

**THE POLITICAL SYSTEM OF THE KINGDOM OF BAHRAIN  
AND ITS FOREIGN POLICY CIRCLES**

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **THE POLITICAL SYSTEM OF THE KINGDOM OF BAHRAIN AND ITS FOREIGN POLICY CIRCLES**

By  
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The turn of the century witnessed global technological, economic, and social transformations that have affected the nature of political systems and international relations in the Middle East. The Arab region faces many challenges to its political systems and must be able to manage crises and threats with consideration for the interests of the region. This study describes the evolution of the Bahrain political system, and analyzes its different levels and how they work in concert to respond to critical issues and crises and guide Bahrain's foreign policy. This study proposes following hypothesis:

**Bahrain's current government and political system can provide the proportionate response to future internal or external crises and effectively manage international pressures, leading to an increased capacity of the Bahrain political system to generate tenable solutions for the long term protection of its people and interests.**

Social, economic, and other crises experienced by Bahrain during the 21st Century are not only the result of internal factors, but also of international and regional interactions, which have a direct impact on the 741 square kilometer country's ability to participate in regional approaches to crises. The following points compiled from document research summarize the findings of this analysis.

First, the political system within Bahrain is a unique community stemming from the people's will, with the ability to face all crises, relying on support from its strong

relations with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Arab state, and other international countries.

Second, the Kingdom of Bahrain's foreign policy is committed to a set of constants based on mutual respect, its treaties, conventions, and provisions of international legitimacy, respect for the sovereignty of states, and non-interference in their internal affairs.<sup>1</sup>

Third, Bahrain maintains bilateral relations with other countries based on their location and configuration of their social ties, culture, and religion consideration of Bahrain's own natural resource.<sup>2</sup>

Fourth, the Kingdom of Bahrain emphasizes the need for regional and international cooperation as an appropriate response to contemporary political issues in the context of the effects and repercussions of globalization. In the spirit of cooperation, Bahrain chooses negotiation as a primary means for resolving problems and crises on all levels; internal, regional, and international. Last, the Kingdom of Bahrain continues to build relations between brotherly Arab countries and other friendly countries based on mutual interests.

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<sup>1</sup> Abu Amood

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

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# CHAPTER I

## GENERAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

### 1-1 Introduction

Historically, Bahrain has been a crossroads for civilizations. His Majesty, the King Sheikh Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa stated in his address to the Bahrain Supreme National Committee while drafting the national charter that Delmon was the meeting place of the Old World that extended from Somer in Mesopotamia, to Majan in Oman, and on. Bahrain was a center of free trade and a vital port of call. Even before Islam, Bahrain was known for its diversity of ideologies and beliefs a rare occurrence in ancient history. In such a climate of spiritual and intellectual tolerance, culture flourished and religions coexisted. Bahrain was one of the first countries to respond to the call of the Prophet Mohammed and willingly converted to Islam. As an early supporter of Islam, Bahrain then carried its banner from the banks of the Arabian Gulf and on to India.<sup>3</sup>

The physical geography of Bahrain offered a fertile environment for human activities like agriculture and trade. With such a prime geographic location and natural resources, Bahrain was often a target for invaders and fortune hunters. In the last quarter of the 18th century, under the rule of Al Khalifi, Ahmed El Fateh successfully defeated a foreign invasion. Following this victory, the people of Bahrain called upon Al Khalifi to unify the territories of Bahrain and Zubara, and assume rule of the country for a guarantee against foreign domination.

“The first act of public participation in governance in Bahrain was an oath of allegiance made by the people of Bahrain to Al-Khalifa. His rule ensured the country's security, maintained cohesion of the people, and secured political and economic stability that has been sustained by Bahrain into modern times”.<sup>4</sup>

“Sheikh Hamad bin Isa bin Ali Al Khalifa, who succeeded his father, introduced a modern education system, public administration, municipal facilities, and enacted laws

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<sup>3</sup> National Action Charter of the Kingdom of Bahrain, 2002

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

and legislation. Thus, the country was able to develop and transform the oil industry in Bahrain in 1932. When Sheikh Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa came to power in Bahrain, the ravages of the World War II created an economic crisis as well as international and regional instability in the Arabian Gulf region. Bahrain overcame its economic crisis in through the cohesion and dedication of the people in support of Al Khalifa, and has continued to develop and build a modern state. Bahrain's institutions and facilities has been vital to consolidate national unity and cohesion overall between the people and leadership despite foreign pressures".<sup>5</sup>

"The reign of the Sheikh Isa Bin Salman era was full of cultural and political achievements. He established the independent state of Bahrain, created modern institutions, and declared independence from foreign claims. A United Nations fact-finding commission confirmed that the entire people of Bahrain were unequivocally committed to its Arab identity, rejecting foreign greed and interventions. They renewed their oath of allegiance to Bahrain Sheikh Isa bin Salman. His Highness (HH) responds by issuing the first constitution of Bahrain in 1973, which laid the foundations and principles of democratic life and constitutional rule of law."<sup>6</sup>

"Under His Majesty the King, Bahrain has witnessed a vigorous leap forward to further democracy in response to the people's aspiration to become a modern state that continues to enjoy security, stability, and prosperity a state where constitutional institutions are capable of meeting the aspirations of both leadership and the Bahrain people, where justice and rule of law reign supreme can be realized. At this historic juncture, the people of Bahrain are resolved to have a shining tomorrow. They stand for

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> National Action Charter of the Kingdom of Bahrain, 2002



freedom, equality, justice, democracy, and participation in governance by all. The state of Bahrain gained political independence through a joint effort of both wise leadership and a faithful people. Together, they have preserved its unity and territorial integrity. Its land and territorial waters are neither alienable nor subject to compromise in any way, under any circumstances. This is expressly reflected by Article I of the Constitution of Bahrain.”<sup>7</sup>

Bahrain is an active member of the international Islamic and Arab communities. It firmly adheres to its leading role as one of the founding members of the GCC and its commitment to work together with member states within the system to meet the goals of the people of Bahrain and surrounding regions. Bahrain established the foundations of its modern state based on a democratic approach, constitutional institutions, and the rule of law. Since Bahrain’s independence, it has adhered to the principles of respect for sovereignty and reciprocity.

## **1-2 Problem of the Study**

This study focuses on the challenges faced by Bahrain’s government and the manner in which Bahrain’s political system has evolved to craft its foreign policy to manage crises resulting from dramatic changes in world political thought and the balance of power in the Arab region. The characteristics of Bahrain’s political system and foreign policy directly impact its international relations and its capabilities to respond to threats and crises.

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<sup>7</sup> Constitution of the Kingdom of Bahrain, 2002

### **1-3 Importance of the Study**

The Kingdom of Bahrain is empowered with a constitutional framework which guides Bahrain's response to local, regional, and international developments. Bahrain plays an active role in political arenas within the Arab, Islamic, and international tiers, facing the onset of rapid changes to its international relations while maintaining its sovereign institutions that are based on justice, equality, and care for citizens' rights. Building on Bahrain's experience in political and economic realm over the last three decades, it must cope with new political, economic, and social developments as well as future challenges. "It manifests its unwavering belief in its role as one of the constituents of the GCC as well as its resolve to work closely with other brotherly member states to further galvanize the GCC system to meet the aspirations of its peoples."<sup>8</sup>

### **1-4 Objectives of the Study**

This study aims to:

1. Define the current political system in Bahrain and its evolution from inception in the 18th Century.
2. Define the characteristics and objectives of the political system and Bahrain government and its management tools.
3. Define foreign policy circles of the Kingdom of Bahrain and their impact on the political system of Bahrain from the perspective of their interests and mutual benefit.
4. Analyze the role of Bahrain's foreign policy in domestic and social issues, human rights, and their compatibility with the forces of civil society.

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<sup>8</sup> National Action Charter of the Kingdom of Bahrain, 2002

## **1-5 Study Hypotheses**

The study hypothesizes key on the following premises:

1. The 21st century crises that face Bahrain's political system are not of internal origin, but are the result of international and regional interactions.
2. The political system is a unique community stemming from the outpouring of honesty and ability to face all crises and developments under the umbrella of the Gulf and Arab political organizations on regional and international levels.
3. The foreign policy of the Kingdom of Bahrain is committed to a set of constants based on mutual respect, treaties, conventions, and the provisions of international legitimacy and respect for the sovereignty of states, and non-interference in internal affairs.
4. Bahrain's foreign policy for bilateral relations between Bahrain and other countries takes into account many considerations such as distance from natural resources of Bahrain, and the other countries configurations of social ties, both cultural and religious.
5. The need for regional and international cooperation provides Bahrain the opportunity to deal with the phenomena and political issues in the context of globalization and its implications.
6. The Kingdom of Bahrain emphasizes negotiation as a basis to resolve all problems and crises within its framework in internal, regional, and international levels.

7. The Kingdom of Bahrain seeks to build relations between its brotherly Arab countries and other friendly countries, taking into account their mutual common interests.

## **1-6 Methodology of the Study**

This study uses three methodologies. First, the analytical approach which relies on the analysis of political events in a scientific method to understand the various systems. Second, The Historical Method is used to view political events that have occurred to reach a more accurate and deeper understanding. This study aims to understand the evolution of the political system through the different Bahraini time periods. The third and final approach used is that of systems analysis. The systems analysis approach is used in the work of political science. David Easton described the features and limitations of public infrastructure as the political interactions within the community forming behaviors that can be separated from the rest of analytical systems.<sup>9</sup> It is easy to distinguish between the basic variables within the system and surrounding environment variables that affect it. In this study, the system will examine a set of interrelated elements that function on a regular basis to observe their interaction and interdependence, thus demonstrating how the political system becomes a state of communication between the parts. This approach will be used to observe the components of this system and their strengths and weaknesses in the analysis of the Arab regional order.

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<sup>9</sup> al-Azzam, 1988

## 1-7 Terms and Definitions of the Study

1. **Concept** A word expressing a range of issues and the various chapters of knowledge that helps to understand a general idea; a selection of certain facts, which in the context of theoretical thought is not only used to organize the available information, but is used to ask new questions of significance.
2. **System** A term that includes the rules and trends of public participation of all states, specifically international relations in context of this study; the abstract concept in examining the patterns and intensity levels; the interactions between the many players who make up elements of the system or its parts on the international scene.
3. **Regional Levels** A term for the geographical area inhabited by political units in the system referring to regionalism in international relations concentrating on states under a legal political organization of connections between the parties, and the juxtaposition of language, race, history, culture, and links to economic and political interests. The broader definition of the concept of the regional system is a set of relationships and interactions between many countries that are located in one geographical region, common characteristics, and subject to the rules and laws regularly inspiring loyalty to a higher authority.
4. **The Arab Regional System** This term appeared at the end of the Arab system of the Ottoman rule. It also launched the Western terms, “Middle East” or “Middle Eastern,” used to describe the same region, and are highly controversial. There is broad difference in terms of political implications and concepts between these terms for the same geographical area. Arab regional order emerged as a result of the

interaction of several factors, especially the peoples who lived for centuries in the territory. They share similar cultures, wisdom, foods, and are united in language, religion, and history. This is what distinguishes its system. Its emergence was not just because its states gained or were promised independence, or that they might unite to face imminent danger. Herein is the risk of Israel's existence.

5. **New World System** The concept of the global system is a more comprehensive concept alongside the nation-state. There are other actors in international relations: There are the state government and non-governmental organizations, and multinational corporations that are outside the state, all of which potentially impact the world; thus the international system is part of the global system. The current international system cannot be considered a new international order, but merely a transitional arrangement of the post-Cold War. Despite witnessing a new world order of concrete changes in the international arena, it is still imbued with much of the features and characteristics of the previous system. But in reality, there are many developments associated with the functions of the system that demonstrate that we are already at a new world order. The world is witnessing structural transformations, such as the retreat of socialism, and the disappearance of the Second World, the collapse of political and economic liberalism, and the application of a multi-political and free market economy, as well as the system of privatization. There are those who consider the term new, as described by the current World Order, does not intend to resolve the dilemmas of the emerging problems in accordance with rules prepared by the United Nations Charter. As a result of the current rules of the rapid, current

global changes, we find that the proper designation for what the world is witnessing today is closer to the New World Order.

6. **Political Crisis** Literature is full of international relations and political crisis. Many of these intellectual efforts attempt to give a precise definition of crisis. In the dictionary of political terms, an international crisis is a term used to denote the significant disruption in the normal relations between sovereign states because of its inability to resolve an existing dispute between them, and that the crisis is an activity to threaten the state's existence or interests. Oran Jonk “defines the political crisis as a series of events leading to the instability of the international system, or in which subsidiary bodies are coordinated by unusual increase of violence.”<sup>10</sup> Coral Bell’s definition of crisis is, “the turning points of decision points in relations between states when conflicts rise to a level which threatens to transform the nature of relationship”,<sup>11</sup> such as the transition from peace to war in the normal relations between states, the disintegration of alliance cohesion, and fissures in the international organization. Crisis can be seen as a situation that combines surprise, danger, and uncertainty.
7. **Management of International Crises** Studies on currency crisis management are varied in their approach to the various dimensions of this administration and the means or tools used. This diversity has led to the concept of crisis management, and there is some uncertainty about what determines the concept of crisis management. Moreover, the application of general principles in a crisis may differ from the results applied to specific, unique, and distinctive situation of any new crisis.

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<sup>10</sup> Beeson, 2002

<sup>11</sup> Richardson, 1994

8. **Foreign Policy** Foreign policy can be defined as the set of actions and reactions and behavioral activities by the state in the international environment to achieve its objectives with the available means.
9. **Foreign Policy Goal** The target is governed by the intentions and motives that are selected with extreme precision by the political decision maker in the state and developed through resolutions, programs, and plans to transfer its vision into material ends. It is directed to other international units, which perform the same role.



## CHAPTER II

### BAHRAIN'S POLITICAL SYSTEM IN LIGHT OF THE EVOLUTION AND THE EMERGENCE OF POLITICS

#### 2-1 What is the Science of Politics and Its Inception?

When we want to study or define and explain the political reality of a particular country, or want to understand a certain political system, we must get closer to accurately understand the concept of its politics as a science in itself, how it evolved and grew, and why. This is one definition of politics. The science of politics is based on the concept that man by nature is a social animal and cannot live alone. When the presence of interactions between the practices of human beings as a society developed, the presence of a particular system evolved to manage these interactions in a specific way. These interactions were multifaceted, becoming a concept of policy. Policies have varied meaning in different societies. Some view policies with a negative outlook as a means to gain power, wealth, prestige, and self-interest, taking away from the interests of people and their rights. Others view policy with a positive outlook. They are interested in the public good, solving the problems of people, and bringing happiness and prosperity to them. In addition to Aristotle's works on ethics, which address the individual, he addressed the concept of the city in his work entitled, "Politics."<sup>12</sup>

"Aristotle's conception of the city is organic, and he is considered one of the first to conceive of the city in this manner. Aristotle considered the city to be a natural community. Moreover, he considered the city to be prior to the family which in turn is prior to the individual, i.e., last in the order of becoming, but first in the order of being. He is also famous for his statement that 'man is by nature a political animal.' Aristotle conceived of politics as being like an organism rather than like a machine, and as a collection of parts none of which can exist without the others."<sup>13</sup>

"It should be noted that the modern understanding of a political community is that of the state. However, the state was foreign to Aristotle. He referred to political

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<sup>12</sup> Weisberg, 1983.

<sup>13</sup> Ebenstein and Ebenstein, 2002

communities as cities. Aristotle understood a city as a political partnership.

Subsequently, a city is created not to avoid injustice or for economic stability, but rather to live a good life. The political partnership must be regarded, therefore, as being for the sake of noble actions, not for the sake of living together. This can be distinguished from the social contract theory which individuals leave the state of nature because of ‘fear of violent death’ or its inconveniences.”<sup>14</sup>

## **2-2 The Political System of the Kingdom of Bahrain**

“For centuries, ever since the Al-Khalifa family assumed rule of the country, Bahraini society has had a unique relationship between the ruler and the people. This has been one of cohesion, direct contact, and mutual understanding in the interest of both individuals and the country. True to this tradition, the people of Bahrain now have resolved that the salient features of the government system in the country should be as follows.”<sup>15</sup>

### **1. The King**

“The system of government in Bahrain is a constitutional monarchy as prescribed by the constitution and the Amiri Decree on succession. The King is the head of state. His person is inviolable. He is the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, the symbol of national stability, and the fulcrum of the government system of the Kingdom of Bahrain. The King exercises his powers through ministers who are accountable to him. He

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<sup>14</sup> Polanyi, 1971

<sup>15</sup> Council of Representatives, Bahrain 2002

appoints and relieves officers to premiership and ministerial posts within his powers as prescribed by the constitution.”<sup>16</sup>

## **2. Constitutional Form of the State**

Bahrain joins democratic constitutional monarchies with a view to meeting its peoples’ aspirations to further progress. It has assumed its full fledged role as a state both in terms of international relations and sovereign institutions based on equality of all citizens, common good and national unity.<sup>17</sup> H.M. the King is vested in freedom for all people of his kingdom, not just for specific classes of citizens. He has guaranteed this in the form of a constitution, through which Bahrain citizens today enjoy freedom and democracy.

## **3. Islamic Shari ‘a and Legislation**

Islam is the religion of the Kingdom. The legal system of Bahrain is a dual system. One is based on an ordinary court system based on secular laws and settles commercial, civil, and criminal cases, as well as cases involving disputes related to non-Muslims. The Shari ‘a has jurisdiction over issues related to Muslims, both Bahraini and non-Bahraini. According to the Constitution, the Islamic Shari ‘a is a principal source for legislation. The Constitution also stipulated that it guarantees the independence of the judiciary. No authority can prevail over the judgment of a judge.<sup>18</sup> The Shari ‘a provides the guidance that Bahraini laws require its citizens to live by. It applies its principles evenly to all citizens.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> The Constitution 2002

<sup>18</sup> Ibid

#### **4. People as the Source of All Powers**

The Political system of the Kingdom of Bahrain is a democracy where all powers are vested with the people. Sovereignty is exercised as prescribed by the constitution.<sup>19</sup> This was the illustrious vision of H.M the King when he gave the National Action Charter to the people of Bahrain to empower them in governing their country.

#### **5. Separation of Powers**

“To maintain a stable democracy, the government system is based on a system of checks and balances; i.e., the separation and cooperation among the legislature, the executive, and the judiciary as set forth in the constitution. H.M the King is at the helm of the three powers.”<sup>20</sup> The ability to make and pass legislation, however, remains with the National Assembly of Bahrain. In this system, power is shared between the Judicial Council, Council of Ministers, and the Parliament and Shora Council, the three ruling powers in the Kingdom of Bahrain. None has the power to take control of the other and all must be in agreement to pass laws. This ensures freedom and equal opportunity to all the Bahraini people.

#### **6. Rule of Law and Independence of the Judiciary**

“Government in the Kingdom of Bahrain is based on the rule of law. The independence and immunity of the judiciary are two key guarantees for protecting rights and freedom. The state completes the judicial system as prescribed in the constitution. It specifies the judicial authority vested with the jurisdiction over disputes as to whether a

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid

<sup>20</sup> Constitution 2002

given law or executive regulations are consistent with the constitution. The state specifies a judicial authority vested with the jurisdiction of the Attorney General.”<sup>21</sup>

## **7. People's Right to Participation in Public Affairs**

“Citizens, men and women alike, have the right to participate in public affairs and political rights including suffrage and the right to contest as prescribed by law.”<sup>22</sup>

Today, all Bahrain citizens and others enjoy the right to peaceful assembly to seek redress to problems or express opinions. Free press and free speech are guaranteed by the Bahraini constitution to everyone, so they can express their needs. Everyone has the right to hold opinions without interference from anyone or the government, as well as the right to seek or receive opinions and ideas of all kinds either orally, in writing, in the form of art, or any other media.

## **2-3 Elements of the State**

### **1. People**

“A state is fundamentally comprised of a permanent population over which it exercises its unlimited authority. The nature of the state depends upon the quality and quantity of its population. No ideal size of population can be stated. Aristotle stated "A population must be large enough to be self-sufficient, but small enough to be well-governed. A good population makes a good state; a bad one, a bad state.”<sup>23</sup> People are the human element of the state. They comprise the community in a state of equality, regardless of differences that exist among them in terms of race, color, religion, or

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<sup>21</sup> National Action Charter of the Kingdom of Bahrain, 2002

<sup>22</sup> Ibid

<sup>23</sup> BlurtIt, n.d.

origin, and are referred to as the people, the nationals of the state. It is not necessary to have a specific number of people within the composition of the state. There are many countries where the numbers of its members are only a few, while others are populated with more than a billion people. The people need to have a sense of loyalty and a feeling of belonging to the state. In return, the state's constitution reciprocates this loyalty by guaranteeing protection to its citizens equally from racism or preference on the basis of color, religion, or origin. This link between the state and its people is the basis of the concept of citizenship. States with a large populace have the advantage of access to greater military and economic power while smaller states are more vulnerable to threats of attack because of their smaller size and limited resources. To secure economic and security stability throughout the region, the states can negotiate strategic agreements as a peaceful option to avoid exploitation of resources and protect borders. The proportion of population to the land mass of the state is important to its economic status. A less dense population is better able to accommodate its resources, and experiences less economic problems. When the population of a country demands a higher standard of living, more social programs, and a higher national income that exceed its economic resources, it weakens the state and disturbs its economic stability. Such a situation attracts foreign private capital to maintain economic progress to meet the demands of the population density. The population density is considered a resource of the state, providing economic and military strength, and moral balance. The homogeneity by the population in any country affects the national unity, including aspects of intellectualism, ideology, and economics. Aristotle believed that citizenship is a privilege and honor of attention in the state, and is an important element of the population in the state's formation and survival.

## **2. Territory**

“A state cannot exist without territory. Territory refers to land, surrounding water up to three nautical miles, as well as the air above the land and water. Nomadic settlements do not possess any permanent territory. Hence, they cannot be called a state.”<sup>24</sup> Territory is a fixed place which is the permanent home of the people of a state, including the land area of the Earth's surface and directly beneath it; areas of water made up of seas, rivers, and territorial waters adjacent to the state; and the air space above it. The national unity is an important element of a region's territory. The interdependence of the people of a region upon a constitutional authority is an important element in the economic and political stability, thereby securing the means to live comfortably aside one another. The cohesion between members of a particular community living on a particular piece of land is dependent upon the leadership of the political system and is based on the investment of the capacities of natural and human resources in the territory.

## **3. The Political System**

“Government is a body of a group of people who administer the population and are meant to express the will of the state. The government has limited power, as opposed to the state's unlimited authority. The government is subject to change and is bound to obey the will of the people as well as state. To equate the government with state is a dangerous, yet common mistake.”<sup>25</sup> One of the pillars of the state by which the state imposes its authority, It is usually compared to the legal system, economic system, cultural system, and other social systems. It is different from them, and can be generally defined on a spectrum from left, e.g. communism, to the right, e.g. fascism. However,

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<sup>24</sup> BlurtIt, n.d.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid

this is a very simplified view of a much more complex system of categories involving the views: who should have authority, how religious questions should be handled, and what the government's influence on its people and economy should be. A political system is one that ensures the maintaining of order and sanity in the society and at the same time makes it possible for some other institutions to also have their grievances and complaints put across in the course of social existence.”<sup>26</sup> His Majesty the King is a good example of the Bahraini democratic experiment, which has been positively received by the international community. The Bahraini political system is a source of pride for all Bahraini people. It stands as a symbol of their national unity and loyalty to the country. A single word, loyalty, binds all Bahraini people together without regard to language, color, or religion. This feeling of loyalty and obedience to this blessed land of national unity derives its strength from the fact that is a model political system based upon the immutable principles of democracy. Its framework ensures stability and renewable vitality in accordance with regional and international developments.

#### **4. Sovereignty**

“Sovereignty is the soul of a state. It implies that the state is independent from external interference, and can maintain its integrity within itself.”<sup>27</sup> “Sovereignty is the quality of having supreme, independent authority over a territory. It can be found in a power to rule and make law that rests on a political fact for which no purely legal explanation can be provided. The concept has been discussed, debated, and questioned throughout history, from the time of the Romans through to the present day, although it has changed in its definition, concept, and application throughout, especially during the

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<sup>26</sup> Wikipedia. *Political System*, 2010

<sup>27</sup> BlurIt, n.d.



Age of Enlightenment. The current notion of state sovereignty was laid down in the Treaty of Westphalia 1648, which, in relation to states, codified the basic principles of territorial integrity, border inviolability, and supremacy of the state rather than the Church. A sovereign is a supreme lawmaking authority.”<sup>28</sup> “Sovereignty may mean different things to different people living in different cultures, throughout different periods, who practice different specialized or professional competences. It may hold different nuanced meanings for jurisprudence, political science, history, philosophy, and other related fields. Indeed, there are at least 13 different overlapping meanings of the term sovereignty.”<sup>29</sup> For example, sovereignty may refer to:

- 1) Sovereignty as a personalized monarch (real or ritualized).<sup>30</sup>
- 2) Sovereignty as a symbol for absolute, unlimited control or power.<sup>31</sup>
- 3) Sovereignty as a symbol of political legitimacy.<sup>32</sup>
- 4) Sovereignty as a symbol of political authority.<sup>33</sup>
- 5) Sovereignty as a symbol of self-determined, national independence.<sup>34</sup>
- 6) Sovereignty as a symbol of governance and constitutional order.<sup>35</sup>
- 7) Sovereignty as a symbol of the juridical personality of Sovereign Equality.<sup>36</sup>
- 8) Sovereignty as a symbol of recognition.<sup>37</sup>
- 9) Sovereignty as a formal unit of legal system.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Wikipedia. *Sovereignty*, 2010

<sup>29</sup> Nagan and Hammer, 2004

<sup>30</sup> Hart, 1961

<sup>31</sup> Bodin, 1576

<sup>32</sup> Thomas, 1985

<sup>33</sup> Black and Garner, 1996

<sup>34</sup> Bradlow and Grossman, 1993

<sup>35</sup> Fowler and Bunck, 1995

<sup>36</sup> Kelson, n.d.

<sup>37</sup> Brownlie, 1990

<sup>38</sup> Hart, 1961

## **2-4 Properties and the Basis of the Political System in Bahrain**

National, regional, and international affiliations are features of any political system. The extent of the impact of those affiliations is uniquely characteristic to the people of the state. First is the common heritage of political systems. The common heritage is in the general framework of political systems and the movement of the state and organization, such as the presence of three powers of the state: the legislative, judiciary, and executive branches. State institutions such as political socialization are at the forefront of important family, education, and employment issues, and participate in the political systems of the main elements of the state such as safeguarding national security and stability, harmony and cohesion among the people and development.<sup>39</sup>

Second, belonging to the Arab and Islamic civilization gives identity and parameters for the Bahrain political system. “Since achieving independence in 1971, Bahrain has pursued a policy of close consultation with neighboring states. Bahrain became a member of the United Nations and the Arab League in 1971. In 1981, it joined its five neighbors - Saudi Arabia, Oman, Kuwait, the U.A.E., and Qatar - to form the strategic Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Bahrain has complied with GCC efforts steps to coordinate economic development and defense and security planning. In December 1994, for example, Bahrain concurred with the GCC decision to drop secondary and tertiary boycotts against Israel.”<sup>40</sup>

“The Kingdom of Bahrain has played an active role in political arenas within Arab, Islamic and international tiers. It has manifested its unwavering belief in its role as one of the constituents of the Gulf Cooperation Council as well as its resolve to work closely

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<sup>39</sup> Jalal, Bahrain's Political System Reform in the Framework of Its Identity in 2007

<sup>40</sup> Department of State, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, 2010

with other brotherly member states to further galvanize the GCC system to meet the aspirations of its peoples.”<sup>41</sup>

Article (2) of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bahrain maintains the state religion is Islam, and the Islamic Shari is the source of legislation. The institutions of civil society play a significant role in the rehabilitation of community members and also a similar role to the state in terms of media education. In this regard, the ideological function has many forms and is not confined only to Islamic countries, but extends to most other political systems.<sup>42</sup>

Third, belonging to the Gulf Environment, which is a more specific affiliation for Bahrain, provides additional foundation for the Bahrain political system. This affiliation is a common bond between the political regimes in the GCC, many which were former colonies of Great Britain, which dominated the region for a long period of time. It is characterized by semi-open joint efforts of foreign presence in the region, and its methods of management and coordination within the Secretariat of the GCC, which has a dramatic impact on the system political in these countries.<sup>43</sup>

Finally, the inherent characteristics of Bahrain help define its unique political system. Bahrain’s long history and its evolution of its political system over the last three centuries created a common culture of the people in Bahrain. Its development makes Bahrain different from other countries in the GCC in terms of education and leadership in political and social activity and openness to the outside world economically, despite limited resources and small land area and high population density.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> National Action Charter of the Kingdom of Bahrain, 2002

<sup>42</sup> Jalal, Bahrain's Political System Reform in the Framework of Its Identity in 2007, n.d.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid

<sup>44</sup> Jalal, Bahrain's Political System Reform in the Framework of Its Identity in 2007, n.d.

## **2-5 Platforms for the Political System in Bahrain**

1. Every Bahraini citizen should contemplate and seek the identity of Bahrain. All Bahrainis are encouraged to focus on their loyalty to the Kingdom, to put away small grievances from the past, and walk side by side with H.M. the King in his vision for democracy.
2. For more than two centuries, Bahrain has been dedicated to maintaining the country's resources, development of the state and welfare of the people, and its unification and interactions. It must be maintained based on these premises without any prejudice because it represents the cord that ties all communities, affiliations, and groups of society together.<sup>45</sup>
3. Building a strong political system is necessary for Bahrain to provide personal expression and integrity of the people, and to deal firmly and strongly with anyone who tries to deviate from the agreed rules under the Charter and the Constitution of the people.

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid

**CHAPTER III**  
**FOREIGN POLICY OF THE KINGDOM OF BAHRAIN**  
**AND SERVICES OF INTEREST**

**3-1 Definition of Foreign Policy in General**

Foreign policy is a set of actions and reactions, and behavioral activities of the state in the international environment to achieve its goals by available means. It includes behaviors associated with the goals that are associated the impact of those policies, which includes legal and constitutional decisions; i.e., the state's external behavior is representative of the self in response to a specific external stimulus in the form of cooperative behavior.

**3-2 Variables That Affect Foreign Policy**

The factors that contribute to making the external behavior of the state are divided into two parts:

**1. Fixed Combination of Factors**

**1) Geographical Factor.**

Geography plays a clear role in the formulation of the strategic thinking of the political decision makers, and determines the kind of political behavior commensurate with its intrinsic properties, which is the geographical area and terrain. Natural resources, population, and manpower play an important role in the formulation and development of security plans.<sup>46</sup> Bahrain is located virtually in the middle of the Persian Gulf has placed it in the midst of some of the greatest civilizations this world has

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<sup>46</sup> Abu Amood

known. It's proximity to other civilizations and cultures enable Bahrain to experience and understand new concepts.

## **2) Natural Resources**

Resources play an important role in promoting regional and international positions. Natural resources contribute to building economic strength, which impacts the behavior and formulation of foreign policy, including the carrot and stick policy. States with poor natural resource have less impact and weight in the international system.<sup>47</sup> Bahrain has a shortage of natural resources such as petroleum, gas, and water, but Bahrain maintains its reputation in the international community as developed country. Bahrain seeks additional natural resources and power from its brotherly and friendly neighbors, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, by exchanging goods for services. While Bahrain has limited oil reserves compared to some other Arab states, it has the largest oil refinery in the Middle East. For example, most of Bahrain's daily oil refining capacity comes from Saudi Arabia. By agreement, Bahrain also receives half of the net output and revenues from Saudi Arabia's Abu Sa'afa offshore oilfield.<sup>48</sup>

## **3) The Military Factor**

This variable plays an important role in the level of the foreign policy as when a country is militarily strong, it is characterized by a high capacity to achieve foreign policy objectives and protect its vital interests.<sup>49</sup> Bahrain enjoys good relations with the GCC and other Arab States, providing a promise of support and security in the face of external threats. This also sends a signal to any aggressors that Bahrain is not a small country to be easily taken over when it has its allied brothers and friends. Bahrain and

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<sup>47</sup> Abu Amood

<sup>48</sup> Department of State, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs 2010

<sup>49</sup> Abu Amood

the United States enjoy good international relations and military cooperation. Bahrain relies upon the United States as a threat deterrent, particularly in situations such as the Iran nuclear program, which threatens to upset the balance of power throughout the Arab region.

#### **4) The Economic Factor.**

Bahrain is focused on developing Islamic banks and financial institutions and services, and competes on an international scale with Malaysia as a worldwide financial center. The financial sector contributes 30 percent to Bahrain's Gross Domestic Production.<sup>50</sup> "Petroleum production and refining account for over 60 per cent of Bahrain's export receipts, over 70 per cent of government earnings, and 11 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), underpinning Bahrain's robust growth of the economy in recent years."<sup>51</sup>

#### **5) The Industrial Factor.**

While Bahrain's natural resources are limited, it has become a regional financial and business center. International financial institutions operate in Bahrain, both offshore and onshore. Bahrain is developing other service industries such as information technology, healthcare, and education. Bahrain's revenues remain largely dependent upon the oil industry. Aluminum is Bahrain's second biggest export after oil and gas. The United States-Bahrain Free Trade Agreement that was signed 2004, is also generating increased U.S. commercial interest in Bahrain. Instead of being dependent upon oil, Bahrain has focused on its financial and manufacturing areas to help create a solid economy to

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<sup>50</sup> Department of State, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs 2010

<sup>51</sup> Economy Watch. n.d.

ensure a higher standard of living for Bahraini citizens, helping ensure a life of peace and prosperity.<sup>52</sup>

## **2. The Changing Factors**

Factors that impact the relative stability include the following:

### **1) The Population**

This is an important variable in the composition of the state; populations constitute the manpower needed to sustain a military force. Its strength commensurate with the density of the country's human population is important in international relations. As mentioned before, a state cannot be measured the size of its population, but a large population can work to the benefit of the state if it has adequate resources to reach self-sufficiency. On the other hand, a state with small number of population and rich resources can bring the attention of the big state to influence.

“Bahrain is one of the most densely populated countries in the world; about 89% of the population lives in the two principal cities of Manama and Al Muharraq. Approximately 66% of the indigenous population is originally from the Arabian Peninsula.”<sup>53</sup>

### **2) The Political System**

This factor plays an integral part in directing foreign policy for the existing system in the state. It is impacted by public opinion and the political decision makers in the country. Bahrain's political system enjoys strong support of its citizens. Bahrain political system is highly respected for its support of human rights and how it serves as a progressive force in the region. Bahrain has established diplomatic relations with other

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<sup>52</sup> Department of State, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs 2010

<sup>53</sup> Ibid



countries based mainly on unity and trust, and by supporting economic or cultural cooperation that benefits all.

### **3) Social Cohesion**

The elements of homogeneity, interdependence, and the features and characteristics of the society influence the behavior of political decision makers. The people of Bahrain share a common bond of traditions, culture, and history. Their language, religion, art, and food are some of the fundamental features that create a sense of solidarity as a nation, and are reflected by their loyalty to the kingdom.

### **4) Political Parties**

Political parties influence the political decision makers of the state, depending on the political system cycle and the impact of the parties, according to ideologies and convictions of certain intellectuals. Going back to the government of Sheikh Isa bin Salman, Bahrain's first Parliament was established in 1973 with 44 members; 14 were named by the government. This National Assembly was not empowered with legislative powers. In 1974, the government issued a security law, which sparked a political crisis between members of the assembly and the government. When Sheikh Hamad succeeded as head of state in 1999, he initiated wide ranging political reforms, scrapping the restrictive state security laws, giving women the right to vote, freeing all political prisoners, and holding parliamentary elections. In 2002, the first poll was held; the second parliamentary election took place on November 25, 2006. Since then, about 17 political parties have taken their place in the political life of Bahrain. Only a few of them have members in the National Assembly. The political parties in Bahrain play a great part in our political experience in Bahrain's global activities.

## **5) Public Opinion**

Public opinion plays an important role in the external political influence or terms of support and rejection of foreign policy goals. Foreign policy represents the opinion of the majority of the people regarding problems that may affect their lives, which political decision makers cannot exceed. Public opinion in Bahrain went against Hussein Shariatmadari when Iran claimed Bahrain as Iranian territory; Bahrain's independence was recognized in 1971 by the Iranian monarchy at the time, although under questionable circumstances. Iran-Bahrain relations have witnessed many ups and downs since the Islamic Revolution in Iran.

### **3-3 Key Dimensions Affecting the Process of Political Decision-Making Space**

#### **1. Self-Psychological Dimension of the Political Leader**

Personal, intellectual, psychological, or historical experience, values and principles, beliefs, and socialization factors are external environment considerations and requirements of a political leader. When H.M the King examined his personal experience as a political leader, he called for a national referendum for all Bahraini citizens to vote on the National Charter to determine their democratic future. Bahrain is only state in the GCC region where all citizens has full political rights. As a political leader, H.M the King enjoys good relations with all Arab leaders and other leader around the globe.

#### **2. The Internal Environment**

The political forces, civil society, and social factors have an influential role on the course of political events, such as public opinion and pressure groups, interests and political parties. Political decision makers cannot ignore these internal environment

factors when making decisions. The political parties and special interest groups take part in Bahrain foreign policy. In many cases, the government cannot take any action without these groups' endorsement through the National Assembly.

### **3. The External Environment**

The extent of the external environment influence of international politics impact Bahraini decision makers in decisions of movement and purpose, effectiveness of political alliances. These impacts of these decisions are experienced through international organizations where the state can stand and make political alliances that best serve its needs.

#### **3-4 Bahraini Foreign Policy Orientations**

There are several key components of the Kingdom of Bahrain's foreign policy orientation: directed isolation, directed neutrality, driving the conflict, guide cooperation, direct integration, and direct competition.

However, the foreign policy of the Kingdom of Bahrain utilizes guide cooperation, integrative trend, and competitive drive as the centerpiece of its foreign relations at all levels.

#### **1. Guide Cooperation**

The main thrust of Bahrain's foreign policy is based on the pursuit of building cooperative relations through the creation of large areas of cooperation through:

- 1) An active role within the GCC, the Arab League, and relevant committees and international organizations;
- 2) Global commissions held in the Bahraini capital, Manama, which are rotated throughout other capitals;

- 3) The signing of protocols of cooperation in certain areas with other countries.
- 4) Association agreements with the major countries in areas such as international peace, security, military cooperation, and free trade.

## **2. Integrative Trends**

Bahrain seeks to avoid conflict with brotherly and friendly countries, based on its role that any activity must be away from conflict. A good example of this was the objection of Saudi Arabia to Bahrain to sign a free trade agreement with the United States in 2004. Bahrain felt it was necessary to sign the convention, and it was beneficial to the rest of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

## **3. Competitiveness Drive**

The Kingdom of Bahrain has enjoyed a comparative advantage for a longer duration than the rest of the regional states. The Bahrain Center for the economic and financial industries in the region is subject to competition. This required the effective management of competition to maintain this privileged status of Bahrain and its development without conflict.

### **3-5 Instrument of Foreign Policy of the Kingdom of Bahrain**

Bahrain, like other countries in the world, has adopted a foreign policy using many tools through which it plays its role effectively at all levels. Perhaps most important of these tools is diplomacy. It is the essential foundation to overcoming all crises at the following levels: summit diplomacy, traditional diplomacy, diplomatic regional and international organizations, and parliamentary diplomacy. All these levels reflect the interest in foreign activity through the exercise of any kind of diplomats. For example,

summit diplomacy reflects the role and relative weight given to the party that deals with Bahrain.

Bahrain also utilizes international alliances, which are a very important tool in foreign policy. The Alliance states add elements of force if the state faces an external threat. In this context, the Bahraini Coalition states that the strategic alliance between Bahrain and the United States as an important force in the world. Furthermore, the Regional Alliance between Bahrain and the rest of the GCC countries under the umbrella of the GCC system provides added proximal unity and security. The bilateral alliance between Bahrain and Saudi Arabia and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the Arab Republic of Egypt and Morocco adds yet another important layer of alliances for Bahrain.<sup>54</sup> Reporting tools also aid Bahrain's foreign policy. Reporting creates a positive vision to other countries for investment purposes and multi-economic cooperation. It creates a framework for cultural and civilization dialogue with countries and peoples of the world. Bahrain drew worldwide interest through its tours, seminars, conferences, and exhibitions to illustrate Bahrain and its achievements, culture, and different areas of investment. Bahrain's use of reporting is concentrated in the EU and U.S. circles, and has recently extended to the Department of Asian and Arab Chambers.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Abu Amood 2008/2009

<sup>55</sup> Abu Amood, Bulletin from the Office of the Prime Minister in the Analysis of Foreign Policy of the Kingdom of Bahrain - 2006, 2008/2009

### **3-6 Political Issues in the Scope of the Foreign Policy of the Kingdom of Bahrain**

Three significant issues affect international peace and security. The first is peace and security, and that the Kingdom of Bahrain's policies are achieved not only through the United Nations, but through its affiliate organizations and other commitments.

Second, management of conflicts and international disputes under the foreign policy of the Kingdom of Bahrain is based on the need to exclude military power to the greatest extent possible within the scope of international conflicts, and stress peaceful means of solution or settlement of all conflicts.

Third, the policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of states is a key concept around which Bahrain foreign policy is based. Contemporary political life has observed the phenomenon in which the larger countries intervene in the internal affairs of small countries under the umbrella of the so-called term of humanity; these smaller countries have failed to achieve security and stability for its peoples. The foreign policy of the Kingdom of Bahrain rejects interfering in the internal affairs of states, based on the principles of international law, international norms, sovereignty, and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

### **3-7 Manifestations of Interest in the Kingdom of Bahrain on Political Issues**

1. Bahrain's accession to all relevant international conventions.<sup>56</sup>
2. Bahrain's membership in all international economic organizations and cooperation in the same context.
3. Summit diplomacy, which is in the mutual visits between the kings and heads of state and political leaders in Bahrain.

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<sup>56</sup> Abu Amood

4. The establishment of the union between Bahraini businessmen and foreigners in order to create and promote economic activities.
5. Economic cooperation agreements in various fields.
6. Greater weight to economic issues in the domain of joint committees between Bahrain and other countries of the world.
7. Signing and ratification of Bahrain for the most international conventions related to combating terrorism and organized crime.
8. Development of the means of exchanging information on various aspects of terrorism with the Arab, Islamic and friendly countries.
9. Commitment to implement international resolutions on counter-terrorism.
10. Active participation in the forums and international conferences related to terrorism.
11. Progress the proposal to establish a Center for the Study of Terrorism and counter and be based in Manama.

### **3-8 Manifestations of Interest in Bahrain's Foreign Policy:**

#### **1. Human Rights**

Increased attention to the issue of human rights has impacted Bahraini foreign policy as follows:<sup>57</sup>

- 1) Bahrain is increasing its role in human rights associations around the world and monitoring the internal developments with regard to human rights and obligations of the state.

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<sup>57</sup> Abu Amod, Lecture: Bulletin from the Office of the Prime Minister in the Analysis of Foreign Policy of the Kingdom of Bahrain - 2006, 2008/2009

- 2) The human rights issue is a contemporary approach to external interference in the internal affairs of countries based on humanitarian considerations.
- 3) The commitment to human rights indicators is an important means to attract foreign investment, which is based on economy.
- 4) Conventions and protocols aim to respect human rights and obligations of the state.
- 5) Major countries are focusing on the designation of countries in terms of respect for human rights to fulfill their obligations and offer assistance.

Perhaps the most important pillars of the Bahraini foreign policy on human rights include:

- 1) The introduction of the comprehensive concept of human rights, not only political rights.
- 2) Full respect for the privacy of religious and social communities in Bahrain.
- 3) Commitment to Islamic principles, which establishes the fundamental rights of human beings.
- 4) Comply with all international conventions and protocols related.
- 5) The obligation to cooperate fully with associations, agencies, and international organizations.

Bahrain's Foreign Policy Analysis in the field of human rights emphasizes:

- 1) Global human rights movement by strengthening cooperation with international and regional organizations concerned with human rights.



- 2) Access to international conventions and regional human rights including the Convention, which provides for the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination, forced labor, and child labor.
- 3) Defense of human rights issues in international forums with respect to human rights violations.
- 4) Bahrain is interested to the international organizations of the United Nations related to human rights. Bahrain was elected as a member of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights.

## **2. Obstacles Facing Bahrain in the Field of Human Rights:**

- 1) Domestic constraints stemming from the recent experience of democracy without providing necessary political achievements; and abroad, which increases the polarization of political backlash.
- 2) Constraints stemming from the regional environment that are the result of 30 years of increased security threats and problems from the lack of security and commitment to human rights.
- 3) External constraints due to the politicization of human rights issues and the use of double standards in dealing with other powers.

## **3. Economic Issues**

Bahrain has focused its attention on broad economic issues within the scope of its foreign policy. It is perhaps is of the most importance to the Kingdom of Bahrain for the following reasons:

- 1) The Kingdom of Bahrain has limited resources and is surrounded by countries with significant natural resources, which Bahrain is interested in using its foreign policy to obtain the surplus resources of these countries<sup>58</sup>.
- 2) Bahrain wishes to create a network of mutual interests between Bahrain and the rest of the region.
- 3) Limitations on the land in Bahrain require a network of economic interests of major powers, which would make any attack on the land of Bahrain prohibitively expensive.
- 4) The relative importance of economic factors in the context of international relations.
- 5) Interest in creating the elements of economic power within the means and objective circumstances surrounding Bahrain.

It must be noted here that the most important economic issues of interest affecting Bahrain's foreign policy, dating from its independence to the present day, are as follows:

- 1) Economic development and access to aid and assistance by donor countries and international organizations.
- 2) Promoting bilateral trade with various countries of the world for primary commodities and markets products to meet the needs of Bahrain.
- 3) Promoting widespread interest in trade and economic services through the site strategically enjoyed by Bahrain.
- 4) Promoting investments in Bahrain, including private capital, transfer of modern technology, advanced management expertise, and the transfer of excellence.

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<sup>58</sup> Abu Amood 2009

#### **4. Cultural Issues**

The importance of cultural interactions in the context of the contemporary international arena has become an important issue due to many reasons, the most important being globalization and its impact on relations between people as well as progress in the field of communications and information. On the other hand, there are increased risks of international conflicts, which makes the quest for nonviolent resolutions all the more important. The events after 9/11 have added a special importance to the cultural issues, especially after the Western media attack on Arabs and Muslims as terrorists. Bahrain began dialogues among cultures as an alternative to a clash of civilizations. Bahrain took part in most of the Chinese and Japanese Turkish-Arab dialogues. This initiative came from the Bahraini side in order to create and provide common ground between the countries of the world, including Bahrain, to help to create mutual interests and the establishment of strong cultural ties.

#### **5. Social Issues**

The international community should preferably adhere to the legal rules for dealing with social issues such as international transfer of employment and immigration, and how this may present a direct threat to the national identity of some communities of the Gulf Cooperation Council. For example, there are issues of foreign workers residing in the country for extended periods of time, political rights, and, in particular, who was born in the land of Bahrain. There are international trends that indicate the need to acquire such citizenship, and raise the issue of the imposition of actions by countries exporting labor to receiving states. Bahrain approved and ratified the relevant conventions on these issues, but has remained cautious on the right of access to

citizenship and rejects interference by other states. Employment in Bahrain is subject to the provisions of the law in the context of the Bahraini Gulf Arab cooperation.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **FOREIGN POLITICAL CIRCLES OF THE KINGDOM OF BAHRAIN BAHRAIN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND ITS FOREIGN POLICY**

#### **4-1 Foreign Relations**

Since its independence in 1971, Bahrain maintained a close relationship with its neighboring Arab states by first joining the United Nations and the Arab League, and then uniting with its neighbors – Saudi Arabia, Oman, Kuwait, and United Arab Emirates, and Qatar – to form the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). This strategic union has benefitted Bahrain as well as the rest in economic development and defense and security planning. The GCC strengthens the bonds between these states and presents a unified military presence.<sup>59</sup>

#### **4-2 The Important Circles of Bahrain Foreign Policy**

##### **1. Geographical Proximity**

Bahrain is surrounded by three key countries, namely Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the Islamic Republic of Iran. This circle is strategically important for Bahrain to pursue active diplomacy in the area so as to achieve stability and security, and to ensure the flow of interactions in peace and security to resolve all differences easily, quickly, and peacefully. With regard to the state of Qatar, Bahrain has focused on the peaceful settlement of the dispute between the two countries through the International Tribunal. Relations between these two countries have progressed into new stages of cooperation and understanding.

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<sup>59</sup> Department of State, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, 2010

## **2. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Circle**

As a small nation, Bahrain was naturally concerned with its defense since it first gained independence in 1971. It attempted to enlist its neighboring countries of Kuwait, Qatar, the UAE, Oman, and Saudi Arabia in an alliance, but little came of it outside bilateral agreements. This changed, however, in 1980 with the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War. By early 1981, it became clear that the war was turning into a long-term conflict, and these states agreed to join Bahrain in the GCC. The GCC was formed as a political and economic union, but issues of security and defense increased as times went on. For Bahrain, this was an opportunity to expand its military forces for defense and receive funding and training. When GCC fellow member, Kuwait, was invaded by Iraq in 1990, Bahrain sent a small contingency of troops to Saudi Arabia in its defense, and gave permission to the United States military to access its naval and air facilities. In addition to its defenses advantages, the GCC also provides economic and social opportunities for free trade and strengthening bonds between their common cultures.<sup>60</sup>

## **3. The Arab Circle**

The foreign policy of the Kingdom of Bahrain has a deeper strategy because Bahrain is an active member of the Arab League and a permanent member of several committees involved in the league and the relevant conferences, where a permanent presence of Bahrain and the perpetrator of the utmost importance and weighs through the service.<sup>61</sup>

## **4. The Islamic Circle**

Bahrain seeks a Muslim-Christian dialogue in various fields through its foreign policy, and brings together their differing views on the basis of that dialogue. Official

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<sup>60</sup> Federal Research , Data as of January 1993

<sup>61</sup> Abu Amood 2009

visits to the Vatican since 2002 are made to facilitate an active form of religious tolerance and allow opportunities for accommodating the representation of religious, political, diplomatic minorities.

Islamabad and Manama enjoy close co-operations in many fields. Joint initiatives between Pakistani and Bahraini governments have started to further their bilateral trades, which reached to \$250 million in 2007. Pakistani businessmen are eyeing on Bahrain's property market while Bahrain is seeing Pakistan as a good agricultural potential investment country. Relations between Bahrain and Turkey were officially established on December 4, 1973. The relations between these two countries are considered positive, with trade at 78.1 million U.S. dollars in 2006. Almost double the amount when it was 2003. In 2007, trade was at 186 million U.S. dollars.<sup>62</sup>

## **5. The Asian Circle.**

Bahraini foreign policy also focuses the scope of Asia, particularly on the three major powers, Japan, China, and India. India has transformed into a major international power with influence in the international system. They represent the common interests and strategy in the region to these countries and the West, and take into account the issue of how to deal with these countries. Bahrain has focused on the Asian circle since the 1990s in the framework of what is known as diplomacy, development, and represents the mutual visits between the officials at all levels.<sup>63 64</sup>

## **6. U.S. – Bahraini Relations**

The Kingdom of Bahrain and the United States have experienced a relatively short relationship, especially when compared to other Western European countries. The American Mission Hospital, affiliated with the National Evangelical Church, has been based in Bahrain for only a little more than a century. Bahrain became a base for U.S. naval activity in the gulf region around 1947.

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<sup>62</sup> Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d.

<sup>63</sup> Abu Amod 2009

<sup>64</sup> Abu Amod, Bulletin from the Office of the Prime Minister in the Analysis of Foreign Policy of the Kingdom of Bahrain - 2006, 2008/2009

Official diplomatic relations between the two countries were established when Bahrain became an independent state during the 1970s. In October 1991, Amir Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa made a state visit to Washington, followed by his son, Amir Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, in 2001. In January 2008, President Bush made the first visit by a sitting president to Bahrain. In October 1991, Bahrain and the United States signed a Defense Cooperation Agreement granting U.S. forces access to Bahraini facilities and ensuring the right to pre-position material for future crises. Bahrain is currently the Headquarters of the U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet. Bahrain became a major non-NATO ally in October 2001. Bahrain and the United States signed a Free Trade Agreement in 2004 that would reduce trade barriers between the two countries.<sup>65</sup>

#### **4-3 Bahrain's Foreign Policy and Civil Society Organizations**

The increased role of international organizations of civil society impacts current foreign policy. The relationship between civil society organizations and foreign policy in can be characterized in three methods:<sup>66</sup>

- 1) Civilian organizations force the government to act on certain international issues.
- 2) The government is based on associations to accomplish some of its policy.
- 3) The association pressures the government to avoid certain situations.

The problem that arises from civil society organizations in relationship to foreign policy is the ability to work within the scope of what is possible and available. Bahrain's foreign policy has experience with three issues relating to normalization of relations

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<sup>65</sup> Department of State, Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, 2010

<sup>66</sup> Abu Amod, Bahraini Foreign Politicians, 2008/2009



with Israel, respect for human rights, and providing assistance through various friendly and brotherly civic associations.

#### **4-4 Constraints Faced By Bahraini Foreign Policy**

##### **1. Constraints Stemming from the Internal Environment**

It may be noted there is a contradiction between the objectives and the available resources to achieve them. Objectives of foreign policy require a range of financial, technical resources, and human resources. Bahrain, like many developing countries in this regard, requires the preparation of necessary groups. Internal pressures by civil society on many important political issues can influence the adoption of the resolutions that may not fit with the objectives of the foreign policy of Bahrain.

##### **2. Constraints Stemming from the Regional and International Environment**

Bahrain maintains friendly relations with its neighboring countries overall. However, during the 1980s and 1990s, Bahrain's relations with Iran became strained when Iran attempted to assert sovereignty over Bahrain based on its former control over the islands in the 17th and 18th centuries. In 1970, the government of Iran announced it had no objection to Bahrain's independence from the United Kingdom, but did not relinquish its claim of sovereignty. After the 1979 Iranian revolution, prominent elements within Iran called for Iranian control of Bahrain, which were quelled in April 1980 when Teheran officially renounced all claims to Bahrain. Although it is currently not an issue of contention, it has complicated relations between the two governments.<sup>67</sup>

However, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, allegations arose that Iran was providing support for fundamentalist Islamic groups in Bahrain. After the Islamic Revolution,

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<sup>67</sup> Encyclopedia of the Nations, 2003

some Iranians demanded the Bahrain's Shi'a community to rise up against the al-Khalifa to which radical elements within Bahrain's Shi'a community responded to the call. Iran was implicated several plots to assassinate key government officials and members of the royal family, overthrow the Bahraini government, and acts of sabotage.

Relations with Iran have improved and, since 1990, a Bahraini ambassador has been in Teheran. In 1992, a protocol for industrial and commercial cooperation was signed.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Encyclopedia of the Nations, 2003

## SUMMARY

Bahrain has the ability to provide appropriate responses to its future internal and external crises through its current government and political system as defined by its constitution and National Action Charter, its foreign policy based on regional and international cooperation, and its emphasis on negotiation as a basis on which to resolve situations on internal, regional, and international tiers. These tools provide Bahrain the capacity to generate solutions that will provide long term protection of its people and its interests.

Bahrain's constitution was crafted on Islamic principles, but includes ideas from both the East and Western cultures. The foreword of the Bahraini Constitution states that, "wisdom is the goal of the believer wherever he finds it he should take it, and that the Qur'an has been remiss in nothing."<sup>69</sup> Using the National Action Charter as a guideline, the Bahraini Constitution addresses the rights of its citizens by guaranteeing their "freedom, equality, security, trust, knowledge, social solidarity, and equality of opportunity." The Constitution also states that, "Justice is the basis of government."<sup>70</sup> The rights are guaranteed to all Bahraini citizens regardless of sex, origin, language, religion, or creed. Both documents received popular support by the Bahraini people. In a national referendum in 2001, a draft of the National Action Charter received 98.4 percent of approval from the voters in a turnout of 90 percent of the population, and was adopted by the Bahraini government.<sup>71</sup>

This overwhelming sense of loyalty of the Bahraini people to the King and the government is reciprocated by the state's pledge to guarantee their protection from

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<sup>69</sup> Kingdom of Bahrain, Constitution, 2002.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid

<sup>71</sup> Ibid

within and without the country. The concept of cooperation and mutual respect and loyalty provides a firm bond between Bahrain and its citizens enabling Bahrain with the capability of responding to internal crises.

Bahrain's National Action Charter and Constitution also provides sources to respond to external crises. While the Constitution states that "peace is the objective of the State,"<sup>72</sup> it provides for national defense of Bahrain and the Arab homeland. Aggressive war is forbidden, and a defensive war can only be declared by a decree presented to the National Assembly. Treaties cannot include secret clauses that conflict those that are openly stated.<sup>73</sup> By declaring its peaceful intentions, Bahrain serves to provide regional stability in the Gulf area.

Bahrain's foreign relations are defined by its Arab heritage in the National Action Charter. Bahrain continues "pursue its efforts, in close cooperation with other Arab countries, to further enhance the role of the Arab League in order to maintain the same as a political and legal institution that embodies Arab unity and furthers joint Arab action and common will. The Kingdom of Bahrain reiterates its support of all forms of inter-Arab economic cooperation."<sup>74</sup> It is committed to unqualified support of just and critical causes of its Arab brotherly states. Through its alliances with the Arab League, Organization of Islamic Conference, United Nations, and GCC, Bahrain strengthens its abilities to respond to regional and international crises.

In terms of international political relations, Bahrain maintains that, "world and regional peace is a core, strategic goal that justifies the greatest effort. Accordingly, it reiterates that it is solemnly attached to the core principles of peaceful settlement of all

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<sup>72</sup> Kingdom of Bahrain, Constitution, 2002

<sup>73</sup> Ibid

<sup>74</sup> Kingdom of Bahrain, National Action Charter, 2002

international disputes, prohibition of use of force at the expense of the territorial integrity or political independence of any country.”<sup>75</sup>

Bahrain has proven its ability to peacefully negotiate international problems and crises, and how its alliances have assisted in coordinating economic development and defense and security planning many times. By continuing to adhere to its core Islamic principles expressed in its National Action Charter and Constitution, Bahrain will continue to demonstrate its ability to find solutions for crises on internal, regional, and international levels.

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<sup>75</sup> Kingdom of Bahrain, National Action Charter, 2002

## **OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE BAHRAIN POLITICAL SYSTEM, FOREIGN RELATION AND PRACTICE OF DEMOCRACY**

The Bahraini political system is a source of pride for all Bahraini people. It stands as a symbol of their national unity and loyalty to the country. Bahraini citizens are encouraged to contemplate and seek the identity of Bahrain. All Bahraini should emphasize their loyalty to the Kingdom, leaving minor grievances behind, walking side by side with H.M the King into the future of his new version of democracy. The characteristics of Bahrain help define its unique political system. Bahrain's long history and its evolution of its political system over the last three centuries have created a common culture of the people in Bahrain.

The foreign policy of the Kingdom of Bahrain utilizes guide cooperation, integrative trends, and competitive drive as the centerpiece of its foreign relations at all levels. Bahrain also utilizes international alliances, which are a very important tool in foreign policy. Bahrain is surrounded by three key countries, namely Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the Islamic Republic of Iran. This strategic circle is important for Bahrain to pursue active diplomacy in the area so as to achieve stability and security.

Bahrain is increasing its role in human rights associations around the world and monitoring internal developments with regard to human rights and obligations of the state. Bahrain's support of human rights has been noted and appreciated by international organizations. In April 2010, the United States credited Bahrain as a human rights example for countries to emulate around the world. In a short time since its adoption of a new constitution and practice of democracy, it has made major changes in its policies,

impacting its citizens with important rights such as the introduction of a comprehensive concept of human rights, not only political rights, and full respect for the privacy of religious and social communities in Bahrain.

The Kingdom of Bahrain has limited natural resources and is surrounded by countries with more abundant resources, which Bahrain is interested in using its foreign policy to obtain the surplus resources of these countries; Bahrain wishes to create a network of mutual interests between Bahrain and the rest of the region.

One question that we ask ourselves, do we believe in democracy and practice democracy in the Arab world? Bahrain and other Arabs countries seek democracy through the freedom of press, believing that it comes from a free society. Everyone in Bahrain can practice democracy, but how and when? And how does society relate or people fulfill their needs from it?

Years ago, education failed to make the Arabs democratic. Bahrain's student went to the best universities in the United Kingdom and the United States to study the sciences, but they had no feeling of democracy. When they came home, they talked about democracy, but they didn't practice it. This region's distinct religion, art, and food are some of the fundamental features. In Bahrain, the new direction of education at every level is focused on democracy, and we are practicing this definition as it is defined by our National Charter and Constitution of the Kingdom.

Before Bahrain's National Charter and Constitution of the Kingdom were instituted, there was no public media in the Arab region that had absolute freedom, and they all fought to separate bureaucracy from democracy. His Royal Highness Prime Minister Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa declared that freedom of opinion and expression

has become part of the identity of Bahraini society; every individual in Bahrain has the freedom of responsible and objective opinion. Today, Bahrain uses this freedom properly as tool for democracy. Freedom of the press provides the information needed for Bahraini citizens to shape public opinion, ensures the safety and security of the country, and safeguards national unity. We should appreciate freedom of opinion and expression that Bahrain is enjoying in His Majesty King Hamad's era. Without freedom of speech, the people's creativity and ability to solve problems are stifled.

Bahrain's press has become independent and a highly regarded tool of expression that must be used to reflect the social intellect and emotions honestly. Bahrain's peoples from all walks of life are enjoying a radiant era and a large margin of freedom, enabling it to be innovative and express feelings. His Majesty the King is a good example of the Bahraini democratic experiment, which has been positively received by the international community.



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