



CANVAS Country Profile Analysis

February 2013

SUBJECT: Analysis of the Kingdom of Bahrain

Introduction:

This analysis will unite the **Situation (I), Pillars of Support (II) Key Opposition Stakeholders and their allies (III), List of potential issues in the campaign (IV)** of a future or current possible campaign through CANVAS and Bahraini partner in the face of ongoing unrest. The two years of resistance against the monarchy have been blissfully dismissed by the international community due to media, internet regulation and lack of international coverage. Over forty percent of Bahrain's current population has been involved in political movements over the past two years. A large portion of the sources used to support this report are 'underground,' meaning that due to lack of reliable news outlets- blogs, videos, interviews and social media utilization from organizers and eye witnesses have been used as viable information to develop the core of this report. The goal of this report is to seek out, inform and organise tactical tools to discredit the monarch and legitimize the staggering revolution. It reviews the climate of Bahrain since 2011 with the Arab Spring branching to current events. It is intended to benefit CANVAS and its partners.

Summary of analysis:

Bahrain presents an interesting picture as an icon in the Gulf States, the Middle East and in global nonviolent protest. Bahrain is a small Gulf country, with a namely Muslim and Arab population, reliant on finance and oil, a former colony, a former emirate, a now kingdom and ruled by the same family for some 300 years. On February 14, 2013 it will mark the two year anniversary of the start of the revolution for democratic change in Bahrain. For everything that this Kingdom is, if this resistance stays adamant and is successful, it will change the entire game for millions of people living in oppressive nations in the Middle East and the power of nonviolent movements.

The current opposition is headed, officially, by the al-wafeq political party. In the background it is controlled and organized by the youth. In the past two years over forty percent of the population has been involved with the opposition protests and rallies against the government. There is an amazing turn out rate for these protests, one blogger states that in two years there have been rallies of some kind everyday by children, women and men with some reaching a turn out rate of 200,000 people. The country is small, with a population of under two million and thirty percent of which is under the age of thirty. This has been the driving force behind this revolution, the youth taking to the social media, email, youtube, skype and cellphone arena to organise and send the message about the oppression of their king.

King al-Khalifa has used the same ploy for the past fourteen years. In an interview with a social media mobilizer by an undercover journalist from BBC he concluded that King al-Khalifa and his family in parliament have exploited the majority Sunni and given benefits to the Shi'ia minority, allowing for support for the monarchy. Genuisly, he has also referred to the monarch as attempting to blind the people and give the "illusion of inclusion" through the '02 constitution, coalitions and concessions. It's an attempt that is being used by King Abdullah in Saudi Arabia,



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President Ahmadinejad of Iran and King Abdullah II in Jordan for minorities including women religious groups. The concept is to trick the minority into believing that they have a sway in government proceedings or their society is changing when in reality nothing is different other than their title, creating an "illusion of inclusion."

The obedience of the mass in Bahrain has proceeded since 1999. The period of blind following, however, is over. The opposition groups and majority of the Bahraini population has taken on task of trying to overthrow a King who rules like an authoritarian dictator. The society and politics has multiple layers of authority that make dissentegration difficult, to say in the least. However, with an already strong base for disobedience and ruthless fighting for democracy, it's only a matter of time before the King falls to his knees. The oppositions biggest problem is that of organization and support by third party members, if they can develop new relationships and network their cause, they will be an even stronger enemy to the monarch and his regime.

(I) SITUATION:

The Key Components of the Situation to date include: Political, Economic, Social & Opposition and International & Military.

A). Political

1. The politics and system of Bahrain was designed in a layer format in which the al-Khalifa family sits in the inner most core. The family has been ruling for 300 years, owns the majority of the country's oil wealth and belongs to the minority Sunni population. The layers of the government/kingdom hybrid starts from the outside superficial layer moving into the core. The spectrum of power begins on the outside with the least amount, moving inward to the highest concentration.

a.) The first layer of the government are the political associations because the gathering of political parties is banned. There are nine official associations that have been approved by the King. Five of which are pro government and majority Sunni, two of the associations also happen to be Islamist. There are four opposition associations that are "licensed" by the King, two are Islamist and the majority of the members are Shi'ia. The largest political associations however are actually parties and are not represented in parliament- they haven't been approved by the King. The four of them house 45% of the overall population's support. Their foremost support comes from the youth and each slogan is based around "freedom for Bahrain."

b.) After associations comes the National Assembly which is the two chambers of the majlis when combined. The lower house or the Council of Representatives was elected last in 2010. The opposition reported on election fraud. It's difficult to speculate if there was or wasn't fraud when the entire system is designed against the majority of the population. From the deputies elected 56% were from the Sunni minority of the population and 44% were Shi'ia majority. This representation isn't accurate of the people and the parties they choose to support. The overwhelming support for the opposition leads to the conclusion that the current system is an exploitation plot of the majority to benefit the minority elite. The representatives pass the minimum amount of legislation and for the most part don't perform much of any government role. Anything they pass or do may be vetoed by the King and declared 'unconstitutional.' The association that has the largest percentage of seats is the Shi'ia dominated al-wafaq (opposition) in the majlis lower house. They have been the main spokesmen for



the protestors. However the people taking to street have made it quite clear that they do not represent their wants and that they are much like any other government party trying to dominate the people.

c.) The second, upper chamber of the majilis is the next layer of government. It's name is the Consultative Council. They are given law making power and are appointed by the king. The Prime Minister is appointed by the king as well. The current and only Prime Minister in the history of Bahrain is the uncle of the king. There are limited roles that he may fulfill according to the constitution but they aren't regulated. He can be considered a double player for the upper house and as the king's inner circle.

d.) The Cabinet of ministers follows. They are all Sunni, all have a hefty pay out by the king and do exactly as he says. The majority of the deputies and ministers in the cabinet are members of the al-khalifa family and benefit from their 600 billion net worth. Their job is to keep the king just barely supported and to keep the main sectors of the economy afloat and prosperous.

e.) The next layer would be the Prime Minister, the head of the upper chamber and cabinet who is considered royalty. When the constitution was placed in 2002 he lost some power on paper but continues to abuse his power as much as he can. He and two other ministers have been told by the king since 2011 to keep the uprisings media coverage and development to absolute minimum. They have been relatively successful thus far, however a brake in this regulation would be huge for the movement.

f.) The military elite including generals, the King of Saudi Arabia and the King of UAE all have immense amount of power in Bahrain. One could argue that the two other gulf kings have more power in the country than King al-Khalifa. Their militaries enter into the country and are known as an "invited invasion" in which they crack down on the people, especially in the last two years. They create endless and ruthless check points and have a constant presence on the streets of the capital in the form of tanks and heavy weaponry.

g.) King al-Khalifa is the ultimate power holder in the kingdom- respectively of course. Some reporters have called him a "king who rules like a dictator" but, in some opinions, a classic ruthless king is the original dictator. He takes what he wants, doesn't care what the people want and will need the ultimate push and loss in order to step down. He is just like an Middle Ages style king and watching him be overthrown by a peaceful revolution without a single doubt would change the face of the Middle East.

2.) The judiciary system in Bahrain is a definite crack in the king's wall. One of the princesses, who is a police officer, has been convicted and tried for torturing doctors who were (and have been) tending to injured protestors in the Arab Spring and the continuous protests, because it hasn't really ended has it? It's interesting that the original article sourced for this information was released by the Bahraini government. It is difficult to say what their tactic is here over convicting a princess as a felon against the opposition. The one thing to be said however is that they state that the "so called pearl spring of Bahrain was put down and toppled immediately," yet there have been protests and continuous disobedience to the al-Khalifa family for two years post Arab Spring. This statement represents the government trying to cover this up out of embarrassment, which shows the progress of the opposition on the power that has been so blindly given to the king.



B.) Economic

1. Bahrain has enjoyed a twenty year growth period in their economy. It used to be solely based on oil exports but shifted towards finance and tourism. In the last year the economy grew 6% in each quarter, which is extremely high compared to the rest of the world.
2. Despite the growth in the country only a small percentage of the population will see the profits. The rural villages outside of the capital continuously suffer because of lack of government spending and discrimination.
3. Unemployment is high in Bahrain, particularly among the under thirty group. It is a negative for the people now but a big selling point to gathering following in the opposition because it is credited mainly to discrimination of Shi'ia people in the city. Government spending is very low in rural parts of the country which the opposition states that the lack of job development is another vision of how the King is exploiting the majority to help the minority.

C.) Social & Opposition

1. Bahrain has always had a deep social division between the Shi'ia and Sunni populations. It has become more prevalent in the last ten years with the new constitution where the discrimination is almost written on paper. The king offered Sunni families 2,000 USD if they supported the regime and joined in on the pro government movements. They receive favors and concessions constantly to have a base of support for the government. The protests in the last year have unfortunately brought this division to a new height because of the government crack downs there is a new animosity of the Sunni minority towards the protestors as well as an anti government, elite and bureaucracy movement among the opposition.
2. The king approved of four opposition associations but none of them represent the 30% under thirty sect of the population. Government discredited political parties are the ones who represent this large portion of the population and more. They are all youth and democracy based political parties that pulled their following to start the rallies in 2011, they then used social media and technology to organize, have a clear message conveyed (ending discrimination, freeing political prisoners and democracy), and march over fifty times in two years with a minimum of five thousand at a time and a maximum of two hundred thousand.
3. Socially the majority of the population is behind the opposition and has in some way or another in the past year been involved in the movement. The opposition hasn't indulged in violence and despite that they are using war tactics to survive, especially the young men under thirty that were the driving force behind the organization. They are being targeted by a secret police division from Saudi Arabia designed to dissolve political movements. They sweep through villages, hospitals and homes in the middle of the night looking for these young men. They move around the country frequently but are able to keep their presence in the movement strong by continuously organizing via the internet and phone.
4. The extra oppression and almost military rule of the country has pressured civilians which includes food shortage, mass unemployment- some of the highest in the Middle East, and heightened fear of disappearing,



being arrested as a political prisoner and torturing. These occurrences have become apart of the everyday lives of a lot of Bahrainis.

D.) International and Military

1. Bahrain is known for being supported and controlled by Saudi Arabia as well as the U.A.E. This has become more prevelant from a military stand point in the last year.

2. The two Gulf countries want this opposition movement to be crushed because the idea of having a free democractic government in the region is fearful to the obiedence of the people in other countries and their blind following of these families. The alternative fear is the alligence to Iran.

3. Bahrain houses the fifth fleet of the US navy base. The US is a supported of King al-Khalifa which makes losing the country to democracy a fear for the military advantage of being in the Gulf, close to their enemy and ever growing nuclear program in Iran.

(II) : KING AL-KHALIFA'S PILLARS OF SUPPORT –WHO PLAYS A MAJOR ROLE IN SUPPORTING THE ROYAL FAMILY

1. Military and Police (including Saudi Arabian and UAE military that is a large portion of Bahrain's defence)
2. The Upper House of the Majilis
3. The Cabinet of the government (part legistlation and part executive branch)
4. Bureaucracy
5. Religious Institution-Sunni
6. Upper Middle Class (professionals)
7. Media
8. Judiciary (although this one could be considered as a crack because of trials of officals and al-Khalifa family members)
9. Regional Support (Saudi Arabia and UAE)
10. International Support (The United States)

(III) KEY PLAYERS AND POTENTIAL ALLIES FOR THE OPPOISTION:

1. Unliscened Youth and Democratic political associations. These groups have a clear message as to what they want, a strong following that could be converted to the opposition's following. They have been trying to become liscened but have been unsucessful especially in the last couple years. The leaders of these associations have either been arrested or are being sought out by the masked secret police to arrest them. A lot of the websites for these associations have been shut down or are difficult to access. Haq movement is only in Arabic and does have some Islamic connections, so it's not worth contacting but they are a good reference for development of this opposition movement.

- Contact information: <http://vob.org/> , <http://bahrainonline.org/forum.php> , <http://www.shabiba.com/>

2. Democratic assembly and coalitions in the country have a strong pull and could be a support for the opposition. The positive point is that these groups have been illegally promoting their message and educating people about



democracy and why it is important for it to be implemented in Bahrain. They have shed light on the implications of the Arab Spring being successful and why this movement needs to keep going. Their message has been spread to women children and men, which is important for a successful non violent movement. They have a strong social media following and update system as well- the main driving force behind the current opposition.

-Contact information: <http://www.aldemokrati.org/> , <http://www.altaqadomi.com/>

3. Graffiti and Social Media Revolution art is a big society in Bahrain. They spread the message of the revolution quietly but powerfully in a disobedient manner by painting their message on the symbols of the king's oppression. These include government buildings and on major highways. In different parts of the country they have had what they call "shows." These are silent, unattended by the artists displays of their work in which different forms of aggression against the King come together in art. They keep relatively distanced from the leaders in the opposition because of the possibility of arrest.

-Contact information and article example: <http://www.disinfo.com/2012/02/bahrain-social-media-graffiti-art-and-revolution/> , <http://raymondharmon.com/ra/>

4. Bahrain is similar to every other Arab Spring nation in that bloggers are a big part of the "new society." One blogger talks about the Sunni vs. Shiite problem in Bahrain as well as the King himself and the why he is keeping control and holding on to a falling regime.

5. Khali al-Marzooq- he used to be in the council of representatives and is currently working with al-wafeq as a spokesman, however he doesn't believe in a future Islamic society for Bahrain. He is a strong hold that would connect the opposition to the association that has a large amount of power and actual communication with the King. He can be contacted through the al-wafeq website or facebook page

-Contact: <http://alwefaq.net/> , <http://www.facebook.com/AlwefaqNews>

6. Hassan Mushaima- He is the senior leader of the opposition and is calling for the people to demand an ousting of the monarchy.

LIST OF POTENTIAL OPPOSITION ALLIES TO BE CONSIDERED IN THE CAMPAIGN:

1. Shiite religious clerics, followers and institutions
2. Exiles- have contacts in Bahrain
3. Bloggers Bahrain
 - a. Khaled Cumber-
http://www.khalidbahrain.com/blog/?p=1097&utm_source=twitterfeed&utm_medium=twitter
 - b. Mohammed alMaskati- <http://about.me/maskati>
 - c. Ali al-Bahraini- https://twitter.com/ali_Bahraini
 - d. Chan'ad Bahraini- <http://chanad.posterous.com/>
4. Artists in Bahrain for the Revolution- large website featuring musicians, writers, artists, photographers for the revolution- <http://bahrainart.com/en/about-us>
 - a. Isa Alhamadi- photographer



- b. Children's perspective on human rights- through the website here <http://bahrainart.com/en/eventsprojects>
- c. Esra'a al Shafei- musician
- 5. Rural Bahraini population
- 6. Small Christian and Kurdish population (braking discrimination)
- 7. Local Council members from cities and towns
- 8. Local Coordination Committees for civil disobedience
- 9. Academics representing the American University in Manama
- 10. Students
- 11. Lower income families
- 12. There have 20 members of opposition and "pro government" parties that have left parliament- all of them are potential allies.

(M) POTENTIAL ISSUES WITH THE CAMPAIGN:

1. The presence of Islamists in the opposition associations makes it difficult to relate to multiple religions when people worry that an extreme group will dominate them. Al-Wafeq does have some Islamists in leadership positions, which is worrisome because of statements made by student oppositions claiming that this political association does not represent their views or goals for Bahrain in the future. If they stay in a position where they have the only say with the government, there will be a problem with the student and future oppositions.
2. Although it's not everything, it is important to stress that the al-Khalifa family has been ruling for hundreds of years and their relations with strong regional neighbors is strong and will not be taken down easily. When it comes down to black and white overthrowing the al-Khalifa family in their monarchy means challenging the House of Saud and the Emir in the UAE, which is dangerous for the economic well being of Bahrain.
3. There is a danger when it comes to the safety of these people getting involved in the movement. There is power in numbers, which is true for the people protesting as well as the amount of Saudi and Emirate military aid that will crush these protests brutally with out thinking twice. The hope is that it won't come to that but it is something to keep in mind that while the opposition has made some amazing strides and stayed strong in the last couple of years, the king has oppressed the country even more and will continue to do so.
4. Many leaders of opposition associations, illegal parties and of the youth movement have been arrested, disappeared or in a new development- had their citizenship stripped and deported then exiled to Saudi Arabia where they are likely to have been killed.
5. The lack of international media surrounding Bahrain could be seen as unhelpful but not a complete problem. Some of positives with this attention can be seen in Egypt or Syria where all eyes are on these regimes and for kingdom that relies so heavily on outside help this would be quite a blow because of the implications it would have on nations like Great Britain and the United States.



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