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Contested Spaces and Sectarian Narratives in Post - Uprising Bahrain

Introduction

In February 2011 widespread protests erupted in Bahrain, the latest of the waves of unrest in the region that became known as the Arab Uprisings[1]. The protests gained momentum[2] before being crushed by Saudi-led Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) forces which entered Bahrain on 14 March. This precipitated a crackdown on opposition groups, and any activity that was deemed critical of the regime, as the Al Khalifa establishment sought to solidify its position. This period has been well-covered by the literature, which mostly focuses on the regime's survival strategies and alliances, amid wider geo-political concerns (see Matthiesen 2013, Neuman 2013, Wehrey 2013, Kinninmont 2013, Mabon 2013). In contrast, scant attention has been paid to how the state master-narrative is being constructed and received by counter-narratives from 'below', within the context of contested political space, at home and in transnational sites. In doing this, the paper also seeks to analyse the use of narrative as a key part of the state's response to the uprisings, and its impact on opposition actors residing in both Bahrain and in exile, situated in a backdrop of escalating sectarianism in the region. This paper suggests that a state master narrative, bolstered by international partners' support – material and discursive - has established the interpretative frameworks by which the Bahraini uprising are to be conceptualised, and restricted the nature of political space both within Bahrain and transnationally, ultimately crushing the political potential of counter-narratives and their advocates. Ultimately, such an effort is designed to regulate and control space and the framing of Bahraini politics.

Unlike some of its wealthier Gulf neighbours, Bahrain's oil wealth has been on a smaller scale and in recent years, the country has begun adjusting to a post-oil economy. Bahrain is a case study of a rentier state that has had to be flexible and diversify in order to keep the ruling family in power. The rentier model allows states to develop and liberalise economically while keeping a tight rein on political rights and freedoms. Bahrain's changing economy, coupled with inequalities inherent in the system, meant that it did not match the rentier state's 'ideal' type (in the Weberian sense) which can disregard the social contract between state and citizens due to

rent accrued externally. This is exacerbated by the fact that the Sunni minority has historically been privileged economically and has ruled politically. Since 1992 a number of the Gulf states have taken steps towards democratisation, putting in place new processes, parliamentary elections, women's' suffrage -, although this is inconsistent between and within states over time. The general consensus, certainly since the uprisings, has been that these are about regime survival rather than commitment to reform. Such a position also seeks to stress that the ensuing political space can be managed and controlled by the state. As such, the expansion of political space does not necessarily mean an expansion of political debate and dissenting voices.

This paper utilises the concept of political space –sites (physical and virtual) where citizens, claiming their agency, are engaged in political action and discussion. Political space falls within the broader concept of the public sphere, defined by Habermas as the manifestation of "society engaged in critical public debate" (Habermas, 1989, p305) in an unrestricted way, shaping public opinion. The public sphere is situated in-between state and society (and given the diasporic nature of opposition groups, has a transnational dimension as well). Political spaces are more grounded, although the sites are fluid and interactive. The sites reflect power relations, political struggles and the actors contained within. Their boundaries are not set, but contested in themselves, and the defining and shaping of the space is part of the political struggle. As a consequence of the divisions within – and between – different facets of Bahraini society, appealing to a master narrative has to find commonality above difference. Such commonality is then framed within the context of latent fears about manipulation and penetration of the state by external actors and, as a consequence, the master narrative gains traction across sites of political space.

This paper begins by providing a brief history of unrest and the geopolitical context within which Bahrain is located, unpacking the importance of the archipelago within the broader narrative of a sectarian conflict. The second section explores the state's response to opposition movements, predominantly focussing upon a two-pronged strategy of repression of political space coupled with attempts to shape Bahrain's international image through soft power strategies. The third section turns to the

consequences and challenges of the use of this master narrative. Ultimately, such a strategy is designed to ensure the survival of the regime in the face of a number of pressures, most notably geopolitical concerns, demographic issues and economic challenges. This paper draws upon a series of interviews conducted in Bahrain and in the UK, in 2013 and 2014. Our interviewees included British officials, prominent Bahrainis who support the regime, and a range of Bahrainis who are opposed to the regime, many of whom do not identify themselves with any one opposition group. All names have been changed unless speaking in an official capacity.

A History of Unrest

Tension and violence between state and society are not new phenomena in Bahrain; rather, the outbreak of violence in 2011 can be seen as a continuation of decades of political unrest. Latent grievances manifest intermittently and a number of strategies aimed at dealing with unrest can be derived from Bahrain's history. Bahrain, at the intersection of the Persian and Arab, Shi'i and Sunni worlds, has historically been home to a mixed and multi-cultural population, reflecting 'a long history of immigration associated with trade, pearling, pilgrimage and military conquest' (Fuccaro, 2009, 9).

State building in the region has been traditionally based on kinship and tribal solidarities[3] (*an-'asabiyyah*) and religious principles (*al-din*). The Al Khalifa arrived from central Arabia between 1735 and 1783 and over the following decades established tribal towns where the pearling industry thrived, distanced from the Shi'i agricultural villages, bringing with them a strong tribal dimension to power and governance, as well as amplifying religious difference. Nelida Fuccaro maintains that tribal solidarities rather than sectarian sentiment were the foundation of 'ideal urban hierarchies' (p29)[4], especially as the towns had both religiously and ethnically mixed populations, leading to distinct urban cultures like that of the Manami[5], reminiscent of other cosmopolitan port cities of the time like Alexandria and Istanbul. It was in this period that the chasm between town and village, tribes and agriculturalists, urban and rural, was reinforced, a division that is still resonant today.

As Juan Cole has discussed, Shi'i had problems integrating into the new states formed after the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, where the prevalent ideology was Arab state nationalism (Cole, 2002). Al Khalifa rule legitimised the Sunni tribal Arab subjects as the authentic Bahrainis, as opposed to the Shi'i Persian non-indigenous other, portrayed as a threat to the social and political order. Modernisation and urban development were of chief benefit to the Sunnis who occupied the cities, with the Shi'i villages lagging behind. Clashes between Persians and Arabs in Manama between 1900 and 1923 reveal the use of the terms 'outsiders' and 'foreigners' thereby setting up the binary which continues to plague the national narrative, and the creation/depiction of the Other. Such history goes some way to creating frame resonance for domestic audiences, particularly when combined with concerns about domestic security.

In Bahrain, Sunnis have always enjoyed a higher social and economic advantage over the majority Shi'i, reinforced by the dominance of Sunni Islam in the Arab world. Sophia Pandya (2010, p40) suggests that this has resulted in a 'Sunni-normative environment' where 'Bahraini Shi'i, despite their (numerically) majority status, feel as though they are "the other", and are thus on the defensive – in a way that Sunnis are not – for their difference.'

Historically, there has been an active public sphere in Bahrain, with vibrant grassroots political networks, whether religious, labour or intellectual in foundation. These were often mobilised around issues of economic, political and social inequality, which were intensified by the divisive competition which accompanied British colonial rule. In time, religious forums became the site of an oppressed Shi'i identity, leading to the articulation of a politics of emancipation, in contrast to the state-sponsored religiosity of the Sunnis and the cadre of influential Sunni clerics with strong business and tribal links (Fuccaro 2009, pp40-1). It is the often the wider geopolitical dimension that has the capacity to shape the nature of protests across Bahrain. Shi'i grievances took on an increasingly class dimension in the 1930s which saw the development of labour mobilisation, through increasing networks and associations of Shi'i workers, which led to strikes, protests, labour disputes and finally in the 1950s, the dissolution of the municipal order [6].

From the 1940s until independence in 1971 the Maharram religious celebrations became the major space to voice political dissent, which took on a nationalist and Arabist dimension, sometimes leading to sectarian clashes, particularly so during the infamous Ashura celebrations in 1953, resulting in a riot 'which became one of the most fiercely contested events in the history of modern Bahrain' (Holmes, 2016, pp105-114) with clear Arab/Persian and Sunni/Shi'i sectarian overtones. Yet, as Fuad Khuri notes, these simple binaries, which are translated as a Sunni/ Shi'i sectarian divide, 'are not clear-cut social categories' but are instead 'historical traditions and must be understood in… context' (Khuri, 1980). Much of the literature points out that there were other identities like class, labour solidarity, anti-colonial sentiments, nationalist ideas that trumped sectarian identities, particularly in the anti-colonial struggle and the subsequent independence movement.

Fuccaro, like others, points to the 'transformative powers of oil' and its impact on the social order together with the advent of modernity, which 'enforced new political, social and spatial divisions' (2009, p11). Fuccaro's study of the urban history of Bahrain reveals that in typical state-building fashion, Manama has been 'gradually transformed into (a) space(s) which embod(ies) a new idea of "homogenous" national culture and political community', with the 'recuperation of pre-oil urban traditions and settings and the establishment of national museums' being among '… the most tangible manifestations of state-sponsored nationalism', in Bahrain as well as some of its Gulf neighbours, alongside a 'teleological narrative of legitimacy promoted by ruling families (Ibid, p3)' to bolster their power base and support.

1994-1997 was a period of great unrest and renewed political activism, with clerics and the youth demanding social, economic and political rights for the disaffected Shi'i population, and the regime responding with largely cosmetic reforms alongside increasingly restrictive measures (Wehrey, 2013). This emphasis on the public appearance of liberalisation and concessions, alongside crackdowns in practice, is typical of authoritarian rule responding to outside pressure, leading to claims of 'façade democracy' (Sadiki, 2002)' as in the case of Tunisia. The rule of Sheikh Hamad from 1999 was meant to usher in a new age of political liberalisation, with elections of the municipal council being held in 2002 (boycotted by the Shi'i and leftists) and 2006 as well as the first parliamentary elections since 1972. The results

of the municipal elections reflected the new realities of Bahraini society, with seven out of ten members elected being from the Jam'iyah al-Wifaq al-Watani al-Islamijjah party (known as al-Wefaq), a Shi'i party which formed in the 1990s. Such political liberalisation was short-lived and repressive measures returned from 2005, further fuelled by the report published by the Gulf Centre for Democratic Development (based in London) in 2006 which claimed to uncover a plot by a secret network within the government – including Royals – to rig the elections results, stoke sectarian tensions and ensure Sunni control of the state[7]. Despite such concerns, in 2010 Al Wifaq, at this point the clear opposition party and the voices for Shi'I grievances, won 45% of the vote in the elections, reflecting the party's involvement within the political system and providing opportunity for resolution.

From this, there have been regular attempts to engage with the demands for increased democratic representation, although these have tended to take the form of two steps forward and three steps back. The Crown Prince, seen by many as a reforming force, has demonstrated the desire to negotiate with the opposition and to hold talks on several occasions. However, the failed attempts to facilitate a resolution in 2011 reduced confidence in his ability to foster reform (interview with British officials, Manama, 2013). In January 2014 the Crown Prince sought to revive the National Dialogue by holding talks with opposition leaders (Law, 2014), building upon secret talks with Al Wifaq over the course of 2013. The lack of breakthrough leaves many with doubts over the ability of the Crown Prince to facilitate reform (Matthiessen, 2014). Following this impasse, Al Wifaq declared their intention to boycott the parliamentary elections; the situation was further worsened when on 28th October, 2014, the party was banned from political activity for three months. To understand the Al Khalifa regime's handling of Al Wifaq one must engage with broader geopolitical concerns about the nature of regional security and the rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

The Geopolitical Importance Dimension

The location of Bahrain's archipelago is perhaps the key reason for the state's importance within the Middle East. Lying only 25 kilometres off the Eastern coast of

Saudi Arabia, and 200 kilometres from the western coast of Iran, Bahrain has become embroiled in a proxy conflict between the two regional powers (Mabon, 2012). This regional competition has been complicated at an international level by the involvement of the US and UK. As a consequence of this, the geostrategic importance of Bahrain cannot be understated. In addition, the escalating sectarianism of the region is a great cause for concern across Bahrain. Indeed, Bahrain is perceived to be the epicentre of the Peninsula's 'sectarian disenfranchisement' (Wehrey et al, 2009), with a majority Shi'a population[8] who are perceived to possess ties with Iran.

Continued Sunni control of Bahrain is of paramount importance to the Arab Gulf States. For Saudi Arabia, the stability of Bahrain is crucial, as demonstrated in 2011 when Saudi-led GCC forces crossed the King Fahd causeway and entered Bahrain. The extent of their involvement in events is disputed, with some suggesting that these forces did little other than protect key strategic sites in the south and were banned from entering Manama (interview, Sunni Bahraini, Manama, 2013). Others suggest that Saudi troops were integral in ending the initial spate of protests. Constant Saudi involvement in Bahrain – regardless of the veracity of any claims – demonstrates the importance of the archipelago for Riyadh.

Given its location on the coast of the Eastern Province, linked directly by the 25 kilometre causeway, the Al Saud does not wish for instability in such close proximity. Building upon this, there is a perception amongst many Arab Gulfis that Iran has aspirations over the sovereignty of Bahrain, with historical and contemporary claims to ownership over the island, perpetuated by a narrative that Iran has been behind the current unrest. This suspicion is coupled with a historical rivalry between Riyadh and Tehran (Mabon, 2013) that is driven by both ideological and geopolitical dimensions. As a consequence, Saudi Arabia is increasingly suspicious as to Iran's motives in Bahrain. Bahrain is also very important for Saudi Arabia due to the ethno-religious composition of the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia. Home to the cities of Dammam, Khobar and Al Qatif, the Eastern Province is the location of the largest oil field in the world, as well as the location of the majority of Saudi Arabia's Shi'i population. The history of unrest in the Eastern Province (Matthiessen, 2010) has often been attributed to Iranian influence.

Bahrain also plays a crucial role in that it acts as a 'valve for social pressures' (Mabon, 2012) for Saudi Arabia. Given the strict Wahhabi doctrine in operation, the opportunity to visit places and participate in activities that would be deemed *haram* in Saudi Arabia, in such close proximity, allows for the release of societal tensions. This was facilitated by the opening of the causeway linking the two states in 1986. There were other avowed intentions behind its construction: to foster economic ties between the two countries, and to facilitate ease of access to Bahrain in case of the Al Khalifa experiencing trouble and needing Saudi help (Henderson, 2011). Supporting this argument is the speed at which the bridge was built in the aftermath of the Islamic Revolution of 1979 in Iran. A *coup d'etat* in Bahrain could have established Khomeini's *veleyat-e faqih* across the archipelago, which would then have had implications for the stability of Saudi Arabia, especially within the Eastern Province, and states with a sectarian schism. This concern was coupled with events in Mecca in 1979 and the seizure of the Grand Mosque (Hegghammer and Lacroix, 2011). When Iranian interference across the region was coupled with the rhetoric emerging from Tehran that stressed the ideological support for the Shia', such conclusions and fears appear more credible.

In contrast, Bahrain appears to possesses little internal strategic importance for Iran, aside from historical Persian claims to sovereignty over the island. Iranian claims have their roots in the eighteenth century, when ancestors of the Al-Khalifa 'wrested Bahrain in 1783 from an indirect Persian rule' (Al-Baharna, 1973). These historical claims extend to contemporary, thinking, as demonstrated by Hussain Shariatmadari, the editor of the Iranian newspaper *Kayhan,* in 2007 suggesting that 'Bahrain was an inseparable part of Iran' (Wehrey et al, 2009), claims which continue to play an important rhetorical role, yet possess very little grounding in reality. Members of the Shi'i community within Bahrain, much like those in Saudi Arabia, 'have long been viewed as a potential Iranian fifth column" (Kaye and Wehrey, 2007) – exacerbated by the 1981 attempted coup by the Islamic Front for Liberation of Bahrain, an Iranian-backed Shia militant organisation. The Shi'i in Bahrain are composed of Arabs who are long term residents (Bahrana) whose origins are from the eastern province of Iraq; long-term residents of Iranian origin (Ajam); and more recent arrivals from Iran following the 1979 revolution. Many of the latter, despite

being second or third generation residents are without Bahraini passports or full citizenship, and are referred to as *bidun*. Recognising such tensions within these communities is imperative when considering the construction of the master narrative, which requires cultivating a strong enough collective base to secure the regime and, thus, to refer to the lowest level of commonality, in this case, religion.

Quantifiable evidence of influence from Iran has been hard to establish, yet the perception - and the myth making by the regime (and its allies) – that Shi'i loyalties lie with Iran, and threaten the ruling order, are dominant in the public sphere. Fear of Iranian influence has not been helped by Shi'i Ashura processions brandishing pictures of Khomeini and Khamenei and other such symbols of perceived loyalty to Iran. In the most recent unrest, despite an increased suspicion of Iranian involvement, either directly or through proxy actors such as Hizballah,[9] there is as yet little factual evidence to support the idea that Iran is manipulating events (Kinninmont, 2012). Furthermore, despite the occasional discovery of domestic plots whose actors appear to possess ties with Tehran, it is important to remember the caution that many (Arabic- speaking) Saudi and Bahraini Shi'i exercise towards their 'Persian-speaking Iranian coreligionists across the Gulf' (Kaye and Wehrey, p116), a sentiment that remains today. It is also important to note that perhaps stronger ties are shared with coreligionists in Iraq (Louer, 2006), such as Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani, who also share ethnic heritage, rather than in Tehran (interview, Sheikh Maytham Al-Salman, Geneva, 2014).

The stability of Al Khalifa rule is especially important for the United States and the United Kingdom for wider geopolitical reasons. For the US, Bahrain is a key strategic location, as the Fifth Fleet is stationed there. Given the strategic importance of the Persian Gulf, with an estimated 17 million barrels of oil per day travelling through the Strait of Hormuz in 2011 (US Energy Information Administration, 2012), the need for a military presence in the region for the US is apparent. The US and the UK are both major arms supplies to Bahrain, and have publicly and consistently declared their support for the regime. The UK is an important ally, strategically, culturally, and economically, reflected in the long-standing ties between the two ruling families. Bahrain plays an increasingly important role in British geostrategic calculations: especially following the British withdrawal from Afghanistan (Interview, British official

Manama, 2013), where it plays a prominent role in Britain's strategic interests in the Middle East and the Horn of Africa. In response to British support during the Arab Uprisings, the Royal Navy was gifted a new naval base in Bahrain, its first permanent military base in the region since its formal withdrawal in 1971 (BBC, 2014).

The role played by the Bahraini regime's international patrons, the US and UK, alongside its regional 'big brother' Saudi Arabia are absolutely crucial factors in keeping the regime in place, and propagating its narrative. In the very rare instances when these allies have dared to step out of line, the regime has retaliated in an uncompromising fashion[10]. Eva Bellin, in her article on the 'robustness of authoritarianism in the Middle East' (2004) focuses on the rigour of the 'coercive apparatus' as a defining factor. In this case it would seem that the support of powerful international allies, who in turn, supply and bolster the 'coercive apparatus' are paramount. Their role in upholding the state's sectarian narrative and tactics undermines any counter-narratives circulating transnationally and internationally. Aidan Hehir (2015) in his study of why Bahrain is an R2P (Responsibility to Protect) 'blind spot' points to the role that the US and UK have played in supporting the regime in pursuit of their own 'narrowly conceived national interests' at the expense of normative concerns with regard to the treatment of the Bahraini population. Such a position also reflects the strength and success of the master narrative in speaking not only to Bahrainis but also to the international community.

Sectarianism as Narrative and Weapon

While *prima facia* explorations of the emergence of conflict in Bahrain suggest that schisms have occurred along sectarian lines, this belies the complexity of the situation. Rather, divisions exist at several levels: between members of the ruling family, the Al Khalifa; between Sunni and Shi'i; between Bahraini and non-Bahraini; and within protest movements, some of whom, residing outside of major cities, have demanded the end of the monarchy itself, while other more integrated opposition groups such as Al Wifaq (Beaugrand, 2016), have been open to engaging with the Crown Prince over reform (Hilterman and McEvers, 2011). Such schisms across the

archipelago demonstrate the difficulty in creating a master narrative that is able to find unitary traction amongst the largest group of people, in this case, within the context of fears at Iranian orchestration of the Shi'a led protests.

Splits within the Al Khalifa are found between the more hard line members of the ruling family and those who advocate a more conciliatory approach, such as the Crown Prince, Salman (Henderson, 2011). On 8th April, 2011, Salman spoke to the state-run TV station, where he stated that 'We all aspire to a better tomorrow, in which nothing but development, progress, respect for the rule of law, and coexistence represent the utmost goal we all seek to achieve' (Ibid). Amongst several of the opposition groups, even some advocating the removal of the Al Khalifa regime, the crown prince is considered the best chance of reform, although perceptions of his political capital vary. The Al Khalifa camp can be split into four factions: liberal, moderate, conservative, and hardliners. These different factions highlight the problems of achieving a political consensus, especially when the King, Crown Prince, and Prime Minister are each perceived to be in different factions. Of course, such divisions raise a number of questions about the construction of the master narrative, once more having to appease schisms, this time within the ruling party.

While sectarianism as a phenomenon is widely understood, its definition, like its origins and analytical value, are contested. As Justin Gengler suggests, the trouble lies in the fact that the term, as 'an omnipresent signifier for conflict and unrest' can act 'as both a description of political contestation and simultaneously, an explanation of it' (Warner, 2013). A useful working definition is: ' the promotion and deliberate deployment of sect-based allegiance in the pursuit of political ends …manifest(ing) itself in diverse ways and at different levels: personal identity, social attitudes, religious ideology, political organisation, national policy and transnational movements' (Ayub, 2013 p2) As Ussama Makdisi (2000) has demonstrated in the case of Lebanon, sectarianism is a modern phenomenon, ignited by the colonial experience, rather than existing inherently as a fractious and violent other. Omar Hisham Al Shehabi (2016) demonstrates that political mobilisation based on ethno sectarian identities in the case of Bahrain is 'a modernist product of the contestations

that occurred in the period of increasing British colonial involvement in the early twentieth century'.

As with all nations, the Gulf States are founded on exclusionary visions of the nation, but the complete absence of the Shi'i story and place in the national narrative is not just a problematic silence but a systematic and continuing side-lining and alienation. Sectarianism and its fear has long been a successful tool used by the Al Khalifa regime as a self-perpetuating myth that works on different levels, to keep itself in power. When the violence erupted in Pearl Roundabout on 17 February 2011, in a press release defending the violent crackdown by the security forces, the foreign minister immediately used the threat of Bahrain falling into a 'sectarian abyss' (Reuters, 2011) thereby defining the conflict in sectarian terms and constructing the framework by which the world media and stage would interpret the uprising. The narrative fuelled the fear that Bahrain could easily become another Iraq or Lebanon without the more reform minded royals. The tragedy of Bahrain is that the power of defining the conflict and setting the narrative, however false, became self-fulfilling, ultimately serving as a means of ensuring regime survival. Despite a prominent Shi'a presence (due to deep-seated grievances), what began as a non-sectarian populist peaceful movement (as stressed by a number of the protesters[11]) became a sectarian one. This was achieved by the construction and mobilisation of the narrative of sectarian difference as the interpretative framework, coupled with the strong arm of the state spreading fear, discord and havoc.

Andrew Hammond (2013) and others have singled out Saudi Arabia as being a key player in 'cultivating sectarian spaces', and using the sectarian narrative to great effect since the outbreak of the Arab uprisings in December 2010. Following these events, concern at rising Iranian influence has dominated policy discussions across Saudi Arabia and the Kingdom has sought to securitise the threat posed by Iran to Sunni Arab states. Such a move is also aimed at US (and increasingly Israeli audiences given shared fears of Iran), with the rapprochement with Iran a cause of consternation for a number of people in both states. In contrast to this view, it is possible that the Saudis do not actually think that the Iranian threat is substantive but what they are really trying to avoid is any political liberalisation and democratisation

in Bahrain which would ultimately also threaten their own authoritarian power at home and have possible repercussions in the rest of the Gulf states.

Indeed, using sectarianism as a 'pre-emptive counter-revolutionary strategy' is nothing new or unique to Bahrain as Madawi Al-Rasheed (2011) has analysed in the case of Saudi Arabia. This tool relies on the ruling regime's claims that 'external agents (are) determined to undermine the country's stability and security' – as the Bahraini regime did with the Iranian conspiracy claim; thereby scaring the Sunni (and the rest of the) population with some kind of external expansionist threat; discrediting legitimate pro-democracy movements, which possessed scope for realisation, and their cross-sectarian potential; and fuelling sectarian tensions and divisions. Of course, divisions within the ruling family resulted in such problematic positions. This also allows government forces to use heavy handed methods to suppress the uprisings, as the narrative holds that continued unrest could lead to the unravelling of the nation due to the claim of an Iranian-backed Shi'i revolt across the region, with local Shi'i as agents and therefore traitors to the country. This propaganda was very actively employed throughout state media, through the tentacles of the state, in Sunni mosques and media stations with the result of fuelling sectarianism (while outwardly denouncing it and presenting the regime as the only one who could curtail it). By creating and bolstering the fear and the perception of 'the Iranian bogeyman' (Zunes, 2013, pp156-8) and conspiracy with the local Shi'i as agents, the regime was able to present itself as the antidote to the apparently inevitable sectarianism and the destructive potential, and thereby legitimising the use of any means necessary to quash dissent. This sectarian macro-narrative takes the focus away from the real, local issues that plague the island and fuelled the uprising, notably the disparities in the distribution of wealth and power, and demands for democratisation and human rights. By building upon and mobilising latent fears about Iranian manipulation of Bahrain's domestic affairs, such political problems are marginalised, removed from the scope of legitimate discourse and subsumed within broader questions about domestic security.

As Al-Rasheed articulates, in the case of Saudi Arabia, 'the regime fosters the impression that, without its intervention, the country will enter a Hobbesian state of nature where tribes, sects and regions unleash their fanaticism and violence on each

other and undermine the security of all Saudis' (2011, p522) This ultimate aim of the Saudi regime is to make impossible the creation of a genuinely inclusive opposition which is cross-sectarian which would be a real threat to its continuing reign. Regardless, the sectarian narrative that the Bahraini state spread was a divisive tactic that drove a wedge through society, and the democratic protests, and prevented the formation of an effective, inclusive opposition, made up of Sunni and Shi-i. Such a simplistic tool has proved devastatingly destructive with regard to political protest in Bahrain, leading to the possible conclusion that the opposition lack agency. Yet its success demonstrates the ability to play upon latent existential fears about the survival of the state, alongside broader questions of regional security within the Gulf (Mabon, 2013).

The Velvet Glove and Iron Fist

The state's response to the uprising has been along two main lines. The first is retaliatory: punishment of protesters, ranging from imprisonment, torture, legal action, dismissal from posts, and disappearances[12]. As a counter to state violence, the second is an active investment in improving Bahrain's image externally, through a 'soft power' strategy.

The main physical site for the uprising, Pearl Roundabout, once a national symbol of Bahrain's regional status[13], became the site and symbol of the uprisings. Much has been documented about how Pearl Roundabout was transformed from an inclusive space of peaceful protest to a site of violent crackdown by government forces, leading to it being dramatically bulldozed on 18 March 2011 (Khalaf, 2013). This irrevocable act revealed state brutality in its unadulterated form, and the accidental death of an Asian migrant worker in the process reinforced the impression of the cavalier attitude of the state to the disenfranchised. By destroying sites of physical space for dissent – and securitizing others – the state sought to deface and remove the dissenters, marginalise their demands, and violently undermine their narrative of peaceful protest and legitimate political demands. The ensuing havoc and confusion fitted the state's narrative of national security to justify their repressive actions and

policies. The controlling of the narrative and public image was completed by the withdrawal from circulation of 500 fils coin which depicted the Pearl monument.

In addition, the state coercive apparatus are in themselves agents of division and discontent. It is clear that the Bahraini riot police is substantially comprised of Sunni Muslims from the Asian subcontinent and beyond, many of whom do not speak Arabic. The composition of the police force demonstrates moves to shore 'up Sunni Leadership in a Shi'i majority country… a legacy of the colonial approach to administering Bahrain' (Strobi, 2014). Indeed, the use of Sunnis brought in from Pakistan, Syria, Jordan and Yemen as 'mercenaries' and granting them citizenship is a deliberate move to engineer social demographics and increase the numbers of Sunnis in Bahrain, with the belief that the latter will not hesitate to be brutal in their policing of Shi'i to which they have no ethnic or religious attachment. This move reinforces the almost complete absence of Shi'i from the police force and their severe under-representation in government ministries in general although there are no clear statistics available (Bahry, 2000). Laurence Louër (2013) highlights the exclusion of Shi'i from the security apparatus as being an efficient 'coup-proofing strategy' by the regime, and that the recruitment strategies were essential to 'ensuring that no segment of the security apparatus sided with the protestors' (Louër, 2013, p251). Such moves result in people holding key positions being complicit within the master narrative, invested in its future and the stability of Bahrain. Alongside this internal repression, the state is engaged in shoring up its image to international audiences.

Gulf states are competing to increase the legitimacy of their respective regimes, in part to ensure the stability of their rule, to increase their influence (both regionally and internationally) and to attract Foreign Direct Investment. Soft Power, the ability to influence the behaviour of others to get the outcomes one wants through seduction and attraction, is the approach employed to woo international audiences, in contrast to the 'hard' power which is unhesitatingly employed internally (Nye, 2004, p6). This seduction and attraction is achieved through cultural resources, the transmission of values and public diplomacy. Whilst notions of Soft Power competition within the Middle East are not new (See: Barnett, 1998 and Mabon, 2013)[14] the literature tends to focus upon religious or ideologically driven Soft Power

competition, which can be seen with the spiralling flux of moves within Islam, namely between Saudi Arabia and Iran, and within the Arab nationalist movements in the 1950s and 1960s. While certain states have a comparative advantage in prestige stakes, either through culture, history or shared values, states that lack inherent prestige may seek to secure this by locating themselves within an international narrative of prestige. Done successfully, this can demonstrate that a state is a responsible member of the international community, behaving in accordance with international norms, with the aim also of placating both external and internal critics.

Since 2004 Bahrain has hosted a Formula 1 race, although the race was cancelled in 2011 amidst large scale protests at the state's response to the unrest. A related facet of this soft power campaign is the use of celebrities in an attempt to shape the brand of Bahrain. US celebrity Kim Kardashian visited Bahrain to open the Millions of Milkshakes branch. On 1st December 2012, Kardashian tweeted 'I just got to Bahrain! OMG can I move here please? Prettiest place on earth!' It was later followed by: 'Thanks Sheikh Khalifa for your amazing hospitality. I'm in love with the Kingdom of Bahrain @bu_daij70'. This handle belongs to Sheikh Khalifa Al Khalifa. However, soft power strategies risk backfiring and attracting global attention for the wrong reasons, as F1 in Bahrain in 2011 exemplifies. The use of controversial celebrities like Kardashian has also led to ridicule from western media and ironically more focus on the political situation in Bahrain (The Young Turks, 2013). More recently, there has been escalating media interest in the treatment of Asian migrant workers in the construction sector in Qatar in the run up to the World Cup in 2022 (See, for example, Human Rights Watch, 2012, and Amnesty International, 2013)[15], which has spread to awareness-raising studies and campaigns concerning domestic workers (Amnesty International, 2014) and other subalterns upon whom the economy and societal infrastructure depends in most Gulf states. Yet despite these potential pitfalls, Bahrain has continued to utilise a soft power strategy, concluding that the prospective benefits outweigh the negatives.

Sites of Conflict and Contestation – Policing Political Spaces

More broadly, the state's response to the uprisings has been the violent suppression of dissenting voices through the restriction and policing of political space. Such a policy is not new, although it has escalated since the uprising. In May 2002, the government blocked the website Bahrain Online which had served as a forum for discursive politics. Since then, the government has sought legal action against anyone engaging in political activities that are deemed subversive, whether online or otherwise (The Arabic Network for Human Rights Information). Forms of political expression, from 'insulting' the king, or criticising the regime are considered to 'disseminating false news' (Article 168 of the Penal Code).

In the first instance this has resulted in a policing of the state borders. Since 2011, the regime's policy has been to try and keep out any visitors who might be critical of the regime. Bahrain Watch has documented over two hundred cases of individuals who were denied entry into Bahrain (Bahrain Watch a). While visas have always been required to enter Bahrain, the number of individuals turned away from Bahrain International Airport is growing. Those denied entry have typically been academics[16], journalists, researchers and those involved in human rights work, and hence considered a threat as potential critics of the master-narrative being put forward by the regime. Of course, ascertaining the success of such moves is difficult to achieve, yet those who have experienced such restrictions are often keen to tell their tales.

This notion of securitised borders has included monitoring cyber activity, with a particular focus upon social media of Twitter and Facebook internationally (Booth and Sheffer, 2011). Alongside the deportation or denial of entry to (potentially) critical voices, the Bahraini government has gone on the offensive by hiring UK and US based PR firms to spread its own narratives and bolster its image (Bahrain Watch, b). Ultimately, the construction of a master narrative is an attempt to shape the image of a regime, as an act of misdirection, away from legitimate concerns. Clearly the regime takes seriously the importance of who 'owns' the narrative and the need to spread and perpetuate the official state narrative while suppressing alternative perspectives. For a politically immature government, any criticism is considered an affront, and any compromise a weakness. So much so that a mild reference to Bahrain suffering from 'sectarian tensions' by the US in 2013, led to a strong and angry response (Bayoumi, 2013) and suggesting that the master narrative has failed

to find traction amongst international audiences, for whom the same security concerns may not outweigh normative questions.

Beyond the physical sites of conflict the virtual domain was also transformed into an increasingly polarised and combative space. There resulted a media war with the state media seeking to dominate the narrative and suppress all others. However, as reported by Al Jazeera, all these measures to 'suppress the narrative of crackdown on a mostly unarmed pro-democracy uprising has been difficult for the government with social media-savvy activists armed with mobile phones or other recording devices' (Cassel, 2012). Although not without internal difference and nuances, there ensued a binary framework, with two broad narratives: the opposition narrative which framed things in terms of peaceful demonstration and demands for reform and democracy, devoid of sectarian content; and the government narrative which spread the myth of an Iranian-backed threat to the relatively liberal state intent on a Shi'i theocracy and the overthrowing of the regime. Without the deployment of a master narrative, the peaceful protestor narrative could have found greater traction amongst Bahrainis, less inclined to continue supporting the Al Khalifa amidst continued human rights abuses. Of course, by constructing the narrative around particular threats and building upon latent fears about Iranian involvement within the domestic affairs of Bahrain, the peaceful protest narrative is less appealing.

There has also been a silencing of internal critics in the virtual realm. The government appears to be both sophisticated and ruthless in its monitoring of online activity. With an increasing diaspora network and, having seen the mobilization power of the online realm, maintaining security and control of narratives online is of paramount importance. There have been recent claims that the government is using fake twitter accounts to track online critics, with at least 11 twitter users jailed for insulting the king (Jadaliyya Reports, 2013). This extreme response to online activities has meant that most individuals have curtailed or even ended their online political engagement, fearing both for themselves and those with whom they are associated (verbal and written communications with several interviewees in Bahrain and in the UK)[17]. Thus the intimidation by the government has been relatively successful in suppressing online activism, apart from major umbrella groups like 14Feb Bahrain (14feb Bahrain) and other human rights-based groups that take

recourse in the human rights narrative as a source of legitimacy and ongoing protest. We see here the use of universal norms and narratives democratic and liberal rights like freedom of expression, freedom to protest and demonstrate, alongside the appeal to supranational and international organisations like Amnesty International (Amnesty International: Bahrain) to validate these perspectives. The latter in turn, work on the supranational level to offer a strong platform for the wider counter-hegemonic narrative, exerting pressure on and seeking to hold the regime to account on the international stage, once more suggesting that the master narrative holds less influence at the international level.

Sites of contestation also possess a personal dimension, as Facebook and other social media sites became spaces for heightened vocal disagreement as friends found themselves taking on their sectarian identities and loyalties, or having them thrust upon them. Thus the heart of the social fabric of a complex and layered society was challenged on the personal level - sectarian and polarised positions becoming the norm, even among the secular and the apolitical. Individuals who had been friends since childhood suddenly 'defriended' each other after public spats, bullying and intimidation on social media as the master narrative became increasingly prevalent. Even close friends grew suspicious of each other, colleagues were afraid to speak openly to each other, while mixed marriages felt pressured. The master narrative gained traction and transcended personal relationships as it became increasingly pervasive. Gradually vocalisation and heightened emotions gave way to silences, defacements, erasures and spectres (Observations of Facebook public (i.e. 'wall' based interactions of friends and acquaintances, as well as private correspondence, 2011-2013).

The exploration of the role of technology in protest and democracy movements is a burgeoning area of exploration. Emma C. Murphy (2006) has written on how the introduction of modern information and communication technologies in the Gulf Arab states has fallen short of its democratising potential. Despite being an expansion of the public sphere, these sites are subject to scrutiny and control by the state. Manuel Castells (2001) in his study of the power of networks argued that it would have a democratising effect – providing forums and (subversive) spaces for information exchange, which could also be spaces which are free from government control,

thereby eroding the power of the state and allowing for increased transnational communication. This prediction has been shown to be idealistic, and critiqued by the subsequent generation of scholars who have focussed on the inherent and structural inequalities within the virtual, which mitigate its levelling potential. One should not entirely dismiss the potential of the internet in terms of the expansion of political spaces, rather, one should be aware that these are also subject to the disciplining power of the state and its tentacles. This phenomenon is by no means confined to the Gulf states, leading to self-censorship on the part of political actors, dilution or complete withdrawal – a successful result for the state regime. Drawing from Foucauldian ideas about how 'counter-memory splinters the monolithic and ruptures the homogenous narratives imposed by the powerful', Khalaf (2013, p276) deems that the 'virtual world has become a site of counter-memory and discourse'. The Bahraini virtual space was not however one of redemptive or genuinely counter-hegemonic potential as the initial terms of the interaction gradually coalesced, and were interpreted and incorporated into the binary framework, with very limited spaces of radical dissidence and challenge to it. Thus the myth of the virtual world being a space for liberating sites of identity-making and belonging does not seem to be the case in the Bahraini example, instead it was a reflection and extension of the hegemonic and counter-hegemonic narratives, and carried the same characteristics of spreading fear, insecurity and discord. There was very limited space for 'just being Bahraini' (interview with Bahraini student in Manchester, December 2013).

Transnational Political Spaces: Narratives From Exile

For decades, enforced exile has been a policy by the government to get rid of opposition leaders. With the political power of transnational activity being strengthened by the trappings of globalisation (and the proliferations of diasporic communities), the position of (forced or chosen) exile, has been transformed from one of marginalisation to one of political potential.

Since the 1970s there have been organised Bahraini exile groups which form part of the wider transnational opposition movement. Harakat Ahrar al Bahrain al-Islamiyyah (The Islamic Freedom Movement of Bahrain) was founded in 1981 and based in

London, headed by Saeed al-Shahabi and Mansur al-Jamri. Its primary aims were the application of the 1975 constitution, and fairer wealth distribution. Shahabi, a former member of Al-Wefaq has not been back to Bahrain since 1967 and is perhaps the most prominent Bahraini in exile in London. He has a wide portfolio, ranging from editing the London-based pan-Arabic weekly *Al Aalam* (1983-1999), being a leader of the London-based Bahrain Freedom Movement, a writer for *Al Quds Al Arabi* and trustee of several Islamic charities. He says his only Bahraini links are online and on twitter, as it is 'too dangerous' to have direct links with people there. As a British citizen he is highly critical of the unwavering support that the UK has provided to the Bahraini regime and considers it a major contributing factor to the aborted revolution (interview, Saeed Shahabi, London, 2013). Another group, the Bahrain Interfaith Centre, is headed by Sheikh Maytham Al Salman, with the goal of cultivating harmony among religious groups and sects in Bahrain.

The 2011 uprising has doubled the number of exiles in London (to around 500, including families) (interview, Saeed Shahabi, London, 2013). The continuing policy of stripping the nationality of individuals deemed troublesome to the regime resulted in 31 people finding themselves stateless in 2012. Many of those who have had their nationalities stripped were active on the Bahraini political scene, espousing the need for political reform, but not necessarily calling for the overthrowing of the monarchy (interview, Jamal and Jalad Fairouz, London, 2013). Former Al Wefaq MPs, brothers Jalal and Jawad Fairooz were among those. The former was in London for a week's course and on the third day received the news that his nationality had been revoked and he would not be returning home. He and his brother and family have been forced to stay in the UK, living in limbo in London not yet having received asylum (ibid). Rather than being cowered by the regime's aggressive tactics, the activists are using the position of exile to speak with unwavering courage and forthrightness[18] about the reality of the Bahrain regime. They too are sceptical of any national dialogue, doubting the sincerity and intentions of the regime. They also point the finger at the regime for the polarization in Bahrain, saying that its divide and rule tactics have created the sectarianism which plagues it, and threatens the unity of Bahraini society that is essential for a political solution to come to fruition.

The physical conflict in Bahrain was also played out outside the boundaries of the state. In the UK and other countries, Bahrainis (and others) gathered to protest against the government repression and in solidarity with the protestors in Bahrain. The strong surveillance of the state extended to these activities, with UK protestors being targeted by the regime. In the case of pro-democracy student protestors in the UK, some had their government scholarships suspended and their university tuitions payments stopped (Taylor, 2011); several said their families in Bahrain had been subjected to visits and phone calls from the state, and threats to their safety. The students claimed that among the protesters there were spies (either Bahraini or Saudi agents) who disrupted the events and reported them, having been alerted to the developments by Facebook (interview, two participants of the protests, Manchester, 2013). One of our interviewees referred to these agents as a 'cyber army' who infiltrated social media groups in order to spy, undermine and destroy, saying Facebook in that period for Bahraini students abroad had become 'the battleground', the destructive effect of which reverberated into their 'real' life relationships and interactions in an effort to ensure the success of the master narrative.

The students' plight was taken up by Arab political activists in Manchester, and linked to UK organisations like the Trade Union Congress (TUC) and National Union of Students (NUS) who expressed their solidarity and worked to help the students in material ways. RAPAR (Refugee and Asylum Seeker Participatory Action Research) a Manchester-based human rights organisation 'working with people, both locally and further afield, who are at risk of having their rights denied' set up the Bahrain Solidarity Campaign, a high profile campaign to highlight the human rights abuses carried out by the Al-Khalifa regime. This organisation, and other UK based ones employ the human rights narrative, and explicitly target their own government's part in bolstering and supporting the Bahraini regime. Bahraini students and exiles, involved in organisations like RAPAR, alongside partners like Manchester Metropolitan University Student Union (MMUnion) and the NUS (Iau, 2011) have been instrumental in raising awareness of the developments in Bahrain, organising a conference and articulating the voices and experiences of the oppressed. To this end, whilst the master narrative has found traction amongst Bahrainis living within the territorial borders of the state, within personal relationships, voices from the

margins and in exile are less inclined to adhere to such narratives, finding different avenues and vehicles to express political, economic and social grievances.

Concluding Thoughts

The Bahraini case is an important contemporary example of how states can successfully define and ultimately construct the terms of a conflict, by imposing a hegemonic narrative, backed by state force. By employing a sectarian narrative, the Bahraini regime has sought to disempower a non-sectarian democratic mobilisation. This was supported by employing both hard and soft power strategies, to mixed success. By representing itself as the only antidote to the apparently inevitable implosion of the delicate social order, the state successfully fixed the interpretative framework and forced it onto events, for both domestic and international consumption. Such a conclusion reveals a great deal about the political climate within Bahrain, along with latent fears about security and sovereignty, struggling to prevent external manipulation, but also, about regional power relations and Bahrain's position within the Gulf. By embracing such a narrative, it delegitimised the protests, (mis)representing them as a sectarian uprising. The additional tragedy, is that this violent quashing of dissent has antagonised the moderate voices and risks alienating – or radicalising – them (Zunes, Op Cit), while dismantling genuine democratic demands and altering the terms of the struggle. The sectarianism framework absolves the state of the need for political reform domestically, although for international audiences, such noises are still required, and diffuses the democratic demands of citizens. In addition, the protestors themselves got trapped in the master-narrative which pervaded the national, transnational and international arenas. When confronted by a persistent and powerful master-narrative with far-reaching tentacles, the opposition were weakened and unable to withstand and challenge the interpretation of the conflict. Dissent was increasingly marginalised and found recourse only in exile, online and in the realms of universal narratives and norms offered by transnational NGOs.

In promoting a sectarian master narrative, the Al Khalifa regime has also sought to locate the Kingdom's problems within the broader schism affecting the Muslim world.

Stressing the sectarian nature of the conflict feeds into wider narratives of Iranian subversion across the region, positioning Bahrain at the epicentre of the Sunni/Shi'i confrontation. By invoking this sectarian master narrative, the state is failing to engage with the complexity of the domestic problem, making it increasingly difficult for opposition voices to find space to express their grievances, and delaying the need to address them constructively, while risking a further tarnishing of its image internationally.

In the case of Bahrain, the expansion of political spaces – to the transnational and the virtual in particular - has not resulted in greater freedoms or democratisation. Instead these spaces have been violently shut down, controlled or co-opted, meaning that counter-narratives and views challenging the regime are relegated to increasingly narrow spaces that are subjected to the same pressures and threats as physical sites. The sectarian narrative fuelled fears of an unravelling nation and instability in the state, thereby justifying the increased use of force and discipline towards citizens, and border controls - discursive and physical. This cycle renews authoritarian regimes and gives them greater legitimacy while silencing and cracking down on dissent within. This trend is by no means confined to Bahrain, we see it in even in a democracy like Turkey which has been sliding towards authoritarianism at least since the Gezi Park protests of May- June 2013. Whether Gezi Park, Lulu Roundabout or Tahrir Square, political sites are being subjected to violent crackdowns, and political spaces forced to retreat and be reconfigured elsewhere, needing constant protection and vigilance. What is perhaps distinct about Bahrain's renewed authoritarianism is the level of support and complicity it received from its international allies, which both physically and metaphorically arm the regime.

[1] Amy Austin Holmes (2016) points out that in terms of the Arab Uprisings, the highest levels of popular support, relative to population were in Bahrain. She attributes the high level of mobilisation to 'the organisational capacity of trade unions and professional associations in Bahrain'. See Amy Austin Holmes (2016) "Working in the Revolution in Bahrain: From the Mass Strike to Everyday Forms of Medical Provision" *Social Movement Studies* Vol. 15, No. 1, pp. 105-114

[2] Eg. On 20 February 2011, 80-85% of employees in Bahrain took part in a nation-wide strike. For more details see Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry, 'Report of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry', 23 November 2011, http://www.bici.org.bh/BICIreportEN.pdf

[3] See the work of Ibn Khaldun, who discusses the importance of tribal kinship within communities. See: Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah, Book 1, An Introduction to History* translated by Franz Rosenthal, (Pantheon Books Inc: New York, 1958)

[5] This extended to the use of different languages, including Sindi, Gujarati, English, Arabic, Persian in the different businesses and industries. There was also a marked difference between the Arabic spoken by the Shi'i and the Sunnis. (Fuccaro, Op. Cit., 67)
[6] For a history of the role played by trade unions and professional associations in the 2011 uprising, see Amy Austin Holmes (2016) "Working in the Revolution in Bahrain: From the Mass Strike to Everyday Forms of Medical Provision" *Social Movement Studies* Vol. 15, No. 1, pp. 105-114
[7] The 'Al-Bandar Report' published by the Bahrain Center for Human Rights, September 2006 is available at http://www.bahrainrights.org/node/528 The author, Salah al-Bandar, a Briton of Sudanese origins who worked in the Royal Court Affairs Ministry, was subsequently expelled from Bahrain after the report publication.
[8] Reliable statistics are difficult to come by, and go up to 75 per cent estimates of the Shia population Justin Gengler's figures are arguably the most accurate, and are a more conservative 58%. 'Facts on the Ground: a reliable estimate of Bahrain's Sunni-Shi'i Balance and Evidence of Demographic Engineering' 5 April 2011 http://bahrainipolitics.blogspot.co.uk/2011/04/facts-on-ground-reliable-estimate-of.html Gengler explains the gap between his stats and those more commonly held with the high rate of Sunni naturalisation over the past decade (discussed below).
[9] See, for instance Fawaz Al Khalifa, the Minister of State for Communications, (@fawaz_alkhalifa) posting a photo of the Hizballah flag on the 10th August 2013.
[10] For example, in July 2014 the US diplomat Tom Malinowski was ordered to leave the island after meeting with the opposition party Al Wifaq.
[11] This was emphasised repeatedly in our interviews, in written communications and in the printed word by those who took part.
[12] For an comprehensive account see Human Rights Watch report, ' "The Blood of People who don't Cooperate" – Continuing Torture and Mistreatment of Detainees in Bahrain', November 22, 2015, https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/11/22/blood-people-who-dont-cooperate/continuing-torture-and-mistreatment-detainees
[13] The Pearl Monument was a famous Bahraini landmark, made up of six dhows, with a pearl perched on top. The sails represented the six member states of the GCC, with the pearl their united heritage. It was constructed in 1982 to mark Bahrain's hosting of the GCC summit, and was situated in the centre of Manama.
[14] See Michael Barnett, *Dialogues in Arab Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998)
[15] See for example, a 2012 report from Human Rights Watch, *Building a Better World Cup*, (12.06.12), available at: http://www.hrw.org/reports/2012/06/12/building-better-world-cup-0, a 2013 report from Amnesty International, *The Dark Side of Migration: Spotlight on Qatar's Construction Sector Ahead of the World Cup,* (2013), available at: http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE22/010/2013/en/ca15040d-290e-4292-8616-d7f845beed7e/mde220102013en.pdf and a 2012 Al Jazeera investigation, *Inside Story – The plight of Qatar's migrant workers* (14.06.12), available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=USpgXmVveHA
[16] Including one of the authors of this paper.
[17] Verbal and written communications with several interviewees based in Bahrain and in the UK.
[18] See for example, BBC HARDtalk, *Jalal Fairooz – Former Bahraini Opposition MP,* (25.12.12), available at: http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01pjsql

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