional and the international relations and politics in particular that relates to the Gulf Corporation Council (GCC) states.

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1. Political Issues.
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7. The links and entanglements between Bahrain issues and other GCC States, in a regional and international context.
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For ideas of research, and if interested to write about one of the above listed topics, please communicate with the Head of BCSL through the following e-mail address: director@bcsl.org.uk

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