

Chances for conflict resolution in Bahrain

A search for the causes of the conflict in Bahrain, and linking these to conflict theories and policy of international actors in order to resolve the conflict

Jacqueline van Dooren
Radboud University Nijmegen



International Community

Summer 2012

Bahrain

- Fact-finding*
- Report on situation*
- Condemn violence*
- Start reconciliation*
- Political reforms*
- Resolve economic inequality*

Chances for conflict resolution in Bahrain

A search for the causes of the conflict in Bahrain, and linking these to conflict theories and policy of international actors in order to resolve the conflict

Jacqueline van Dooren
Master Thesis
Radboud University Nijmegen

J.W.M. van Dooren
S4076044

Radboud University Nijmegen
Nijmegen School of Management
Human Geography
'Conflicts, Territories & Identities'
Master Thesis

Supervisor: Dr. W.M. Verkoren, MA
Second reader: Dr. H.W. Bomert

August 15, 2012

Explanatory notes on title, front page, and reading guide

This research explores the causes of the conflict in Bahrain and what has been done by the international community to address these causes. Based on this it will appear what has been done, and which possibilities for resolution remain.

The image of the to-do list also refers to these chances. Meant as a means for triggering attention, it is not to be understood literally. First of all, this research does not want to pinpoint to the international community (nor anyone else) what it has done wrong, or what it should do. In international relations we have past that way of working, so it is more meant as a guide: *if* an international actor wants to get (more) involved in Bahrain, it might use this research to see what would be an action with high efficiency.

Secondly, whereas this research deals with a part of the international community, it is here represented as the whole international community, as if the whole international community was studied in this research. That was not possible. Also in this image, meant as a trigger, the community is projected as if it were one organization represented by the globe¹ as their logo. That is done for reasons of simplicity and for triggering the reader, because international community is a renowned term about all international actors. However it is certainly not one homogeneous group, as the international community is composed of very diverse actors: local organizations, international organizations, foreign governments, multilateral organizations, etcetera, all with their own motives and goals. In this research it was not possible to give a representative view of all actors in the international community, and so the term 'international actors' is used instead. The actors interviewed can be grouped under this term as will be explained later on, which is why they are here depicted as one image.

Thirdly, the to-do list projected here of course is not fully based on this research, as one otherwise might skip the rest of the content! The things-to-do that are projected are general ideas, and some examples of what the international community has done. For the actual to-do-list, please continue reading this research!

¹ Source of picture of the globe: Villa van Staden (2012) Cited June 12, 2012. <http://www.villavanstaden.nl/route1.html>. Source of the picture of the notepad: WP Clipart (2012). Cited June 12, 2012. http://www.wpclipart.com/education/supplies/paper/notepad_page.png.html

Executive Summary

Whereas there is much of attention for the Arab Spring, the conflict in the small Gulf island of Bahrain receives considerable less attention in science, media, and policy. The limited publications that have appeared present a gap between reports about the current situation and a scientific understanding of the protests and chances for resolution; and theories and policy on this. This research aimed to reduce this gap by thoroughly analyzing the causes of the protests and linking these to which causes were addressed by selected international actors. In doing so, reflections were made on the used theories and policy of these actors. The research question was:

What caused the uprisings in Bahrain in February 2011 and how have these causes been addressed by international actors, The Netherlands in particular?

By analyzing the case of Bahrain, reflections could also be made on the theory and policy, which formed additional goals of this research.

Three root causes – social, socio-economic, and political – and three direct causes – Arab Spring, economic crisis, and the special date – were studied in theory, using conflict theories and literature, and in practice, through interviews and observations in Bahrain and among international actors. All categories of causes appeared to have contributed more or less to the eruption of protests in Bahrain in February 2011, except for the economic crisis. The international actors studied have done small interventions to make contributions to the addressing of the causes, a fact that is little known about. There remain many possibilities for conflict resolution by addressing the causes, but the most suitable actor to do this would be the Bahraini government itself.

The main cause of conflict was political discontent. The theories of Hegre et al. (2001) were proven, that a situation between autocracy and democracy is very prone to conflict. Besides not fully democratic, Bahrain is neither inclusive, which proved Reynal-Querol's theory (2004). Lastly, the process of democratization, which Bahrain is in since decades, is also an indicator for conflict, as Mansfield and Snyder (1995) proved. Additionally the 'bad leaders' were a cause of political discontent. To address the political causes, small efforts were made by the international actors interviewed. Assistance is given in reform of the judiciary by the US Embassy and the ICRC has helped in reforming the military.

Secondly, socio-economic inequality and unemployment contributed to the discontent causing the conflict. Woodward's theory (2004) applies, namely there is high unemployment, and this is unequally spread among Shia and Sunni. Not only do Shia face more unemployment, they face economic and social inequality (in the sense of receiving goods and services from the government) as well. The whole population was disappointed in the promises for democracy in 2001 and 2002, and the example of change in other Arab Spring countries, which caused aspirational deprivation (Gurr's theory 1970). Also there was a slight decremental deprivation because the economic growth decreased right before the protests, however the economic growth was not much higher before that period. Not any of these root causes has been addressed by the international actors spoken to, nor was anything found in the literature.

Thirdly important was a direct cause: the Arab Spring. The geographical proximity of the Arab Spring gave the Bahraini hope that they could achieve change (Hegre et al.2001). This cause cannot be addressed and so this was not done by the international actors.

A fourth cause of conflict was the social aspect, because the ethnic heterogeneity contributed to the outbreak of protests (theory of Hegre et al.2001). While the conflict transformed, other social causes, mainly the sectarian divide, increased in importance, however this was no cause. Remarkable therefore is that this "cause" is being addressed through small projects of the British Embassy. They have one project on primary and high schools about social acceptance, and organized an exchange with Northern-Ireland for key figures of the Bahraini society. Some actors decided to do something about the protests. Bahrain is important for military reasons (for the USA), economic aspects (for all countries doing business with Bahrain), and for the stability in the region (especially seen the relations with Iran, and the Shia-Sunni division present in most Gulf states). Although not much was done, nor could be done, due to governmental restrictions, it appears that a few of these projects were related to the causes of conflict. The UK draws the relation to the conflict in Northern-Ireland, which has many similarities to the conflict in Bahrain. Because in that conflict much attention is paid to the mutual relations between Catholics and Protestants, the UK mainly pays attention to the social aspect in Bahrain as well. The USA is more focused on the judiciary sector, and the unequal and undemocratic character of this forms an important cause for the opposition to rise. A French company and the BICI are assisting the media to become more independent, another means to improve democracy. The BICI recommendations were mainly focused on the prevention of human rights abuses, but their ideas about reform in the police and military appear to help addressing the root cause of the lack of democracy. The ICRC has also contributed to this reform through organizing workshops. Also the reform in media by the BICI and a French company contribute to the addressing of this cause.

The exact date of February 14th was determined by the events on that day nine and ten years ago; the National Action Charter and constitution. This direct cause can neither be addressed. The political discussions about the family law, and the ideas of Shia leaders about including Iranian leaders in these decisions, caused political agitation right before February 14. Also this cause was not addressed by the international actors spoken to.

The social causes appeared the least important, even though this is the major impression after reading newspapers. Economic causes, but especially political causes were more important factors.

However this research studied more theories and it appeared that not all applied (in full). The struggle between Shia and Sunni only arose while the conflict was transforming and was no cause. This means that the theory of Oberschall (2000) does not relate to the cause of conflict, but to a later stage, for the case of Bahrain. Further research is needed to study whether this also is the case in other conflicts. Also Juergensmeyer (2003) and Stern (2003) were not right that the cause of conflict is religion. The aspect of religion only applies to the most religious communities of society and not the society in general, and this cause has therefore only limited value for Bahrain. This important new insight could help understanding other conflicts, and religious differences. It shows that a difference in religion does not have to be a determinant of conflict.

Two theories could be adapted, based on the case of Bahrain. Gurr's theory (1970) should also include political deprivation and not only economic deprivation. Brubaker and Laitin (1998) claimed that conflicts are being ethnicized to achieve attention from the international community, but it was found that a link between this is the media. The media first makes the image of the conflict, on which the international community will consequently base its policy. Therefore the role of the media is more important in this regard.

Based on the theories, recommendations can be done regarding the policy of international actors active for Bahrain. First, a political dialogue should be restarted, guided by an international actor with interest in Bahrain such as the United States, which has already started a small project related to judiciary reform. Alternatively, an actor with deep-rooted relations could assist, such as the United Kingdom. From the theories follows that democracy is the best political situation to prevent violent conflict, however the choice will have to be made by Bahrain whether they want this. If so, a plan for democratization should be designed, after which implementation can start. During this difficult process, attention should be paid to bad leaders, and to the representation of Shia in political and judiciary institutions. Regarding economic causes, unemployment can be combated through trade with the international actors, stimulated by embassies. Aspirational deprivation will have to be prevented by not making false promises in economic and political sense, which unfortunately has happened in the history of Bahrain. Regarding the social causes, the UK Embassy seems to have good projects relating to social tolerance. These could become part of a bigger plan in which multiple actors could cooperate to diminish the influence of sectarianism, by using the theories of Oberschall for example. However the conflict resolution process will also be dependent on the agenda of the international community, the situation of the Middle East, the opportunities present for resolution, and the unity of actors.

Contents

Explanatory notes on title, front page, and reading guide.....	3
Executive Summary	4
Contents	6
Preface.....	8
List of Abbreviations.....	9
1. Introduction.....	10
2. Contextual framework.....	14
2.1 Geographical context	14
2.1.1 General statistics	14
2.1.2 Population.....	14
2.1.3 Economy	15
2.1.4 Political and legal system.....	17
2.1.5 Military	18
2.1.6 International relations	18
2.2 Historical context	18
2.2.1 Early history	19
2.2.2 Modern history	19
2.2.3 The Arab Spring.....	21
Conclusion.....	27
3. Theoretical framework.....	28
3.1 Definitions of general terms	28
3.1.1 Conflict, war, rebellion.....	28
3.1.2 Defining the actors.....	29
3.2 Theories on causes of conflict and their solution	30
3.2.1 Root causes.....	30
3.2.2 Direct causes.....	39
Conclusion.....	39
4. Methodology	42
4.1 Choice and demarcation of topic	42
4.1.1 Topic: from refugees to causes.....	42
4.1.2 General design	43
4.1.3 Research sub question 1: causes	44
4.1.4 Research sub question 2: the addressing of causes by international actors.....	45
4.2 Data collection	45
4.2.1 Literature study	45
4.2.2 Interviews	46
4.2.3 Observation	48

4.3 Data processing	49
4.4 Planning and unforeseen circumstances	49
Ethical reflection	49
5. Causes of the protests in Bahrain in February 2011.....	52
5.1 Weighing the causes	52
5.2 Root causes	53
5.2.1 Social causes	53
5.2.2 Socio-economic causes	58
5.2.3 Political causes.....	62
5.3 Direct causes	64
5.3.1 Bad neighborhood	64
5.3.2 Economic crisis.....	65
5.3.3 Special date.....	66
5.3.4 Family law	66
5.4 Conclusion	66
6. Addressing the causes of the conflict in Bahrain by international actors	69
6.1 Root causes	69
6.1.1 Social causes	69
6.2 Socio-economic causes	70
6.3 Political causes.....	71
Direct causes	73
Action of the Netherlands.....	74
Other actions.....	74
Conclusion.....	75
7. Conclusion and recommendations.....	78
7.1 Research goal 1: understanding Bahrain	78
7.2 Research goal 2: Improving theories.....	79
7.3 Research goal 3: Improving policy	81
7.4 Recommendations for further research	84
Literature	85
Attachments	91
1. List of interview respondents.....	91
2. Interview and observation guide	92

Preface

Finally, after more than one year of writing, this thesis has come to an end. Due to the unforeseen circumstances the project took much more time and effort than was expected. However, because the topic was very interesting, and became only more so due to the complications, I enjoyed almost every minute of it. Although my first impression was that I would perform this research independently, on my own, I happened to need a lot of people and so I would like to thank them deeply for their support, help, and ideas. The graces don't follow an order of importance; everybody deserves a great place here.

First of all, without UNHCR I would have never chosen Bahrain as a topic of study. Thanks to their suggestion I had great experiences at UNHCR during the internship; afterwards during studying Bahrain; and during the internship at the embassy. If it weren't for UNHCR I would have ended up in a totally different place, and missed all the great experiences I had now. Big thanks especially goes to René Bruin, Head of Office of UNHCR the Netherlands as he was my supervisor for the internship and my thesis. My fellow interns helped me with brainstorming about the subject, and just discussing the topic with them helped in specifying the research.

Also I am extremely thankful for the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Everybody appeared very enthusiastic and stimulating regarding my research and interest in the region. The previous consul, who in the first place arranged my internship at the embassy in Kuwait; the current consul; the Dutch Ambassador to Kuwait; my colleagues in the embassy; and officials in the Ministry. Thanks to them, I was very well prepared before travelling to the region; I received full support during the period abroad; I gained access to many actors; and I learned so much through the whole internship. I have already thanked them many times but it should also be written here, as their support helped me for the research and for my whole personal development. Also here my fellow intern appeared of great help, for expressing my doubts and sorrows about the project; for technical questions about performing research; and for translations from Arabic to Dutch/English. Mohammed, I enjoyed your company during our time in the embassy.

Of course the Radboud University has helped me a lot as well. First, Mathijs van Leeuwen was my supervisor. He already gave some useful tips, even though I was thinking about completely different topics than I ended up with. Willemijn Verkoren assisted me especially through the whole Bahrain-thesis process. Thanks to her critical feedback the thesis became much better than it used to be. Her feedback was positive and supportive, and challenged me to improve myself, which I can tell from experience is not easy: many thanks!

Then in the personal field, I owe many thanks to my parents, sister, partner, and friends. They supported my efforts and kept doing so even when the outlook was not much promising at all. Talking to them already helped a lot, and the outstanding scientific qualities of my little sister even appeared extremely useful. Also the academic background of my parents was of good use. I am very proud of you all and am grateful for our good relation. Sjoerd, you have been extremely patient with me and I respect you deeply for that. I could always count on you for moral support and understanding. Thank you for the good circumstances under which I was able to write this thesis. My dear friends, you helped me to relax every once in a while with a deep laughter, even over Skype. Vicky, thank you so much for sharing your outstanding skills in English in order to improve the language aspect of this thesis. You did much more than merely a language check and helped a lot in improving this thesis!

Afterwards I can say, I learned much more than I expected, I had some tough moments for the first time in my studies, but it was all worth it in the end.

List of Abbreviations

BICI	Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry
BHRS	Bahrain Human Rights Society
BHRWS	Bahrain Human Rights Watch Society
BYSHR	Bahrain Youth Society for Human Rights
FTA	Free Trade Agreement
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INGO	International Non Governmental Organization
IPRI	International Peace Research Institute
MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
NUG	National Union Gathering
QU	Qatar University
RUSI	Royal United Service Institute
UN	United Nations
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America

1. Introduction

"In a sense there is no 'opposition' in Bahrain, as the phrase implies one unified block with the same views. Such a phrase is not in our constitution, unlike say the United Kingdom. We only have people with different views and that's okay"

His Majesty Sheikh Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, King of Bahrain, February 2012².

On February 14th, 2011, thousands of people gathered at the Pearl Roundabout after a call on social media to commemorate the National Action Charter and the constitution, established in 2001 and 2002 respectively. Nobody, including the organizers, expected it to be this widely supported: Sunni, Shia and expats, representatives of all layers of society attended the event. This became known as Bahrain's Arab Spring. All around the Arab world, people gathered themselves in the Arabian streets in 2011 and 2012 to demand more democracy and human rights from their leaders. In chronological order, the Arab Spring found its way in to the following countries: Tunisia, Algeria, Libya, Egypt, Yemen, Lebanon, Palestine and Jordan, Bahrain and Iran, Morocco, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and Syria³. Some protests were more prolonged than others, and some received more international attention. While much attention has been given to Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Syria for example, the Kingdom of Bahrain⁴ received considerable less consideration. Even though the small island has only over one million inhabitants, the uprisings are serious and still has not ceased until this day. Whereas other Arab Spring countries faced regime change, a first impression reveals no big changes in Bahrain after this period. Therefore, a solution might not be within reach yet. Although the above quote of the king of Bahrain suggests that there is freedom to protest and to express different views, the answer of the Bahraini government to this opposition was serious. A permanent state of emergency was declared, there was military assistance from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) to control the situation (troops from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates), protesters were detained, and there were numerous violations of human rights of protesters⁵. On the other hand, there was also the intention from the Bahraini government to change these bad practices, mainly through the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI). Even in spite of these complex circumstances, the media, the international community, and the scientific world seem to focus on other conflicts. If Bahrain is mentioned in the media, it is short, or it is about the consequences of the conflict. For example, much attention was given to the issue whether the Grand Prix could still be held due to the 'civil unrest'⁶.

Research has amongst others focused on the history of Bahrain (see for example Niblock 1980, Cottrell 1980, Al-Khalifa 1986), the border issue between Bahrain and Qatar (International Court of Justice 1999), and oil (Clarke 1991). There is only a marginal amount of literature on the recent political situation of Bahrain (see for example Zweiri 2007, Niethammer 2006, and Gengler 2009), and there is even less on the recent conflict (apart from small articles from Gengler, Stephens, Kinninmont, and a very recent study from Akbari and Stern). There are non-scientific reports and articles on the current human rights situation in Bahrain from non-governmental organizations (NGOs), however, the reports with much background information date from before the Arab Spring. Additionally, there are articles in news magazines (The Economist, Time, NRC, The Guardian, NU.nl, and so forth) about the uprisings in Bahrain. These are also not scientific, and often only mention new facts and no or limited understanding of the causes of the conflict. This research is aimed at making this information gap smaller, in providing new, reliable information about Bahrain.

As in every research, decisions had to be made where to put the focus on. As there is such limited information available on Bahrain, a logical first step is to analyze the causes of the conflict. However, Bahrain is small and the ambitions of the researcher are high, thus the topic could be broader than merely the causes of the conflict. The research aims at analyzing possibilities for conflict resolution because of the researcher's pacifist background. To limit the range of all that conflict resolution can be, this research



² Reuters (2012). Bahrain king dismisses opposition as disunited [online]. Cited 13 February 2012. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/02/12/us-bahrain-king-opposition-idUSTRE81B0CV20120212>

³ The Guardian (2011). The path of protest [online]. Cited June 2011. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/interactive/2011/mar/22/middle-east-protest-interactive-timeline>

⁴ Although the official name is 'Kingdom of Bahrain', for sake of simplicity 'Bahrain' will be used throughout this research.

⁵ The Economist (2011). Bloodshed in Bahrain: A Gulf state that is an odd man out [online]. Cited June 2011. <http://www.economist.com/node/18187110>

⁶ Based on the GoogleAlert that was followed from spring 2011 to summer 2012 and Formula 1 (2011). Bahrain 2011 reinstated, as India becomes season finale [online]. Cited December 22, 2011. <http://www.formula1.com/news/headlines/2011/6/12132.html>

will connect the found causes to the resolution of the conflict by looking at which of the causes have been addressed by international actors. A hidden assumption in this is that addressing the causes of conflicts will help in resolving them. This sounds logically, since these causes were the reason why people started protesting in February 2011 in the first place. On the other hand, in practice it appears that conflicts can transform over time: demands of the parties, and the conflicting parties themselves, change. A first observation shows that the protests in Bahrain on February 14th in both 2011 and in 2012 called for the same demands (more democracy, illustrated by the famous phrase “*Down, down Hamad!*”). Thus the root cause of political dissatisfaction might not have changed much. However, this will be carefully analyzed later on in this research. The root cause approach is very important, whether the causes did or did not change. If the conflict did transform, the root causes will still form a major component of the conflict, because this was the trigger to the conflict in the first place. Root causes have been simmering for a long time, and therefore will not be removed from people’s minds in a short time span. Resolving these causes will help Bahrain significantly. If the conflict did not transform, the root cause approach is even more logical to resolve the conflict, as these causes still are the reason for conflict.

A second comment that needs to be clarified here is that one group of causes will not be discussed in this thesis, namely that of resources (sometimes referred to as the ‘resource curse’). This research analyzes the direct causes, the triggers that caused the conflict to erupt on that specific February 14. It also addresses the indirect or root causes, the grievances that were present in Bahrain since long and indirectly led to the outburst. However, the resource curse theories would form a new chapter in these causes, as it seems to have created the root causes of conflict, and therefore form a third layer, and a different type of cause. In addition, it is very difficult to achieve data on this, as much is related to the government and revenues they make from for instance the oil industry. Thus, to study this thoroughly would have been impossible. This third layer could better be analyzed in a separate study.

A third note is that removing the causes of conflicts is certainly not the only solution to resolve conflicts. Other options include suppression of the conflict or focusing on other aspects that might be easier to address (for example financial support to keep people satisfied). The advantage of the root cause approach is that it addresses the underlying feelings. Once these are addressed, the conflict will truly be resolved, and not only silenced, which most probably will be the case with the other solutions. With the root cause approach, if applied in full, a sustainable peace will be created.

Lastly, another delineation has been made. As mentioned before, conflict resolution is a broad term, and many actors can be involved in the process. In Bahrain, actors such as the Bahraini government, local NGOs, neighboring Saudi Arabia, and the United States of America (USA) (with its fifth fleet located in Bahrain) come into mind as being important actors. To give a thorough analysis, this research will put the main focus on conflict resolution performed by international actors and in particular the Netherlands. What these international actors are will be defined in chapter three. The choice for international actors, and the Netherlands in particular, was made because the researcher has a Dutch background. She is thus able to analyze this perspective better than for instance the Bahraini perspective, as the researcher has broad access to this group of Dutch actors.

Following these considerations, research questions can be posed in order to structure this study. The main research question is:

What caused the uprisings in Bahrain in February 2011 and how have these causes been addressed by international actors, the Netherlands in particular?

This question will be answered structurally. Firstly it is important to gain an understanding of the situation of Bahrain, what problems the country faces, and how this conflict relates to the past, and to former conflicts. Information on this will provide guidance on what the causes of the most recent conflict are. This will be done in chapter two; the contextual framework. The second step is to analyze possible causes of conflict, and ways in which these causes can be addressed in theory. This is done in chapter three; the theoretical framework. This chapter also demarcates the main definitions that are used throughout this research, in order to avoid misunderstandings. These two chapters will be based on existing literature. They will summarize existing information and theories, and look critically towards this information by means of a perspective focused on Bahrain. The following part of this research will be based on more recent information which is in hands of Bahrain experts, the Bahraini people, and policy makers that are occupied with Bahrain. Therefore, the only way to obtain this information is through interviews. Further explanation and justification for the chosen methods is given in chapter four. However, a preview of the

Graffiti in Bahrain symbolizing the cause of conflict?
Source: Jacqueline van Dooren



chapter is important here, as that chapter deals with the research sub questions that guide the rest of the research. The two research sub questions that will be answered are:

1. *What are the causes of the uprisings in Bahrain in February 2011?*
2. *Which causes of conflict in Bahrain have been addressed by international actors, the Netherlands in particular?*

Chapter five starts with the first question. To answer this, theories on causes of conflict (studied in chapter three) will be applied to the circumstances in Bahrain. The chapter will analyze which of the possible causes were present in Bahrain. The second research sub question is discussed in chapter six. This chapter will link the causes of the conflict in Bahrain (found in chapter five) to the actions of conflict resolution of the international actors (found in the contextual framework, mainly the part about the Arab Spring in Bahrain, and in the interviews). Using this structure, the main research question can be answered in the conclusion. Based on these conclusions, an outlook will be discussed on which causes could receive more attention in the future. This could help policy makers involved in Bahrain.

As this outline exemplifies, a lot of theory and policy will also be used and reviewed. Although the main perspective is from Bahrain, and which theories and policy measures can help Bahrain, there are more goals entangled within this research.

The first goal was earlier explained above in detail; the research aims to understand the conflict in Bahrain, focused on the causes and the addressing of those causes. This goal is important for Bahrain and other actors for a number of reasons, beside the named lack of information.

By paying attention to Bahrain this research can generate an increased support and understanding for the situation of the country. This is done by means of publication of this research, but also through talking about the subject to colleagues, Bahraini and Kuwaiti citizens, friends and family. More attention can lead to more direct support for Bahrain in politics and development.

Although it seems like an open door, this research is designed to help Bahrain in dealing with its conflict. In providing more information, which is based on long-term scientific research, a greater understanding for each party in the conflict will be possible. Also, this research does not only analyze, but will result in delivering clear recommendations on where the gaps of conflict resolution are. These can be used by the Bahraini government, but also by other parties involved, like the GCC, the National Commission and local and international NGOs. By learning from Bahrain, also other conflict areas can be helped in the future by applying the best and bad practices to their situation.

And the importance of this research stretches further. In a globalized world, conflicts can have widespread effects, and therefore it is also in the gain of others that there is peace in Bahrain. Looking from a Western perspective, there are economic, political and other interests in Bahrain. For economic reasons, Bahrain is attractive because of its diversified, high quality trade sector. A Dutch public officer said that *"if there is anything that is killing for economic success, it is war"*⁷. Greater levels of conflict cause trade to be more difficult⁸. Therefore it is not only in the interest of the inner market of Bahrain, but also for its trading partners, such as the Netherlands, that a solution for the conflict is found. Stability is in the interest of the Netherlands, but also of the economic development of Bahrain⁹. Bahrain, politically speaking, is an important crossroad in the region. It is on this small island where both Sunni and Shia¹⁰ Muslims live and where sharing power among these two groups causes trouble. There have been many speculations about the influence of Iran, consisting of mainly Shia, as an interfering power in the conflict. This was supposedly done through supporting, training or coordinating the Bahraini Shia. Sunni majority Saudi Arabia is involved in the conflict, seen its military presence in March 2011. In this way, Bahrain could become the front between the Shia and the Sunni's, causing a major clash in the Arab world¹¹. Another effect of conflict is that it can produce refugees, who might end up needing residence in the Netherlands. By understanding the conflict situation, a better response can be given in case Bahraini refugees might come and seek asylum. The Dutch government has repeatedly stated it wants to decrease flows of migrants to the Netherlands, and by understanding the situation these flows can be prevented¹². Additionally, for a safe world without human rights violations, it is important that the conflict in Bahrain is resolved. As we have seen with the Arab Spring, conflict can easily spread throughout a region and infect many other regions. It is therefore in the importance of the whole world that the conflict in Bahrain is understood, and hopefully eventually resolved. The lessons that are learned from Bahrain might help other countries that faced the Arab Spring, since their circumstances might be similar. Also the goal is to help

⁷ Interview with public officer of the Dutch Ministry for Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation on January 27, 2012.

⁸ Polachek, S.W. (1980). Conflict and Trade. In: Journal of Conflict Resolution 24 (55), P.60.

⁹ Advisory Council on International Affairs (2012). De Arabische region, een onzekere toekomst [online]. Cited August 11, 2012. <http://www.aiv-advies.nl/> p.26

¹⁰ There are different ways to spell Shia/Shi'a. For reasons of consistency, Shia will be used here.

¹¹ Reformatorisch Dagblad (2011). Confrontatie Iran en golfstaten lijkt kwestie van tijd [online]. Cited May 23, 2011.

¹² Advisory Council on International Affairs (2012). De Arabische region, een onzekere toekomst [online]. Cited August 11, 2012. <http://www.aiv-advies.nl/> p.27

other regions facing conflicts. This will mostly be limited to conflicts that resemble the Bahraini case, however, this can still be a broad range since issues like democracy and inequality seem to be at stake in Bahrain. This research hopes to contribute to that goal; help getting Bahrain and other conflict areas on their way to sustainable peace.

The second goal of this research is of a theoretical kind. This goal is a side effect from studying Bahrain by using theories, but the goal is much more important than merely a side effect. Although ample has been learned about conflicts in the past decades, many discussions remain. For example, the question whether conflicts are caused by greed or by grievance is still a heated debate in the sector. This discussion also seems to be present in Bahrain: is it greed of the rulers which causes dissatisfaction among the people, or are there (sectarian) grievances in Bahrain? There is also a vivid discussion present about whether democracy prevents conflict or not. As Bahrain does not seem to be a complete democracy, these theories can also be tested. Resulting from premises on why conflicts erupt, the approach on how to resolve them is equally discussed in the scientific debate. Is democracy the key to peaceful societies? And if it is, how should democracy then be implemented? How can ethnic or sectarian groups best be represented in government? These discussions about causes of and resolutions to conflict seem to be present in Bahrain. Studying this specific case can therefore give more insight in these theories: do they work in Bahrain, and if so how, and whether these theories need to be changed. This research could thus provide more insight in the value and applicability of these theories. This can help the scientific debate on conflict causes and their resolutions in the future, and in other conflicts. Refining theories will help in understanding conflicts in general, so that eventually their resolving will be easier and more successful. This goal will therefore also be tried to achieved, in chapters five, six and the conclusion.

The last goal evaluates policy and also results from studying the Bahrain case. The logic follows the same as that of the theories: actors involved in Bahrain follow policy, and by evaluating Bahrain, the policy will also be evaluated as a (very important!) side effect. First, an overview of the policy of the actors will be given in the contextual framework and in chapter six. Second, it will be studied whether this policy addresses the causes of the Bahraini conflict, using the root causes that were found in chapter five. A clear overview of this will reveal possible gaps and answer the question whether the actors address the causes. The causes that they do not address, and additional findings, will serve as policy recommendations. If not all causes are addressed in this case, it might be the same with other cases. A possible recommendation could be to look more closely at the causes of conflict before making policy to resolve it.

Summarizing, the goals of this research are:

<u>Empirical</u>	understanding the causes of the conflict in Bahrain, and their resolutions so far by international actors
<u>Theoretical</u>	improving theories that explain conflicts, by testing them to the reality of Bahrain
<u>Policy</u>	improving policy of international actors regarding Bahrain by evaluating their current policy

Time demarcation

Although most demarcations have yet been made, it is equally important to demarcate the time period discussed. This research will focus on the protests that started on February 14th, 2011. Short before this date there had not been many demonstrations, it was something new that started at that specific moment. What started then continues up until today and therefore these events can be grouped together as one movement. The end date is the end of the research; July 6th 2012.

2. Contextual framework

In order to understand the Bahrain of today, it is first important to have background information. This chapter deals with general statistics, the composition of the population, economy, the political and legal system, the military, and the international relations of Bahrain. This all is grouped under the label of 'geographical context'. The second part of this chapter describes the history of the country, with specific attention for the recent history of the Arab Spring. This information will help in understanding the protests of Bahraini people, and in finding the possible causes for these¹³.

Map 1. Bahrain

Source: CIA



2.1 Geographical context

This part describes the geographical situation of Bahrain, in the broadest sense of the word. It will appear that many of these aspects are relevant to understand the context in which the conflict of Bahrain has erupted.

2.1.1 General statistics

Bahrain, officially Dawlat Al Bahrayn (the country Bahrain), means 'two seas'¹⁴. The kingdom is composed of one big island and about 29 smaller islands¹⁵. Bahrain is connected to Saudi Arabia via the 26km long King Fahd Causeway, completed in 1986 (see map 1 for the general picture of Bahrain's geographical situation)¹⁶. The flag was chosen in 1933 and symbolizes peace or pearls (the white color) and the Islamic tribe of the Sharia (Islamic law), or the traditional color of all countries located in the Gulf, or the cloth where pearls were carried in traditionally (the red color)¹⁷. The five points of the zigzag represent the five pillars of Islam or the five governorates¹⁸.

2.1.2 Population

The estimation was that in 2010, 1,234,571 people lived in Bahrain, of whom 666,172 expatriates (54%)¹⁹. All Gulf countries are depending on expats, and Bahrain is a country

with the most native inhabitants compared to the other countries. The Bahraini expats mainly originate from South Asia: India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, the Philippines, Bangladesh and Korea²⁰. Expats make up about 83% of the workforce because they accept lower wages and poorer working conditions. The government of Bahrain has attempted to reform the employment and migration system to give native Bahraini's an equal chance to compete with them, but the number of expats has only increased. The fact that some of the expats live in areas that were sea access points for locals causes the feeling of being overtaken by the expats among some Bahraini. The BICI report however still labels the relations between expats and Bahraini's as '*generally cordial*'²¹. The influence of expats in the conflict therefore is unclear at this moment and will be studied in the following chapters.

Of the population, 1/5th is aged under 15 (20.5%) and the median age is 30.9 years. Compared to developed countries, this is relatively young, but compared to developing countries this is rather old. Bahrain is thus in the middle of this rank²².

Flag of Bahrain

Source: *Travelblog.org*



¹³ Decisions on terminology will be further explained and justified in chapter three, the theoretical framework. For reasons of consistency, the grouped protests in Bahrain will be referred to as 'conflict' from here on.

¹⁴ BBC (2011). Bahrain Profile [online]. Cited June 12, 2011. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/country_profiles/790690.stm

¹⁵ Al Jazeera (2011). Saudi Arabia's intervention in Bahrain [online]. Cited May 23, 2011.

<http://english.aljazeera.net/programmes/insidestory/2011/03/2011316105616297611.html>

¹⁶ SAMIRAD (2011). King Fahd Causeway (Bahrain Causeway) [online]. Cited May 23, 2011 <http://www.saudinf.com/main/g13.htm>

¹⁷ Verlinden, P. (2000). Oman en de emiraten aan de Golf. KIT Publishers: Amsterdam. P. 19.

Central Intelligence Agency (2011). The World Factbook: Bahrain [online]. Cited May 22, 2011.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ba.html>

¹⁸ Based on a conversation with a tour operator, who is employed through the Ministry of Interior.

¹⁹ Bahraini Census 2010 (2010). General Tables [online]. Cited December 23, 2011. http://www.census2010.gov.bh/results_en.php

²⁰ International Organisation for Migration (2012). Bahrain [online]. Cited February 12, 2012. <http://www.iom.int/jahia/Jahia/bahrain>

²¹ Bahrain Independent Commission for Inquiry (2011). Report of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry. P. 19

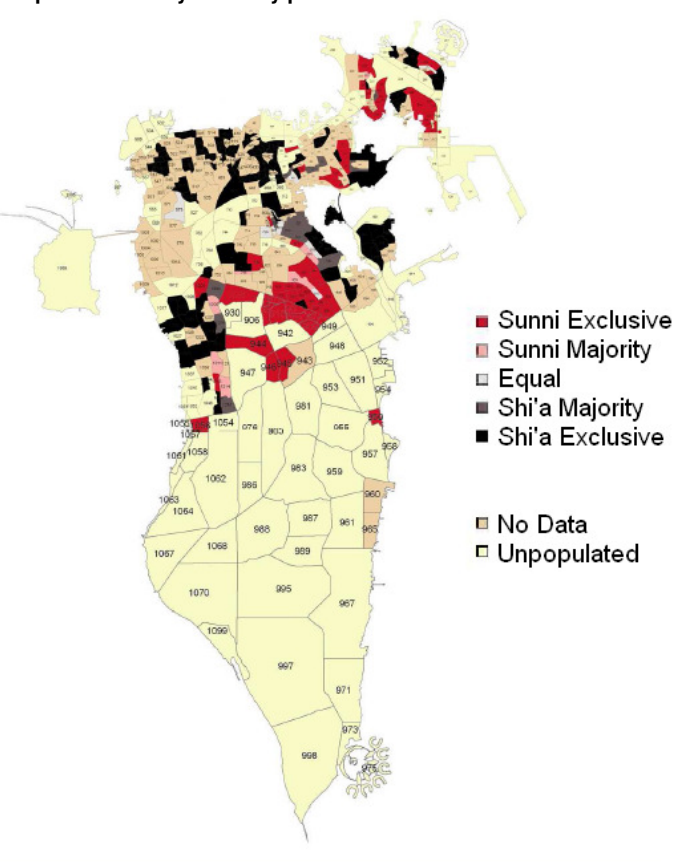
²² Central Intelligence Agency (2012). Bahrain [online]. Cited May 22, 2012. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ba.html>

The fact that the Bahraini flag symbolizes parts of Islam proves that the country has an Islamic background. The protests of the 1950s also took place in a religious framework (see history below). Therefore it is important to obtain general information on the importance of religion in Bahrain. The statistics however rather differ. The census data mention that 70.2% of the population is Muslim, however

most media state that 70% of the population is Shia-Muslim²⁴. A population study performed by Justin Gengler in 2009 contains a different number: Gengler states that 57.7% of the Muslims is Shia, and 42.4% Sunni²⁵. Gengler also studied the places of where the Sunni and Shia actually live. Map 2 shows that the groups live rather separated. Other data state that 9% of the population is Christian, a group that is almost never mentioned in reports on the conflict²⁶. There is the possibility that the conflict resembles that of Northern-Ireland. There, the groups are defined along sects as well ('Catholics' and 'Protestants') but the sect names became labels of the conflict parties and have little to do with religion anymore. The role of religion will therefore be carefully analyzed in the upcoming chapters.

What is often not mentioned in news articles is that beside different religious groups there are also several ethnic and religious subgroups within Bahrain. These do not cross the religious boundaries, which is probably the reason that they are not often mentioned. The Shia are divided among the Baharna and the Ajam, the latter being the minority. The Ajam have Iranian origins and "are traditionally close to the government" according to the Kuwait Times²⁷. The Sunni are mainly divided among the Najdis and Huwala, and to a lesser extent among groups of African descent²⁸. This could play a role in the conflict: some ethnic groups could be more involved than others. Therefore it is important to keep an eye on this as well in the following chapters.

Map 2. Bahrain by ethnicity per block²³



2.1.3 Economy

There are several economic causes that can contribute to the conflict. Therefore it is important to study the economic situation in Bahrain from the start of the first political protests, which was in the 1930s as mentioned previously.

One remarkable relation between the past protests and the economy is already visible: the start of protests coincided roughly with the discovery of oil. Before the discovery, namely from the 19th century until 1932, Bahrain was specialized in pearl fishing and shipbuilding²⁹. Bahrain was the first area in the region where oil was found and it also was the first in the region to exploit it, which caused an extreme rise in welfare³⁰. Because of this, an economic middle class developed³¹. From this viewpoint, one can consider Bahrain as being a resource-rich area. However, Bahrain actually only has a limited amount of oil: it is expected that the reserves are depleted roughly before 2030³². In 1997 the country even received the shared off-shore oil field Abu Safaa from Saudi Arabia. The government of Bahrain realized its oil-wealth would be over after a short time span, and that it had less oil compared to its neighbors. In order to decrease its dependency on oil and to earn its status in another sector than oil, a diversification program

²³ Gengler, J. (2011). Ethnic Conflict and Political Mobilization in Bahrain and the Arab Gulf. University of Michigan. P.139

²⁴ Bahraini Census 2010 (2010). General Tables [online]. Cited December 23, 2011. http://www.census2010.gov.bh/results_en.php. The media that refer to 70% of the population as being Shia are Al Jazeera, <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2011/02/2011214925802473.html> and Bahrain Center for Human Rights (2011). Religious Freedom for Shia in Bahrain :“Systematic Oppression and Marginalization” [online]. Cited May 26, 2011. <http://www.bahrainrights.org/node/1442>

²⁵ Gengler, J. (2011). Ethnic Conflict and Political Mobilization in Bahrain and the Arab Gulf. University of Michigan. P.134

²⁶ Central Intelligence Agency (2011). The World Factbook: Bahrain [online]. Cited May 22, 2011. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ba.html>

²⁷ Kuwait Times (2012). Political risks to watch in Bahrain. May 1st, 2012, p.8.

²⁸ Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (2011). Report of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry, p.22-23.

²⁹ Verlinden, P. (2000). Oman en de emiraten aan de Golf. KIT Publishers: Amsterdam. P. 6

³⁰ Ibid P.19

³¹ Niblock, T. (1980). Social and economic development in the Arab Gulf. Croom Helm: London, p.74.

³² Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (2011). Report of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry, p.16.

was started already in the 1980s³³. The main sector that has been promoted is the financial sector, but beside this Bahrain is also known for its construction industry, the production of alumina, and the procession of oil (from Saudi Arabia)³⁴. An additional part of the diversification plans was the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the United States. The Agreement was made in August 2006, which was the first FTA between the United States and a Gulf state³⁵. Although there still have been tough economic times in the 1980s (also due to the Gulf war), the diversification program has had positive results³⁶. Bahrain is depending less on oil than all other Gulf States³⁷. This does not mean that oil does not still form a huge share of the economy: petroleum production and refining count for more than 60% of Bahrain's export receipts, 70% of government revenues, and 11% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (exclusive of allied industries; the inclusive number is unavailable)³⁸.

Many theories relate resources to conflict. This group of causes is often labeled as the 'resource curse'. Some of these theories relate to resource abundance, others to resource scarcity, and as can be seen, both could apply to Bahrain. What however mainly seems to be the case in Bahrain is that the resources are not a direct cause of conflict. The conflict is not about the availability or the access to resources; this was not once mentioned in the protests as far as was made public. At this moment, it seems that the resources have created the political and economic system that led up to the discontent, and eventually to the protests. This therefore is another layer of causes. The first layer is composed of the direct causes, the second layer of the indirect causes, such as the political and economic system. These two are discussed in this research. This research explains how the current system and the direct causes have created the eruption of protests, but it does not describe however how this system was created. That would be the subsequent step, the third layer: this describes the causes that created the second layer. It is therefore beyond the scope of this research, as it is impossible to discuss this third layer in a well-studied manner. Because of this, it was chosen to not discuss the subject of resources here. A second argument to make this demarcation is that the researcher would not have access to sufficient data, as much data concerns the government. After a preliminary study it already appeared difficult to get statistics about the oil revenues and the spending of those revenues for example. The government would probably not be very cooperative to share this information with an outsider, as this would not reflect a professional image. It would be very interesting however to study the third layer in further research. For now it was chosen to explain the first and second layer in depth, and to specialize in these two layers, and to leave the third layer for further research.

There are however other economic factors that might have caused the conflict, which will be studied in this research. Unemployment, especially among the youth, is a long-term economic problem that Bahrain is struggling with. In 2005, 15% of the labor force was unemployed. According to the Labor Minister of Bahrain the rate has dropped to only 3% in 2008 because of a National Employment Project. Wright (2008) however pleads that this is largely because of a change in definition of unemployment. The estimations for 2008 varied between 15 and 30 percent³⁹. The most recent data about youth unemployment are from 2001, when 20.1% between the age of 15-24 year was unemployed⁴⁰. It is uncertain how unemployment is spread among Shia and Sunni people, but some sources report unemployment is at a much higher percentage among Shia people⁴¹. This could possibly indicate horizontal inequality, and it has been proven by Schock (1996) for example that economic inequality in general tends to promote violent political conflict⁴². Moreover, unemployment can form a direct cause of conflict, as unemployed people have the time to demonstrate; and also have little or nothing to lose when doing that. More on these theories will follow in the theoretical framework.

Also the global financial crisis caused a decrease in funding for many non-oil projects, resulting in a slower economic growth. This could relate to the relative deprivation theory (Gurr 1970). When there

³³ Bahrain Minister of Oil and Gas (2011). Diversification of Bahrain's economy [online]. Cited May 19, 2012. <http://www.marcopolis.net/diversification-of-bahrain-s-economy.htm>

³⁴ New York Times (2011). Bahrain's Economic Plans in Jeopardy [online]. Cited May 22, 2011. <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/24/world/middleeast/24iht-m24bfinancial.html>

Verlinden, P. (2000). Oman en de emiraten aan de Golf. KIT Publishers: Amsterdam. P.6, 59)

³⁵ Central Intelligence Agency (2011). The World Factbook: Bahrain [online]. Cited May 22, 2011. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ba.html>

³⁶ Verlinden, P. (2000). Oman en de emiraten aan de Golf. KIT Publishers: Amsterdam. P. 64.

³⁷ Niblock, T. (1980). Social and economic development in the Arab Gulf. Croom Helm: London, p.89.

³⁸ Central Intelligence Agency (2011). The World Factbook: Bahrain [online]. Cited May 22, 2011. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ba.html>

³⁹ Wright, S. (2008). Fixing the Kingdom: political evolution and socio-economic challenges in Bahrain. P.10

⁴⁰ Central Intelligence Agency (2011). The World Factbook: Bahrain [online]. Cited May 22, 2011. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ba.html>

⁴¹ Al Jazeera (2011). Shouting in the dark [online]. Cited August 4, 2011. <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/2011/08/201184144547798162.html>

Wright, S. (2008). Fixing the Kingdom: political evolution and socio-economic challenges in Bahrain. P.10

⁴² Schock, K. (1996). A conjunctural model of political conflict: the impact of political opportunities on the relationship between economic inequality and violent political conflict. In: Journal of Conflict Resolution 40 (1), p.124.

was wealth before, but this suddenly decreases, it leads to disappointment, causing conflict exactly because people know what they are missing.

Other challenges that Bahrain faces include the slow growth of government debt as a result of a large subsidy program; the financing of large government projects; and debt restructuring, such as the deposit of state-owned Gulf Air⁴³. These issues might have caused frustration among (a part of) the population.

However, a more positive note can be made as well. Even with the economic crisis, Bahrain is very rich compared to other countries. The GDP per capita was \$40,400 in 2010, the 19th rank of all countries, and the real growth rate was 3.9%. Of the GDP, 0.5% was earned in agriculture, 56.6% in industry (which includes the 11% of petroleum production and refining mentioned before) and 42.9% in services. The main trading partners are Saudi Arabia and India for export; and Saudi Arabia, France, the United States, other Asian countries, and other European countries for import⁴⁴. The protests unfortunately had a very negative influence on the economy. Jasim Husain, former Member of Parliament, found that the GDP growth decreased with 5% between February and October 2011⁴⁵. As the conflict continues, investors are turning to Dubai and other Gulf countries instead of Bahrain⁴⁶.

2.1.4 Political and legal system

Bahrain knows a constitutional monarchy, king Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa being its leader since 1999, and the Al-Khalifa family has ruled Bahrain since 1783. The reign over Bahrain is passed on from father to son. Prime Minister Khalifa bin Salman Al-Khalifa, uncle of the king, is the head of government since 1971. His function is appointed by the monarch, as is the Cabinet. There is a bicameral legislature consisting of the Consultative Council (Shura Council), composed of 40 members who are appointed by the king, and the Council of Representatives (Chamber of Deputies), with also 40 seats, directly elected for four years, by absolute majority vote in single-member constituencies⁴⁷. The last elections for the Council of Representatives were held in 2010. The seats are currently divided among these societies: Al-Wefaq (Shia) 18, Asala (Sunni Salafi) 3, Minbar (Sunni Muslim Brotherhood) 2, and independents 17. In July 2005 political *societies* were legalized, but political *parties* are illegal⁴⁸. At the regional level there are five governorates: Asamah, Janubiyah, Muharraq, Shamaliyah, and Wasat. These are administered by an appointed governor. The fact that many positions are appointed by the king, and that political parties are prohibited, shows that Bahrain knows no (full) democracy, which might be a cause of the conflict.

Although corruption is punished with penalties, these laws are not implemented effectively, thus corruption still exists⁴⁹. One example of corruption can be found in the real estate industry. Examples of this are that the recently built harbor area was sold to Prime Minister Khalifa for only 1 dinar (about 2 euro), and that the Al-Khalifa's own \$14 billion in public land⁵⁰, which is said to be equal to 97% of the land of Bahrain⁵¹. The Al-Khalifa's are thus very wealthy, but, as stated before, it is unknown how they gained their wealth. A probable explanation would oil company, as it is owned by the state.

There are two legal systems: one based on Sharia (Islamic law) for Muslims, and one based on English common law, for people with a different religion. There are separate departments for Sunni and Shia based on who is bringing the case to the court⁵². Courts are subject to government pressure regarding verdicts, sentencing, and appeals. The king appoints all judges by royal decree⁵³. In some cases before 2011, journalists and human rights activists were denied access to the court⁵⁴.

At Manama airport, one is being welcomed by the king, Prime Minister and Crown Prince
Source: Jacqueline van Dooren



⁴³ Central Intelligence Agency (2011). The World Factbook: Bahrain [online]. Cited May 22, 2011.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ba.html>

⁴⁴ Ibid dem.

⁴⁵ Jasim Husain on July 17, 2012 at the Exeter Gulf Conference.

⁴⁶ Interview with David Roberts from RUSI, June 10, 2012.

⁴⁷ Election Guide (2011). Country profile: Bahrain [online]. Cited June 2nd, 2012. <http://electionguide.org/country.php?ID=18>

⁴⁸ Central Intelligence Agency (2011). The World Factbook: Bahrain [online]. Cited May 22, 2011.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ba.html>

Verlinden, P. (2000). Oman en de emiraten aan de Golf. KIT Publishers: Amsterdam. P.72.

⁴⁹ U.S. Department of State (2011). 2010 Human rights report: Bahrain [online]. Cited June 1st, 2011.

<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2010/nea/154459.htm> p.16-17

⁵⁰ Al Jazeera (2011). Shouting in the dark [online]. Cited August 4, 2011.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/2011/08/201184144547798162.html>

⁵¹ Hala Kindelberger on July 18, 2012, at the Exeter Gulf Conference.

⁵² Bahrain embassy to Japan http://www.bahrain-embassy.or.jp/en/?page_id=14

⁵³ U.S. Department of State (2011). 2010 Human rights report: Bahrain [online]. Cited June 1st, 2011.

<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2010/nea/154459.htm> p.16-17

⁵⁴ Ibid p.5

2.1.5 Military

Bahrain has no obligatory military service. It spends 4.5% of GDP on military expenditures, which is considerable more compared to other countries (rank 21 of all countries⁵⁵), but only little compared to other Gulf States. The United States have their Fifth Fleet on the island, with 75 shore based personnel and a few dependants⁵⁶.

2.1.6 International relations

Regional relations

The relations between Bahrain and its neighbors have been very good for a long time. There has been plentiful (economic) cooperation, such as providing financial support from other countries to the smaller Bahrain with its less amount of oil since 1972. Since the 1970s there have been official agreements between several Arab countries⁵⁷. Bahrain is a member of many regional economic organizations of which the most important is the GCC. The GCC knows an open border system, where both goods and people can flow freely from one country to the other. This is also the cause of why it is difficult to find out if there are refugees coming from Bahrain as a consequence of the conflict. Fellow GCC-member Saudi Arabia in particular has good relations with Bahrain. There are many official visits for example, and the Bahraini ambassador to Saudi Arabia even states that the *"the cordial bilateral ties"* have always been based on *"love, mutual respect, solidarity and common interests"* which even makes them look *"like a united nation"*⁵⁸.

The relations between Bahrain and Iran are difficult to analyze, being very sensitive for global relations. A New York Times journalist and the BICI report have not found any form of Iranian influence in the conflict. For these two reasons it was chosen to pay little attention to Iran in this research. This even though the government of Bahrain at times is very harsh against Iran, and accuses the Bahraini Shia of having relations with the country⁵⁹. Despite these tough reactions from both sides, the following brief summary of a US embassy, made public via WikiLeaks, seems to reflect the impressions of the relationship:

*"The Sunni ruling family of tiny, Shia-majority Bahrain have long recognized that they needed outsiders -- first the British, then the United States -- to protect them from predatory neighbors, Iran foremost among them. Both Shahs and Ayatollahs have asserted claims to sovereignty over Bahrain from time to time. While keeping close to their American protectors, Bahrain's rulers seek to avoid provoking Iran unnecessarily, and keep channels of communication with Iranian leaders open"*⁶⁰.

Worldwide relations

Since 1971 Bahrain is a member of the United Nations, as it is of many other international organizations⁶¹. Bahrain has ratified many international treaties, so in case these were violated during the conflict, there is a means of control and punishment⁶².

As also appears from the fragment above, and from their naval presence, there are strong relations between the United States and Bahrain.

From Europe, the strongest ties are between the former colonizer the United Kingdom. More on international relations will be explained in chapter six.

2.2 Historical context

"To understand the world, we are searching for economic, political or social explanations, but the answers are laid in history"
Francis Fukuyama⁶³

This research does not try to understand the world, but a small part of it: Bahrain, and its current conflict in particular. Not only is history important for understanding the world, but also for understanding conflicts, as

⁵⁵ Central Intelligence Agency (2011). The World Factbook: Bahrain [online]. Cited May 22, 2011. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ba.html>

⁵⁶ Cottrell. A.J. (1980). The Persian Gulf States. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, p.167

⁵⁷ Niblock, T. (1980). Social and economic development in the Arab Gulf. Croom Helm: London, p.196-201.

⁵⁸ Bahrain News Agency (2012). Exemplary Bahraini-Saudi ties praised [online]. Cited February 16, 2012.

<http://www.bna.bh/portal/en/news/492412>

⁵⁹ AFP (2012). Bahrain warns Iran against meddling in its affairs [online]. Cited July 23, 2012.

<http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5hYxhvDQN0keeeDq4jHZ8tIsD0UXw?docId=CNG.99be604c1b2b27392e949c6c4024b328.571>

Yahoo!News (2012). Bahrain convicts six of plotting with Iran [online]. Cited July 23, 2012. <http://news.yahoo.com/bahrain-convicts-six-plotting-iran-163508551.html>

⁶⁰ The Guardian (2011). US embassy cables: Bahrain's relations with Iran [online]. Cited February 16, 2012.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/us-embassy-cables-documents/164906>

⁶¹ Niblock, T. (1980). Social and economic development in the Arab Gulf. Croom Helm: London, p.171

⁶² United Nations Treaty Collection (2011). United Nations Treaty Series Online Collection [online]. Cited December 22, 2011.

<http://treaties.un.org/Pages/UNTSOnline.aspx?id=3>

⁶³ Fukuyama, F. (2011). Op de rug van het verleden. In: IS magazine 6, p.36.

Ramsbotham et al. (2005) state⁶⁴. This part describes the history of Bahrain and pays attention to the conflicts that existed throughout history, in order to see what earlier conflicts were roughly about. First the early history of Bahrain is explained, and then the history from 1783 onwards will be described, which is the modern history of Bahrain. 1783 is chosen because reliable information is available from that period onwards.

2.2.1 Early history

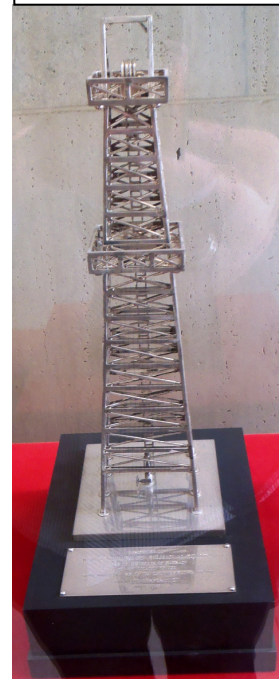
The small country of Bahrain used to be part of the Dilmun civilization, which dates from around 2300 B.C. to the seventh century B.C.⁶⁵. After that it has often been under foreign influence. Already in the fourth century B.C. this started with Greek influences⁶⁶. Bahrain also was a desired resort for Oman, Egypt, the Wahhabis, Rian, the Ottomans, Portugal (1521-1602) and Persia (1602-1783)⁶⁷. This was mainly because of its good geographical location for trade, being located between India and former Mesopotamia⁶⁸. However, Bahrain also is known for its own resources: pearls, and from the 1930s on, oil.

2.2.2 Modern history

In 1783, the Sunni Al-Khalifa family (Utabs, originally stemming from Kuwait and later on Qatar) took over Bahrain from the Persians. In order to secure their holdings, the family entered into a series of treaties with the United Kingdom during the 19th century that made Bahrain a British protectorate⁶⁹. In January 1820 the current United Arab Emirates signed treaties with the United Kingdom which made it responsible for the defence of all emirates, including Bahrain. During this period the economic independence of Bahrain was high, however, the military means were owned by the United Kingdom. Since this period the United Arab Emirates, together with Bahrain and a part of Oman were also called the Trucial States, a term which is still being used sometimes⁷⁰. In 1861 Bahrain became an official protectorate of the United Kingdom, and later on even the British main quarter was settled here⁷¹. In 1899 the UK ruled over the whole Gulf area⁷². In the interbellum between both World Wars, the United Kingdom built an important military basis in Bahrain⁷³ and general reforms in administration were carried out⁷⁴. More about these reforms is unknown, and they were probably only small. Some sources, mainly Iranian, and researcher Shadi Bushra, state that the United Kingdom promised to support the rule of the Al-Khalifa's. Furthermore they were said to encourage repression and sectarian conflict between Sunni and Shia Bahrainis in order to prevent a unified opposition from coalescing to Iran⁷⁵. However, these theories are not confirmed by most researchers. This thus could be another issue to explore in further research. A proven fact is that in polls from the 1920s most Bahrainis were 'receptive' to the idea of becoming part of Iran⁷⁶.

In 1932, oil was discovered in Bahrain. The capacity of the production expanded in 1938, and consequentially, the United Kingdom sent many Indian employers to Bahrain, even though there was an economic depression causing unemployment among local Bahraini. Resentment among the Bahrainis evolved, uniting themselves in an anti-government movement. A strike was planned but the organizers were arrested, causing more protests and eventually a national strike to take place. Beside the employment issue, the protesters were demanding for a legislative body that would better represent the Shia. As the Shia count about half of the population, they also wished for half of the positions in governing bodies and the security force, which was now made up of only 20% Bahraini's⁷⁷. The demands, supported by both Shia and Sunni, were not realized. The situation however did quiet down⁷⁸.

The first oil drill in Bahrain (replica)
Source: Bahrain National Museum, photo Jacqueline van Dooren



⁶⁴ Ramsbotham, O., Woodhouse, T., Miall, H. (2005). Contemporary conflict resolution. Polity Press: Cambridge, p.64.

⁶⁵ Cottrell, A.J. (1980). The Persian Gulf States. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, p.481-3.

⁶⁶ Verlinden, P. (2000). Oman en de emiraten aan de Golf. KIT Publishers: Amsterdam. P. 48

⁶⁷ Cottrell, A.J. (1980). The Persian Gulf States. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, p.65. And Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (2011). Report of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry, p.13.

⁶⁸ Verlinden, P. (2000). Oman en de emiraten aan de Golf. KIT Publishers: Amsterdam, p.8.

⁶⁹ Central Intelligence Agency (2011). The World Factbook: Bahrain [online]. Cited May 22, 2011. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ba.html>

⁷⁰ Verlinden, P. (2000). Oman en de emiraten aan de Golf. KIT Publishers: Amsterdam, p. 14.

⁷¹ Bahrain Independent Commission for Inquiry (2011). Report of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry. P.14. Verlinden, P. (2000). Oman en de emiraten aan de Golf. KIT Publishers: Amsterdam, p.19.

⁷² Verlinden, P. (2000). Oman en de emiraten aan de Golf. KIT Publishers: Amsterdam, p.13

⁷³ Ibid, p.19.

⁷⁴ Niblock, T. (1980). Social and economic development in the Arab Gulf. Croom Helm: London, p.55.

⁷⁵ Bushra, S. (2011). Supporting Bahraini Apartheid is not in America's interest [online]. In: Stanford Progressive, June 2011. Cited May 2, 2012. <http://www.stanford.edu/group/progressive/cgi-bin/?p=1673>

⁷⁶ Ibid dem

⁷⁷ Strobl, S. (2011). From colonial policing to community policing in Bahrain: The historical persistence of sectarianism. In: International Journal of Comparative and Applied Criminal Justice 35(1). p.25

The 1950s equally are marked by an increase in political agitation. Labor strikes in the oil industry were held from 1954 to 1956, in 1965, 1968, and 1970-1972. The United Kingdom intervened in the strikes of 1956 and 1965⁷⁹. Beside economic demands the Bahraini wanted more political rights, such as freedom of speech, assembly and press, and government reforms. Sunni-Shia rivalries are also named as a cause of the protests, but unfortunately more details on these early protests, such as who demonstrated (migrants, Shia or Sunni?) and for what exactly (which rights and representation?) are unavailable⁸⁰. Labor leaders and journalists supporting the protests were regularly jailed or exiled. The protests did acquire results: more Shia Bahraini were included in the government since the 1950s; in 1954, the first political party in the Gulf States was founded in Bahrain, and an advisory council was established in 1956⁸¹. The political party, the Higher Executive Committee, was made up of four Shia and four Sunni's outside the government and their main goals were to push for an elected assembly, a general legal and civil code, labor unions, and the establishment of a Supreme Court⁸². More details on the advisory council are not available. Due to the reforms, the unrest declined but not for long, since the process towards independence was related to political unrest as well.

In 1969 the United Kingdom decided that its political and especially military presence in the Gulf was too expensive. The emirs of the Gulf States proposed to create a federal state bond with Bahrain, Oman and Qatar. The latter declined; this for reasons of fear for the bigger countries. Therefore, Bahrain also declined, and gained independence on August 15, 1971. This uncertainty triggered new demonstrations⁸³. But reforms were on the way: in 1972 a constituent assembly was elected, leading to the adoption of a constitution, and the election of a national assembly and parliament in 1973⁸⁴. The people mainly voted for the leftist/nationalist/reformist bloc. There was a period of 1,5 years with national assemblies after their election because the king⁸⁵ fired the assembly in 1975. This period is referred to as 'the constitutional experiment'. The legislative branch was headed jointly by the ruler and the national assembly, this thus not being a real democracy⁸⁶.

In 1981 the GCC was established, a council '*to effect coordination, integration and inter-connection among the Member States in all fields in order to achieve unity*'. There are six members: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates⁸⁷. In that same year, 1981, Bahrain was affected by the Iranian revolution which started in 1978. The Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain, of Shia background, attempted to overthrow the Bahraini regime by force. The government still is convinced that Iran supported this failed coup d'état financially and politically, although this claim has never been proven. In the following years of the 1980s other Islamist organizations evolved in Bahrain, some being more violent than others. The most renowned organization was the Bahrain Islamic Freedom Movement. Beside Shia, some Sunni people also shared the grievances and demands of political and economic reform⁸⁸.

The unrest continued through the 1990s. In 1994 a petition was held to ask for political and socio-economic change, signed by thousands of people. This movement was again led by people of Shia background, yet there were also Sunnis who joined. The complaints towards the government were: anti-Shia discrimination, deprivation of civil and political rights, corruption, lack of economic opportunities, increasing unemployment levels and privileging foreign employees over Shia in the security sector. Many of the leaders were imprisoned or forced into exile. In 1996 the government of Bahrain claimed that Hezbollah, supposedly funded and assisted by Iran, had executed a terrorist operation in Sitra. The organizations' leaders and members were brought to trial. Further calls for political and socio-economic change led to unrest, causing almost 40 deaths in the decade⁸⁹.

The unrest declined when in March 1999 the current king came to power: Hamad bin Isa al Khalifa. With economic and political reforms he tried to ease the situation, for example by releasing 500 political prisoners in the first months after he came to power. He also adopted a new constitution which was approved by the people through referendum on February 14th, 2001. The new constitution entered

⁷⁸ Niblock, T. (1980). Social and economic development in the Arab Gulf. Croom Helm: London, p.73-4

⁷⁹ Cottrell, A.J. (1980). The Persian Gulf States. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, p.65 and 521.

⁸⁰ Ibid p.66.

⁸¹ Ibid, p.522-3

⁸² Jadaliyya (2012). Political movements in Bahrain: past, present and future [online]. Cited July 23, 2012. http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/4363/political-movements-in-bahrain_past-present-and-fu

⁸³ Verlinden, P. (2000). Oman en de emiraten aan de Golf. KIT Publishers: Amsterdam. P. 19.

⁸⁴ Cottrell, A.J. (1980). The Persian Gulf States. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, p.66.

⁸⁵ Between 1783 and 1971, the king held the title of Ruler, and since the independence until 2002, the title of Emir (Al Jazeera 2002). On 14 February 2002, the then-Emir declared Bahrain a kingdom and proclaimed himself the first king (Mohammed 2002). For reasons of simplicity, only the term 'king' will be used here.

⁸⁶ Niblock, T. (1980). Social and economic development in the Arab Gulf. Croom Helm: London, p.163-173.

⁸⁷ The Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (2012). Foundations and objectives [online]. Cited February 14, 2012. <http://www.gcc-sg.org/eng/index895b.html?action=Sec-Show&ID=3>

⁸⁸ Bahrain Independent Commission for Inquiry (2011). Report of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry. P.29-30

⁸⁹ Ibid dem.

into force exactly one year later: February 14, 2002⁹⁰. After boycotting the countries' first round of democratic elections under the newly-promulgated constitution in 2002, Shia political societies participated in 2006 and 2010 in legislative and municipal elections. Al-Wefaq⁹¹, the largest Shia political society, won the largest bloc of seats in the elected lower-house of the legislature both times. Nevertheless, the Shia discontent persisted, often expressed in street demonstrations and low-level violence⁹².

2.2.3 The Arab Spring

For this recent part of history it is important to know the context of the whole Arab Spring and to recognize what similarities and differences exist compared to Bahrain. The causes of the Arab Spring in other regions might overlap with causes of the conflict in Bahrain. On December 19, 2010, police confiscated fruit and vegetables from a 26-year old grocery seller named Mohamed Bouazizi who was living in Sidi Bouzid, Tunisia. He acquired a university degree but was unemployed and illegally sold fruits and vegetables. When the authorities stopped him and confiscated his products, he was so angry about his situation that he set himself on fire. After having spent his last days in hospital, he would die in January 2011. On that same December 19th several hundreds of young people gathered in the city to support the grocery seller. They protested peacefully against the incident and the high unemployment rate outside the regional government headquarters. Later that evening the protest turned violent and the police started using tear-gas and arrested many people. The protests spread to other cities, including the capital Tunis. There had not been this much unrest in Tunisia for at least a decade. Later on, other factors beside unemployment were mentioned as being the cause for the protests: inflation, high food prices, lack of freedom of expression, corruption, and the expenses of president Zine el Abidine Ben Ali. The protests continued for weeks, resulting in the president fleeing from his country on January 15, 2011. He was said to seek refuge in Franc, which was a futile attempt. Thus the president ended up in Saudi Arabia⁹³.

The so-called Jasmine revolution, named after the Tunisian national flower⁹⁴, was the first revolution of the 'Arab Spring'. On the 1st of January a suicide bomber blew up in a church in Alexandria, Egypt, killing 21. Christians went out onto the streets and clashed with the police and with Muslims⁹⁵. On the 17th of January a man set himself on fire, in the same manner as happened in Tunisia. On January 5th, riots hit Algeria, and on the 13th of that same month another man set himself alight as well⁹⁶. In the fourth week of January protests hit Yemen, Lebanon, and Jordan. Hereafter the protests also reached Bahrain and Iran (February 14), Morocco (February 21), Iraq (February 25) and Saudi Arabia (March 6), and on March 19 Syria would follow⁹⁷. In all countries the demonstrators call for departure of their rulers and more democracy. Many protests are (partially) organized via social media such as Facebook. As we know, some rulers have been driven away, some remained seated; the latter also being the case in Bahrain. The outlook to the future in all countries is unknown: will the goals of the demonstrators be achieved and lead to sustainable change, or will someone else occupy the position of the former ruler? Will the countries experience real democracy soon, and will the civil unrest fade away? After 1,5 years it is once again proven that a revolution is not something done overnight: real changes of powers, respecting all of its citizens, appears to have only taken place in Tunisia. Other countries have fallen into civil conflict and questions of power⁹⁸.

Through the new characteristics of the globalized society, such as social media, the Arab Spring was presented as something totally new. However, this revolution is not as new as it seems. In 1919 already there were simultaneous revolutions in Tunisia, Libya and Egypt. Also there is not one movement, but each protest has a different character, pleads Lisa Anderson. The issues are different, as is the character of the protesters⁹⁹. Therefore it was not one big new movement, and older theories about conflicts, based on decades of experience, can be applied to Bahrain as well. For example, the Arab

⁹⁰ U.S. Department of State (2012). Background note: Bahrain [online]. Cited May 31, 2012. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/26414.htm>

⁹¹ Al-Wefaq is sometimes spelled as Al-Wifaq, Al Wefaq, et cetera. Because the organization uses the spelling Al-Wefaq, this is used throughout this research.

⁹² Central Intelligence Agency (2011). The World Factbook: Bahrain [online]. Cited May 22, 2011. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ba.html>

⁹³ The Guardian (2011). Tunisian president vows to punish rioters after worst unrest in a decade [online]. Cited June 8, 2011. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/dec/29/tunisian-president-vows-punish-rioters>

⁹⁴ Europe 1 (2011). D'où vient la "révolution du jasmin" ? [online]. Cited June 9th, 2011. <http://www.europe1.fr/International/D-ou-vient-la-revolution-du-jasmin-375743/>

⁹⁵ The Guardian (2011). Arab spring: an interactive timeline of Middle East protests [online]. Cited June 13, 2011. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/interactive/2011/mar/22/middle-east-protest-interactive-timeline>

⁹⁶ The Guardian (2011). Algerian riots resume over food prices [online]. Cited June 13, 2011. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/jan/07/algeria-riots-food-prices>

⁹⁷ The Guardian (2011). Arab spring: an interactive timeline of Middle East protests [online]. Cited June 13, 2011. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/interactive/2011/mar/22/middle-east-protest-interactive-timeline>

⁹⁸ Shatz, A. (2011). Whose Egypt?. [online]. Cited February 16, 2012. <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v34/n01/adam-shatz/whose-egypt>

⁹⁹ Anderson, L. (2011). Demystifying the Arab Spring – parsing the differences between Tunisia, Egypt and Libya. In: Foreign Affairs 90 (2). Cited May 2nd, 2012.

Spring relates to the process of democratization and state formation. The protests could provide proof for Mansfield and Snyder's (1995) thesis that the process of democratization is very war-prone. A more in-depth study will be provided in the theoretical framework (page 35). There are also many theories that include the context and the spillover-effects of other conflicts in geographic proximity. During the Arab Spring, sections of societies in all Arab Spring countries felt inspired and supported by other revolutions, despite the people coming from a different background and the protests having different goals. These other protests could therefore have been a direct cause of the conflict in Bahrain, and these theories will be carefully analyzed from page 30 of the theoretical framework onwards. It is clear that the conflicts spread throughout the region, but as every conflict has its own specific context, the causes and outcome of each one is different. This research is telling the story of the Bahrain Arab Spring, seen from a Bahrain viewpoint, not from the Arab Spring perspective. The following paragraph therefore explains the details of the events in Bahrain.

The Arab Spring in Bahrain

On February 14, 2011, the biggest demonstrations in the history of Bahrain were held in the capital Manama, in Shia towns surrounding it, and in the city of Newidrat in the southwest of the country¹⁰⁰. The focus area of the protests became the Pearl Roundabout in Manama. The Bahraini ruling family had offered cash payouts in the run-up to the protest to prevent unrest that was spreading the region, but it was in vain¹⁰¹.

The conflict appeared to be inspired by events in Cairo and Tunis, as it was also calling for democratic reforms and new leaders. A famous activist (Nabeel Rajab) stated the following: "*We are only asking for political reforms, right of political participation, respect for human rights, stopping of systematic discrimination against Shias. All the demands are to do with human rights and nothing to do with the ruling family and their regime*"¹⁰². As Rajab thus points out, the protests also called for changes specifically relating to Bahrain, as Rajab mentions the anger towards discrimination of the Shia¹⁰³. However, an unknown number of Sunni Bahraini joined their Shia fellow-citizens in the demonstrations¹⁰⁴. It was therefore not a struggle against the Sunni's, or only carried out by Shia, but directed from citizens against their government.

In Manama and other towns, demonstrators demanded the release of Shia detainees. In reaction to the protests the police fired tear-gas and rubber bullets, injuring at least 14 people and killing at least one¹⁰⁵. The demonstrations continued for one month. On February 23rd the largest demonstration was held, which was attended by about a quarter of the total population¹⁰⁶. Compared to other Arab Spring countries, this was the largest amount of people joining the protests¹⁰⁷. During the first month of protests, seven people were killed¹⁰⁸. Because of this, 18 Members of Parliament, all member of the Al-Wefaq party, resigned. On the 14th of March military support from the GCC arrived, composed of about 1,000 Saudi Arabia soldiers and 500 United Arab Emirates officers. This was on initiative of the Bahraini government to guarantee stability, but the opposition claims it to be an invasion, a 'declaration of war'. The United States supported the GCC claiming it was no invasion¹⁰⁹. The crown prince installed martial law on the same day, which would last until June 1st. On March 18, the Pearl statue on the likewise named roundabout was removed by the government, in order "*to remove a bad memory*" according to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. This was a highly symbolic action as the statue was on Bahrain's Tahrir Square, the center of the protests. The statue became the symbol for the movement. The statue, a pearl balancing on six pillars, was build in honor of a GCC meeting in 1982. It resembled a perfume bottle, but also stood for

¹⁰⁰ Al Jazeera (2011). Saudi Arabia's intervention in Bahrain [online]. Cited June 14, 2011. <http://english.aljazeera.net/programmes/insidestory/2011/03/2011316105616297611.html>

¹⁰¹ Al Jazeera (2011). Bahrain activists in 'Day of Rage' [online]. Cited June 14, 2011. <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2011/02/2011214925802473.html>

¹⁰² Ibid dem.

¹⁰³ The Guardian (2011). Arrests and deaths as Egypt protest spreads across Middle East [online]. Cited June 15, 2011. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/feb/14/middle-east-iran-bahrain-yemen>

¹⁰⁴ Al Jazeera (2011). Bahrain activists in 'Day of Rage' [online]. Cited June 14, 2011. <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2011/02/2011214925802473.html>

¹⁰⁵ The Guardian (2011). Arrests and deaths as Egypt protest spreads across Middle East [online]. Cited June 15, 2011. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/feb/14/middle-east-iran-bahrain-yemen>

¹⁰⁶ Al Jazeera (2011). Shouting in the dark [online]. Cited August 4, 2011. <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/2011/08/201184144547798162.html>

¹⁰⁷ Ala Al-Shehabi, writer and political activist, on July 9 at the conference 'Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and the Struggle for Democracy in the Gulf and the Sectarian Divide' at Institute Clingendael, The Hague.

¹⁰⁸ Elsevier (2011). Iran veroordeelt geweld tegen betogers in Bahrain [online]. Cited August 1, 2011.

<http://www.elsevier.nl/web/Nieuws/Buitenland/291864/Iran-veroordeelt-geweld-tegen-betogers-in-Bahrain.htm?rss=true>

¹⁰⁹ Al Jazeera (2011). Saudi Arabia's intervention in Bahrain [online]. Cited June 14, 2011. <http://english.aljazeera.net/programmes/insidestory/2011/03/2011316105616297611.html>

Bahrain's economic strength; the pearl trade, and the future strength of the country¹¹⁰. In May the roundabout was renamed Al Farooq Junction, meaning 'to desire change'¹¹¹. This probably means that everybody wanted a change from the protests and violent situation towards one of more peace. This comes back in all interviews, no matter what side the person is on: everybody wants a better future for Bahrain. Up until today it is not possible to enter the roundabout, and it is still heavily secured by police, visible in the pictures below.



The Pearl Roundabout in Manama. Clockwise: before, during and after the protests.

Source: Big Think / The Hindu / Jacqueline van Dooren.

During the months March through to May, Bahraini security forces arrested hundreds of people and are said to have carried out a violent crackdown¹¹². People that were arrested were sentenced by military courts and were tortured in custody¹¹³. At the end of April, 405 detainees had been referred to these courts of whom 312 were released, some for health reasons. Others have died in custody¹¹⁴. Lawyers and medical staff (47 people) were arrested as well. Some declare this was done to discourage them in treating protestors¹¹⁵ however others claim that the doctors took over the Salmaniya hospital and turned it into a protestor zone¹¹⁶.

On the 29th of June the king ordered an independent fact finding mission to find out whether human rights were violated during the crackdown, which was later called the Bahrain Independent

¹¹⁰ Washington Post (2011). Bahrain's Pearl Statue is gone, but it remains an icon of democracy [online]. Cited February 16, 2012. http://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/bahrain-pearl-statue-is-gone-but-it-remains-an-icon-of-democracy/2011/05/10/AFKcnh2G_story.html

¹¹¹ Gulfnews.com (2011). Bahrain renames former Pearl Roundabout [online]. Cited March 19, 2012. <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/bahrain/bahrain-renames-former-pearl-roundabout-1.814302>

¹¹² The Guardian (2011). Arab spring: an interactive timeline of Middle East protests [online]. Cited June 13, 2011. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/interactive/2011/mar/22/middle-east-protest-interactive-timeline>

¹¹³ International Crisis Group (2011). Crisiswatch, 93. Cited May 1st, 2011. <http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/CrisisWatch/2011/cw93.ashx> .

¹¹⁴ Al Jazeera (2011). Bahrain sentences protesters to death [online]. Cited June 15, 2011. <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2011/04/201142881322769709.html>

¹¹⁵ Al Jazeera (2011). Bahrain 'arrests rights lawyer and doctors' [online]. Cited June 15, 2011. <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2011/04/20114161822138150.html>

¹¹⁶ Stated by Sheikh Al-Mahdmood, president of the National Union Gathering, and employees at the Netherlands consulate, in interviews on 17 and 28 May 2012 respectively.

Commission of Inquiry (BICI)¹¹⁷. The BICI was headed by M. Cherif Bassiouni (therefore sometimes also referred to as the Bassiouni report), and other members were international judges, lawyers, and professors. Most NGOs and other key actors in Bahrain were very optimistic about the initiative of the King, looking critically at his policy through this report¹¹⁸. Meanwhile, political negotiations between the government, political societies, companies, NGOs, the media and public figures were held under the header of 'National Dialogue'¹¹⁹. This started on the 2nd of July, but after ten days Al-Wefaq left the negotiations, claiming their desire for more rights and political freedom was not taken seriously. Al-Wefaq's goal is to establish a constitutional monarchy with an elected government¹²⁰. The society also boycotted the election of September 24 2011. In this election, 18 new Members of Parliament were chosen instead of those of Al-Wefaq who resigned in February because they thought the function of MP should have more meaning¹²¹.

In the meanwhile the protests on the streets continued. NGOs and media paid attention to the arms sale of Western countries to the Arab world, including Bahrain¹²², and the European Parliament condemned the repression¹²³.

On the 23rd of November the BICI report was presented. This showed that many violations of human rights had taken place, ranging from torture of detainees, disproportional use of force against protesters, unfair trials, house raiding, and derogatory language and censorship in media. The report demonstrated that not only Shia, but Sunni and expatriates also had been the target of human rights violations¹²⁴. King Hamad's reaction was extensive, and said that "*we are determined, Inshallah, to ensure that the painful events our beloved nation has just experienced are not repeated, but that we learn from them, and use our new insights as a catalyst for positive change*". In order to achieve this he initiated the creation of an Arab Court of Human Rights¹²⁵, and a National Commission to implement the BICI recommendations. Most recommendations have been implemented by now. Examples of these are: installing a Special Investigations Unit in the Public Prosecutor's office to investigate unlawful acts from the government; establishing an independent Ombudsman; reforming the National Safety Agency to an intelligence gathering agency without force; and transferring and reviewing all cases from the National Safety Courts to the ordinary courts. The police received training, and 500 new policemen and women 'from all layers of society' were hired. People who received charges or were fired for merely expressing their opinion were dropped charges and reinstated. A French company assisted in the media reform, and a German firm delivered audio-visual material for detention rooms. With the permission of the government, all progress was documented by the BICI and the National Commission. There still are affairs that need to be addressed though, for example recommendations 1722 J and K; the compensation given to victims. Another affair that still needs to be implemented is 1723 C; the reinstatement of students and teachers who participated in protests are still being implemented¹²⁶. According to staff of the German embassy in Bahrain, "*a student can return to university quite easy, but a teacher not, he has to be switched to another class or department or something*"¹²⁷. Also other recommendations, such as rebuilding religious sites, changing school curricula, and reforming the media obviously need more time to be implemented. Some people and organizations, for example Al-Wefaq, complain that not enough has been done. They claim for example that the office of the public prosecutor was assumed to be neutral, but that it is not; and that the reform of the security sector was blocked by the Minister for Internal Affairs. They also state that the BICI is mainly fighting the symptoms and not addressing the real causes, mainly makes superficial changes to

¹¹⁷ The Guardian (2011). Bahrain's king orders investigation into human rights abuses at protests [online]. Cited June 17, 2011. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/jun/29/bahrain-king-human-rights-protests>

¹¹⁸ Bahrain Human Rights Monitor (2012). Reactions of Civil and Political Societies to Bassiouni's Report [online]. Cited June 14, 2012. <http://www.bahrainmonitor.org/civil/v-034-01.html>

¹¹⁹ Bahrain National Dialogue (2011). About the National Dialogue [online]. Cited June 17, 2011. <http://www.nd.bh/en/>

¹²⁰ NU.nl (2011). Sjiieten lopen weg uit overleg Bahrain [online]. Cited June 29, 2011. <http://www.nu.nl/onrust-midden-oosten/2563725/sjiieten-lopen-weg-overleg-Bahrain.html>

¹²¹ De Standaard (2011). Sjiietische oppositie gaat partiële verkiezingen in Bahrain boycotten. [online]. Cited June 29, 2011. http://www.standaard.be/artikel/detail.aspx?artikelid=DMF20110813_007

¹²² Amnesty International (2011). Stop U.S. arms sales to Bahrain [online]. Cited December 28, 2011. <http://takeaction.amnestyusa.org/siteapps/advocacy/ActionItem.aspx?c=6oJCLQPAJiJUG&b=6645049&aid=516688&msource=W1210EAMNA1&tr=v&aid=9765100>

¹²³ Europees Parlement (2011). Human rights resolutions: Tibet, Bahrain, Syria [online]. Cited December 28, 2011.

¹²⁴ Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (2011). Report of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry, p.416-422

¹²⁵ Bahrain News Agency (2011). HM King Hamad Receives BICI's Report and Delivers a Keynote Speech [online]. Cited December 28, 2011. <http://www.bna.bh/portal/en/news/481652>

¹²⁶ The National Commission (2012). Highlights of the National commission for the BICI report recommendations [online]. Cited June 15, 2012. http://translate.google.nl/translate?sl=ar&tl=en&is=n&prev=t&hl=nl&ie=UTF-8&layout=2&eotf=1&u=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.biciactions.bh%2Fwps%2Fportal%2FBICI%2F%21ut%2Fp%2Fc5%2F04_SB8K8xLLM9MSSzPy8xBz9CP0os3h_Rw9Pd3d3A3d_s1BLA8-AMGdPk1A3QwMDA6B8pFm8hYgJo6EnUN49wNEIKG_oaehiYWhsYGZlJG64vLu5JUje1cLV0ciU2MDEmIDucJBr8duOYqIW80HyBjiAo4G-n0d-bqp-QW5ohEFmQDoAWiXjBw%21%21%2Fd13%2Fd3%2FL2dJQSEvUUt3QS9ZQnZ3LzZfODA0QTFJRzBHOFZBMjBJUDVHMziUMZA_wMDc%21%2F

¹²⁷ Interview with an officer of the German embassy on March 26, 2012.

create goodwill from the international community¹²⁸. Although the BICI was not interviewed, more attention will be given to the Commission in chapters five and six. It was probably the biggest initiative towards reform within Bahrain and therefore deserves attention. Also, because the report names 'solutions' to the protests there are also (hidden) assumptions about the causes present.

After the report neither the protests, nor the arrests stopped; implying it did not solve all problems. Protests occurred on almost a daily basis, and some were attended by more than 10.000 protesters. On February 14 2012, the first anniversary of the start of the protests, the protests made clear that some measures were taken to prevent human rights violations, but that by far not all problems were solved¹²⁹. In the run up to the anniversary some media, NGOs and a mission of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights were denied visa. Relating to the commemoration, the protests started already in the night of February 13 with adolescents throwing petrol bombs and Molotov cocktails, and the police responding to this with tear gas¹³⁰. For the first time since June 2011 there were armored personnel carriers again. The protests, composed thousands of people, resulted in approximately 30 arrests, of whom six were American activists who were later deported¹³¹. Also, people are being tortured up until today¹³². After the commemoration big protests were held for example in the run up to the Grand Prix in mid-April¹³³; around the GCC talks about further cooperation in the form of a union¹³⁴; and when high-profile political activists were arrested, such as Nabeel Rajab¹³⁵. Although the numbers are disputed, approximately 79 people were killed between February 14, 2011 and April 22nd 2012. Five of them were policemen¹³⁶.

Over time, the character of the conflict changed. Whereas in the first month(s)¹³⁷ both Sunni and Shia were protesting, making clear that most Bahraini supported the cause and not only Shia, the protests later almost entirely consisted of Shia protesters, especially the youth. A distinction emerged between hardliners and moderate Shia taking part in only the big demonstrations or no demonstrations at all. These hardliners, for example some members of the Coalition of the February 14 Youth, were not afraid to use violent means, such as throwing rocks to the police¹³⁸. The attention that was given to these demonstrations by the media and the Bahraini government (by trying to negotiate with them) angered some Sunni's. Therefore also this group split up into two parts, one being more moderate and supporting dialogue, and the other demanding more security from the government, and protesting for this¹³⁹. On February 22nd, 2012 the first protest only made up of Sunni's was held. They expressed their fears for that the protests of the Shia had a sectarian agenda, and said a dialogue should not be held with violent parties (terrorists). The Sunni's felt abandoned by the state because the lack of security¹⁴⁰. This led to sectarianism. There have been some incidents of raids against Shia or Sunni shops for example, and people tend to

buy products or do business more along sectarian lines¹⁴¹.

After the National Dialogue, there has not been an official political dialogue anymore. Until March 2012 there were some informal conversations between the major opposition party and the government, but after March that stopped¹⁴².

A case that received much attention worldwide and especially from the Netherlands is the case of Mahdi Abu Dheeb, leader of the Bahrain Teachers Association. He was detained when he called for a

¹²⁸ Interview with Al-Wefaq on April 17, 2012.

¹²⁹ Al Jazeera (2012). Clashes in Bahrain on protests anniversary [online]. Cited June 12, 2012. <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/02/20122148441179977.html>

¹³⁰ Although it is always disputed who started: the protesters or the police. The general impression is that some protesters challenge the police so much that it leads to a response.

¹³¹ Reuters (2012). Bahrain forces patrol capital on revolt anniversary [online]. Cited June 12, 2012. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/02/14/us-bahrain-protests-anniversary-idUSTRE81D0J220120214>

¹³² Interview with Michael Stephens, June 10 2012. And Al-Wefaq

¹³³ NRC Handelsblad (2012). Protesten en arrestaties in Bahrain in aanloop naar Grand Prix [online]. Cited June 14, 2012. <http://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2012/04/19/protesten-en-arrestaties-in-Bahrain-in-aanloop-naar-grand-prix/>

¹³⁴ NOS (2012). Grote demonstratie in Bahrain [online]. Cited June 14, 2012. <http://nos.nl/artikel/374469-grote-demonstratie-in-Bahrain.html>

¹³⁵ The Guardian (2012). Bahrain police battle biggest protests in weeks [online]. Cited June 14, 2012.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/jun/08/bahrain-police-battle-protest>

¹³⁶ Bahrain Center for Human Rights (2012). List of people killed in Bahrain since 14th February 2011 [online]. Cited July 5th, 2012. <http://bahrainrights.org/en/node/3864>

¹³⁷ Whereas Michael Stephens from RUSI and Sheikh Mahmood claim in the interviews held on June 10th and May 17 2012 respectively that the character of the protest changed after the first month, the BHRWS (in an interview on June 26) states this happened earlier; already after one, maybe two weeks

¹³⁸ Reports from the ground from Dutch embassy and Consulate staff.

¹³⁹ Interviews with Dutch embassy and Consulate staff, and staff of other Embassies in Bahrain.

¹⁴⁰ Kuwait Times (2012). Bahrain Sunnis warn government over dialogue at rally. February 23, 2012, p.8.

¹⁴¹ Interviews with employees at the Netherlands Consulate between February and June 2012; and with Justin Gengler on June 10, 2012.

¹⁴² Interviews with staff from Embassies in Bahrain; the UN in Bahrain; Michael Stephens from RUSI and Justin Gengler.

strike among fellow teachers. Education International is following his trial and urges the international community to act on this case¹⁴³.

Box 1. Human Rights before and during the conflict

Above is a summary of the human rights situation in Bahrain relating to the protests. However, it is important to know what the difference is between the situation during the protests, and the normal situation of human rights in Bahrain. At this moment it is not clear whether the human rights violations relating to the protests were different from the normal practices. This information clarifies whether the protests are an exception or 'daily practice'. Not all human rights are safeguarded in Bahrain, but the situation improved, especially since 2002¹⁴⁴.

Freedom of expression: assembly, press, and religion

The Bahrain constitution ensures freedom of speech and freedom of press, provided that Islam is not infringed, the unity of people is not prejudiced, and the king is not insulted¹⁴⁵. There is a lively private press, but most Bahraini radio and TV stations are state-run. A press law guarantees the right of journalists to operate independently but they are controlled cautiously. As related to the conflict, the freedom of expression was tightened further than usual: Reporters without Borders speaks of exclusion of the foreign media, harassment of human rights defenders, arrests of bloggers and netizens (one of whom died behind bars), prosecutions and defamation campaigns against free expression activists, and disruption of communications¹⁴⁶.

Although the constitution provides the right for free assembly and association, there are laws that restrict this right. Organizers must submit requests for gatherings or demonstrations at least 72 hours in advance, and these requests know strict rules for application. This gave the government the right to stop 'illegal' protests. NGOs and civil society organizations are sometimes hindered in their work by the government.

The constitution provides for freedom of religion, and other laws and policies contribute to the generally free practice of religion. However, the government placed some limitations on the exercise of these rights. For example in Hamad Town and Isa Town, there are a disproportionate number of Sunni mosques¹⁴⁷. Between March and May 2011 the Government of Bahrain demolished 44 religious sites, primarily of Shia background. Of the 30 sites researched by BICI, only 5 had the necessary royal deed and building permits. The BICI report states that although the demolishing was legal at that time, and that the places were used to plan attacks and store weapons, it gave a wrong impression to the Shia. The government is rebuilding the sites at this moment¹⁴⁸.

Discrimination

The constitution provides for equality. However, rights relating to this were applied according to one's social status, sect, or gender, already before the conflict. There is Sunni domination over Shia in 'employment in sensitive government positions' such as the police, the military and managerial ranks. Promotion processes often favor Sunni people, and Shia people are underrepresented in the Ministry of Education, which also determines the curriculum of schools. This causes that Shia traditions and practices are not being taught in schools. Also naturalization and citizenship processes often favor Sunni applicants over Shia¹⁴⁹. This might have caused frustration among Shia, leading to the conflict.

Imprisonment

Although arbitrary arrest or abduct is prohibited by the constitution, this has happened both before and during the conflict. In 2010 there were 28 people arrested that can be labeled political prisoners, and prison conditions are 'suboptimal' according to the United Nations. Many were held incommunicado and received pretrial detention, where they were mistreated and tortured, and access to attorneys was often restricted. There has been torture and cruel treatment or punishment by the government in order to secure confessions from security suspects, although this as well is prohibited by the constitution. Also during the protests in 2011 and 2012 these human rights violations were observed. In 2010 there were no reports of arbitrary or unlawful killings by the government; no disappearances¹⁵⁰, but this did occur during the protests in 2011 and 2012.

Some of these aspects already show that there is not a complete democracy in Bahrain. More on this can be found below, where the overall political system is discussed.

Another significant point of interest was the 22nd EU-GCC Summit at the end of June. Economic and political affairs were discussed, and there was a program for financial cooperation focused on increasing mutual understanding. This shows the rather tight connection between the GCC and EU. Regarding Bahrain, the situation was discussed, and the Dutch Minister for Foreign Affairs did not meet his Bahraini colleague to make a political statement¹⁵¹.

¹⁴³ Education International (2012). Bahrain: BTA court case postponed for fourth time to 30 May [online]. Cited July 5th, 2012. http://www.ei-ie.org/en/news/news_details/2154

¹⁴⁴ BBC (2011). Bahrain Profile [online]. Cited June 12, 2011. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/country_profiles/790690.stm

¹⁴⁵ U.S. Department of State (2011). 2010 Human rights report: Bahrain [online]. Cited June 1st, 2011. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2010/nea/154459.htm> p.8

¹⁴⁶ Reporters Without Borders (2012). Bahrain [online]. Cited March 19, 2012. http://en.rsf.org/bahrain-12-03-2012_42055.html

¹⁴⁷ U.S. Department of State (2011). 2010 Human rights report: Bahrain [online]. Cited June 1st, 2011.

<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2010/nea/154459.htm> p.11-3

Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (2011). Report of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry, p.329-330¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁹ Ibid p.14

¹⁵⁰ Ibid p.2-7

¹⁵¹ European Union (2012). The EU & The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) [online]. Cited July 5th, 2012.

http://eeas.europa.eu/gulf_cooperation/index_en.htm

Conclusion

From all this information, a few facts come to the fore as the most significant for this research. First of all, it is obvious that there have been many protests in Bahrain in the past. Also, the human rights situation was far from ideal already before February 14, 2011. In this regard, the protests are not so new; there might be a long term conflict in Bahrain which sometimes pops up when additional opportunities arise, such as the Arab Spring in 2010-2011. The causes of past protests were the hiring of expats instead of (mainly Shia) Bahraini; undemocratic government; lack of freedom of speech and of free press; and the privileging of the Sunni population over the Shia. From the other facts it appears that the worlds of Shia and Sunni are rather separated: different judicial systems, the separated living, and the further increasing separation. Also their economic position appears to differ. These issues might still have their influence in today's protests. Another important issue was the lack of democracy, for which the current protesters also ask. The royal family has much power over the executive, legislative, and judiciary sectors, and additionally, there are other aspects that indicate that Bahrain knows no full democracy. These issues will be studied theoretically in the next chapter, and in practice in chapter five. They might have been a cause for the protests starting in 2011.

It is impossible to convey how the causes were addressed, as the causes are not yet clear. There can be made some statements about the intervention in the protests however. The Bahraini government has, together with the GCC, tried to remove the protests with military and judicial means. The government has created the BICI to independently study the human rights violations, and the National Commission has implemented its recommendations to prevent human rights violations in the future. This does not hint at addressing the causes. The BICI did produce some recommendations which might have addressed the causes. At this point it is difficult to say how international actors exactly have addressed the causes. It is clear that France and Germany have helped practically, through their support to implement certain BICI recommendations. The United Kingdom, as former colonizer, might still have strong relations to Bahrain. What the Netherlands have done is still largely unclear. Multilateral initiatives were present from the GCC and the EU. NGOs mainly focused on publishing information and addressing the human rights situation, which also does not seem to address a cause. Further elaboration on the influence of the international community is discussed in chapter six. First, the next chapter will clarify how theories explain conflict, and how these causes can be addressed in theory in the next chapter.

3. Theoretical framework

Many theories have been developed on the causes and resolutions of conflicts. These theories are useful in order to answer the main question, which questions what the causes of the conflict in Bahrain are and how these have been addressed. They allow one to thoroughly understand the causes and how these could lead to violent conflict. However, the theories might not always apply to the situation, therefore taking a cautious point of view is required. It is of course impossible to discuss all possible causes in this research. A selection was made, based on the first impression that resulted from the contextual framework on what the causes can be, and on the results of the interviews and observations. More on the selection process will be discussed below. Firstly, definitions of the general terms that are used throughout this research are discussed.

3.1 Definitions of general terms

In order to thoroughly comprehend what this research is about, it is important to firstly understand the definitions of the terms that are used. For instance, is there a conflict or an uprising in Bahrain? What is meant with religious conflict? There are many discussions and theories about terms like these. Here, the definitions as they will be used in this research are explained.

3.1.1 Conflict, war, rebellion

How should the violence in Bahrain be labeled: conflict, war, rebellion, or otherwise?

Many definitions and opinions on what conflict is exist. The broadest term is perhaps '*the pursuit of incompatible goals by different groups*'. As well as Ramsbotham et al. (2005) mean, the term here solely applies to political conflicts. Whereas armed conflict means that both parties are armed, violent conflict means that only one party is armed. In Bahrain the character of conflict changed, as was described on page 25. This is where a change in definitions occurs: during the first stage of the conflict, only the government side (the army and police) was armed, thus it could be labeled as a violent conflict¹⁵². Later on this changed; the protesters created their own weapons, such as Molotov cocktails, which turned the happenings into an armed conflict. This makes it difficult to choose the exact term relating to conflict. Perhaps another term is more suitable.

The Correlates of War project codes an event as war if there are more than 1,000 battle deaths in a single year, and a project of Uppsala University and International Peace Research Institute (IPRI) takes 25 deaths in a year as measure. According to the Correlates of War project there is therefore no war in Bahrain, but according to Uppsala University and IPRI there is, or at least was in 2011. But many discussions rise around the casualty threshold. It is for example questioned whether all victims related to the conflict should be counted, or only the battle deaths, and whether to relate the number of deaths to the size of a country or population, or portray the casualties in absolute numbers¹⁵³. Because Bahrain is a small country, a limited number of deaths counts for a large percentage of the society, and can therefore still indicate war. Accordingly I plead to not pay too much attention to the casualty threshold, but instead consider the kind of conflict that is going on.

The term civil war also appears to be interesting in the case of Bahrain. A civil war is a fight between agents of or claimants to a state and organized non-state groups from within the same country, aiming to replace the government or to secure power in a region or even secession from the country, or lastly to change government policy. Secondly, it can be called a civil war when the amounts of deaths cross the casualty threshold; and thirdly at least a hundred of these battle deaths must be on the government side¹⁵⁴. Again there is a difference for the stages of conflict that Bahrain faced. During the first stage, agents of the state fought against non-state groups, however their degree of organization was uncertain, since many citizens joined in the protests, but not all were organized in an association. The goals of the protest were political, but again the casualty threshold does not hold. Also, the question remains whether the Shia Muslims want to reign themselves or that they just want to live in a true democracy where they can practice their freedom and human rights, either Shia or Sunni rule. During the second stage of the conflict the government was attacked more often, and there were 'battle deaths on the government side'; at least three policemen were killed. A different definition of civil war is given by Hegre et al. (2001), who define it as: "an internal war in which a) military action was involved, b) the national government at the time was actively involved, c) effective resistance (as measured by the ratio of fatalities of the weaker to the stronger forces) occurred on both sides, and d) at least 1,000 battle deaths resulted"¹⁵⁵. Except for the casualty characteristic, the term civil war seems to describe Bahrain very well.

¹⁵² Ramsbotham, O., T. Woodhouse, and H. Miall, (2005). Contemporary conflict resolution. Polity Press: Cambridge, p.27-9.

¹⁵³ Cramer, C. (2006) Chapter two, 'Categories trends and evidence of violent conflict. In: Civil war is not a stupid thing: accounting for violence in developing countries. London: Hurst & Company. P.59-62

¹⁵⁴ Ibid dem

¹⁵⁵ Hegre, H., T. Ellinsen, S. Gates & N.P. Gleditsch (2001). Toward a democratic civil peace? Democracy, political change and civil war 1816-1992. In: The American Political Science Review 95 (1) p.36.

The term *revolution* might also suit Bahrain. Besancon defines a revolution as: ‘*episodes of violent conflict between governments and politically organized groups (political challengers) that seek to overthrow the central government, to replace its leaders, or to seize power in one region*’¹⁵⁶. Again the question arises to what extent the protesters were an organized group. An interesting fact is that revolutions most likely occur after a period of economic and social development, followed by a short period of a sharp fall in this development¹⁵⁷. This could have been the case in Bahrain, for example because of the economic crisis that was developing. This might have been a cause, and will therefore be further explored in chapter five.

A definition of *rebellion* however is hard to find. Cleary (2011) gives a definition of ethnic rebellion: “*large-scale, sustained violence against the state/majority, committed by groups with a salient indigenous identity*”. For Bahrain, this would imply that only Shia people (a group with a salient indigenous identity) would join the rebellion, which does not seem to have been the case at the start of the protests. Other characteristics of rebellions are that they are large scale, sustained, and planned¹⁵⁸. Since the protests in Bahrain were largely unplanned rebellion does not seem to be a good definition.

Another possible definition describing the violence in Bahrain could be *sectarianism*, a term also used by the Ambassador of the Netherlands to Kuwait (and responsible for Bahrain) Mr. Boon von Ochssee¹⁵⁹. McVeigh (1995) gives a definition for the case of Northern-Ireland: “*Sectarianism in Ireland is that changing set of ideas and practices, including, crucially, acts of violence, which serves to construct and reproduce the difference between, and unequal status of, Irish Protestants and Catholics*”¹⁶⁰. Although McVeigh pleads that his definition only fits Ireland, the conflict in Bahrain over time also developed in one between two religious sects, the Shia and Sunni. Interesting aspects of McVeigh’s definition are that he refers to sectarianism as a process, and as an asymmetrical power relationship. In several videos from Bahrain, especially during the first phase of the conflict, the people in the protests stated that Shia and Sunni are brothers, which indicates the conflict is not strictly between the two sects¹⁶¹. Therefore at this moment sectarianism does not seem to be the appropriate definition either.

The media almost always refers to Bahrain as an *uprising*. This is not a term used in academic circles and there is no official definition, which makes it difficult to use in this research. The term appears to the researcher as being more spontaneously organized than a rebellion, almost ad hoc. An uprising also does not seem to have an organization behind it, it mainly sounds like many people are stepping up for their rights at the same moment.

In conclusion, it is difficult to squeeze Bahrain into a definition. And due to the alteration of the conflict, this is even more difficult. At this moment, some aspects of the terms, like the grade of (political) organization, and the parties (to what extent did Sunni Muslims participate in the protests?) are still unclear. Before drawing hasty conclusions it would be best to use a broad term which is often used in science, ensuring that all options remain open to analyze these aspects in a scientific manner. Therefore the term ‘*conflict*’ will thus be used throughout this research.

3.1.2 Defining the actors

This research mainly focuses on actions of international actors, and the Netherlands in particular. The exact definition and explanation of the role of these actors are both discussed here.

International actors

It was chosen to label all international actors studied ‘international actors’. At first sight this may sound like an international community, but there is a difference: with international actors, only those interviewed and observed in this research are meant. International community is a far broader term. Ramsbotham et al. (2005) give a definition of the international community: “*Non-state actors as well as states, motivated by solidarist values, the chief organizing principle being international legitimacy as determined through relevant international institutions, international organizations, and international law*”¹⁶². This term therefore refers to both states and their bilateral relations, and (international) NGOs, and other actors. To narrow this, from all states and organizations that work in, or pay attention to Bahrain, some were chosen to interview or observe, and to be included in this research. A full list of the interviewees and observants is present in attachment 1. The Bahraini government was not chosen as a major actor for this research, as

¹⁵⁶ Besancon, M.L. (2005). ‘Relative resources: inequality in ethnic wars, revolutions and genocide’. In: *Journal of Peace Research*, 42 (4), p. 398.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid* p. 395.

¹⁵⁸ Cleary, M.R. (2011). Democracy and Indigenous Rebellion in Latin America. In: *Comparative Political Studies* 2000 33: 1123

¹⁵⁹ Interview with the Dutch Ambassador to Kuwait and Bahrain, September 2011.

¹⁶⁰ Irish Society (1995). Sociological perspectives. Institute of Public Administration: Ireland. P.643

¹⁶¹ Al Jazeera (2011). Shouting in the dark [online]. Cited August 4, 2011.

<http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/2011/08/201184144547798162.html>

¹⁶² Ramsbotham, O., Woodhouse, T., Miall, H. (2005). *Contemporary conflict resolution*. Polity Press: Cambridge, p.318

the researcher did not have enough entrance to sources in order to give a well-founded opinion¹⁶³. Eventually a few sources were available, but not enough for scientific research. The main focus therefore is on the international actors, and the Netherlands in particular. This actor was chosen because of the background of the researcher.

The bilateral channel

Bilateral refers to actions between the governments of two countries, without further mediation. One can think of delivering humanitarian aid, military assistance, financial aid, but also diplomacy, the latter consisting out of three types. Track 1 diplomacy is comprised of official governmental or intergovernmental representatives, who may use good offices, mediation, and carrots and sticks to seek or force an outcome, typically along the win-lose or bargaining line. Track II involves unofficial mediators without carrots or sticks. Track III is composed of indigenous resources and local actors¹⁶⁴. This research is limited to track 1 diplomacy, because the second track is difficult, maybe impossible to study, and the third track is also more difficult and too extensive to study. Track 1 diplomacy between the Netherlands and Bahrain can be well studied, especially via the researcher's internship at the embassy in Kuwait. However not only diplomacy, but any action from one country to the other will be analyzed. More details on this will follow in the upcoming chapters.

3.2 Theories on causes of conflict and their solution

In the contextual framework several possible causes of the conflict came up of which the most clear the Shia-Sunni division and the limited democratic freedom. However much still remains unknown: how did these causes exactly transfer Bahrain from a peaceful country to a country facing protests on a daily basis? And which cause(s) play a major role, and which are less important? To help answering these questions, a great deal of research has been performed on the causes of conflict. These theories have certainly proven their value, although there still are major discussions, as not every theory can be applied to each situation. The causes are grouped into two categories: direct causes and indirect causes or root causes. Root causes are the '*underlying conflicts of interest and relationships*'¹⁶⁵. The counterpart of this term is direct causes, which are the '*immediate circumstances and events that provoke people to have recourse*' to conflict¹⁶⁶. These types of causes are very different from one another and are therefore discussed separately. They have a different time span: root causes simmer for a long time, sometimes even centuries, whereas a direct cause can be a single event, such as the murder of Franz Ferdinand triggering the outbreak of World War II. First the root causes that can be important in Bahrain are discussed. This might sound simple, but the categories are still very broad at this moment because it is not transparent how the causes exactly apply to Bahrain. This chapter summarizes the causes of conflict that were mentioned in the interviews and observations, but from these topics, the chapter discusses all possible ways in which these could work in Bahrain. This is done to prevent uneven focus on certain causes or theories: this chapter explores all ways in which the causes could work. For every cause also the possible solution is discussed. Subsequently, chapter five will combine the insights in the causes together with the held interviews in order to answer on the research question on what the causes of the conflict in Bahrain are. Chapter six will combine the theories and interview results on how to resolve the causes of conflict, so that the second research sub question can be answered.

3.2.1 Root causes

The indirect causes are a broad category and can be divided into three sub-parts: social, political and socio-economic causes. From the start of this research, all theories were taken into account and so these labels are used. But eventually the focus is on the social causes relating to the Sunni-Shia issue; political causes relating to the call for democracy; and socio-economic causes relating to economic inequality. These will be explored in the following paragraphs.

Social causes

As appears from the contextual framework and from the media¹⁶⁷ there are struggles within the Bahraini population. This is a social cause because it relates to the people, their identity, and the mutual relations between the groups. The most obvious cause is the division between the people based on their religious

¹⁶³ More explanation on this can be found in chapter four about Methodology.

¹⁶⁴ Ramsbotham, O., Woodhouse, T., Miall, H. (2005). Contemporary conflict resolution. Polity Press: Cambridge p.20-5

¹⁶⁵ Ibid p.108

¹⁶⁶ Bjorge uses the term 'trigger causes' and applies these terms to terrorism. However in conflict studies the terms of root causes and direct causes are also used, so this reference is only used to explain the definition. Bjorge 'root causes of terrorism' p.3

http://books.google.nl/books?hl=nl&lr=&id=mIUp866_-AUC&oi=fnd&pg=PA1&dq=root+causes+conflict&ots=vvE8ZAIR2d&sig=fSuzGfqMb3AdrEN_Uaa980yCgoc#v=onepage&q=counterp art&f=false

¹⁶⁷ For example, see NOS (2012) <http://nos.nl/artikel/372301-vs-hervat-leveranties-aan-Bahrain.html> and Reuters (2012) <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/05/12/us-bahrain-protests-idUSBRE84B08120120512>

identity: the Sunni and Shia sect. The Shia-Sunni division was the only social cause that was named in the interviews and observations and this part accordingly can be labeled 'social causes'. At this point in research it is still not clear how this division works in Bahrain. The difference between Sunni and Shia is based on religion and therefore causes of conflict relating to religion might be present in Bahrain. However, the contextual framework also showed that the Bahraini are divided among several ethnic groups within their sects. Ethnicity might therefore also play a role in Bahrain. The theories on these two topics and their solution will be discussed below.

Definition

Besancon (2005) describes ethnic wars as: "*episodes of violent conflict between governments and national, ethnic, religious, or other communal minorities (ethnic challengers) in which the challengers seek major changes in their status*", or when the government is not included, the subject of war is political power or the government. In a broader sense this would mean that a minority group which perceives its status as inferior wants to change that status. This sounds as the definition that could suit Bahrain. According to Besancon, rioting and warfare between rival communal groups is not coded as ethnic warfare unless it involves conflict over political power or government policy¹⁶⁸. This description seems to fit Bahrain perfectly: the Shia, a religious community, want to change their inferior perceived status. However, the inferior perceived status also relates to economic or political inequality, or relative deprivation between two groups: not the social difference in itself. This will be studied in the economic and political sections of this chapter. A second note for this theory is that the Shia involved in the protests are marked as a religious sect; not as an ethnic group, and therefore the term ethnic sounds peculiar. Then what is ethnicity? If the above definition categorizes *religious* groups fighting an *ethnic* war, ethnicity could be a label of many groups (either ethnic, religious, etc.). Theories on ethnicity are therefore useful to look into from this perspective.

There are many discussions about what ethnicity is: is it a character of people, can it be inherited by blood, or is it a label created by people? These questions determine how ethnicity can be a cause of conflict and hence are important. Oberschall (2000) categorizes the views on ethnicity into four groups:

Primordial view ethnic	attachments and identities are a cultural given and a natural affinity
Instrumentalist view	ethnic sentiments and loyalties are manipulated by political leaders and intellectuals for political ends
Constructionist view	ethnicity is a very real social fact, but in ordinary times they are only one of several roles and identities that matter
Fear and insecurity	state breakdown, anarchy and the security dilemma make ethnic groups engaging in defensive arming to protect themselves against their ethnic rivals ¹⁶⁹

This shows that ethnicity can either be the reason for conflict, or that it is an indirect reason through political leaders and intellectuals, or state breakdown, anarchy and the security dilemma. These different views will be kept in mind while exploring how ethnicity exactly plays a role in Bahrain. Depending on the outcome of this, different solutions are possible. If the ethnic sentiments are manipulated by political leaders, it is of course important to address those leaders, but if the constructionist view applies, it might be relevant to remind people that ethnicity is merely one out of several aspects of identity.

Theories on conflict and ethnicity

Lake and Rothchild (1996) thoroughly describe the process of the development of an ethnic conflict: "*ethnic conflict is most often caused by collective fears of the future. As groups begin to fear for their safety, dangerous and difficult-to-resolve strategic dilemmas arise that contain within them the potential for tremendous violence. As information failures, problems of credible commitment, and the security dilemma take hold, groups become apprehensive, the state weakens, and conflict becomes more likely. Ethnic activists and political entrepreneurs, operating within groups, build upon these fears and polarize society. Political memories and emotions also magnify these anxieties, driving groups further apart. Together these between-group and within-group strategic interaction produce a toxic brew that can explode into murderous violence*"¹⁷⁰. This theory starts with a fear for the future. This fear has to have a cause as well, either perceived or real. This will have to be looked for in Bahrain. The theory sounds very heavy: groups begin to fear for their safety; tremendous violence would occur; the state weakens; a toxic brew that can

¹⁶⁸ Besancon, M.L. (2005). 'Relative resources: inequality in ethnic wars, revolutions and genocide'. In: Journal of Peace Research, 42 (4), p.398

¹⁶⁹ Oberschall, A. (2000). The manipulation of ethnicity: from ethnic cooperation to violence and war in Yugoslavia. In: Ethnic and Racial Studies 23 (6), p.982-4.

¹⁷⁰ Lake and Rothchild 1996:41 in Ramsbotham, O., Woodhouse, T., Miall, H. (2005). Contemporary conflict resolution. Polity Press: Cambridge, p.93-4.

explode. The fears need to be very serious will this occur based only on that anxiety. Otherwise other causes could be combined with these fears.

According to research of Hegre et al. (2001), ethnic heterogeneity increases the probability of civil war. They concluded that civil wars occur more often in countries that have a '*substantial population of one or more ethnic, religious, or linguistic groups*'¹⁷¹. The probability of civil war is almost twice as high in countries where the major ethnic group forms only about half of the population, compared to countries where the major group fills up 95% of the population. The composition of the Bahraini population increases the risk on civil war. The theory does not explain why this is the case, it only came forward that this appeared during conflicts in the past. Of course, addressing this cause would be unrealistic, as it would mean removing half of the Bahraini population. However, awareness of this risk can cause programs focused on tolerance to be initiated for instance. Also, seen these facts about the composition of population, it is interesting to not only think of the diverse census statistics of the Shia-Sunni population, but also of the high number of expats living in Bahrain (p.14). On the other hand, as stated, every Gulf country has more expats than natives, but not every country is facing a conflict. There should be more reasons for conflict then.

Additionally, Collier and Hoeffler (2000) studied the composition of the population in relation to conflict. They discovered that one ethnic group being a majority heightens the risk of conflict. Collier and Hoeffler define a majority as 45-90% of the population¹⁷². In the case of Bahrain, the Shia are the majority, but the Sunni might even make up 42.4% of the Muslim population (according to Gengler, see p.15), which is close to the number of Shia (57.7% according to Gengler), so it would be difficult to state whether the Shia are an actual majority as is meant in this theory.

Ethnicity therefore does seem to determine a risk on conflict, but it does not seem to explain why conflict erupts completely. According to the theories either the underlying search for power or money or fear for the future would be the cause. A theory that may explain the value of ethnicity in Bahrain is that of Brubaker and Laitin (1998), about ethnicizing conflicts. A non-ethnic conflict is made to look like an ethnic conflict because this will gain more attention and resources from the diaspora and international and non-governmental organizations. These actors might be willing to share their resources for a noble cause (ethnic deprivation; cruel suppression of an ethnic group) but not for a cause for power¹⁷³. This search for power however is the underlying cause in that case, which points to politics as a deeper cause of the conflict. This motive will be studied below.

In conclusion it seems like although the ethnic composition of a country increases the risk on conflict, it does not singularly explain why conflict erupts. Ethnicity is either used to gain support from the international community and diaspora, to mobilize people to combat their fear, or it determines the political or economic situation of people. Because one is Shia or Sunni, one is more deprived or privileged in political and economic ways. This causes tension, and not because one is Shia or Sunni, but because of the position resulting from that. In the following paragraphs one finds an account of whether religion has a more satisfactory explanation, and then the research will shift to politics and economy.

Theories on conflict and religion

Whereas it is only one of the four views from Oberschall (2000) that ethnicity is absolute, Juergensmeyer (2003) and Stern (2003) consider religion as absolute. Religion is about the truth, and many (monotheistic) religions claim to have the truth about life and death. They think they do the right thing and that God is on their side, and other ideas are impossible¹⁷⁴. Juergensmeyer calls this the struggle between good and evil, a divine struggle that goes beyond human experience. It is an all-or-nothing conflict where no compromises are possible, and thus religion often is a cause of conflict¹⁷⁵.

However, religion does not have to be absolute but can be 'religionized' as well. For example, in Northern-Ireland the conflict was not about religion itself but still the terms 'Catholic' and 'Protestant' were labels for the parties. Stewart (2002) is convinced that when unequal access to political, economic, or social resources coincides with cultural differences (of which religion is just one example), culture can become a "*powerful mobilizing agent that can lead to a range of political disturbances*"¹⁷⁶. These disturbances can take place in the form of riots, civil war, massacres, or terrorism. The motives of leaders

¹⁷¹ Hegre, H., T. Ellinsen, S. Gates & N.P. Gleditsch (2001). Toward a democratic civil peace? Democracy, political change and civil war 1816-1992. In: The American Political Science Review 95 (1) p.40

¹⁷² Collier, P. and A. Hoeffler (2004). Greed and grievance in civil war. In: Oxford Economic Papers 56, p.588

¹⁷³ Brubaker, R. and D.D. Laitin (1998). Ethnic and nationalist violence. In: Annual Review of Sociology, 24 p.425.

¹⁷⁴ Stern, J. (2003). Terror in the name of God - Why Religious Militants Kill. New York: HarperCollins Publishers. p.282

¹⁷⁵ Juergensmeyer, M. (2003). Terror in the mind of God. Berkeley: University of California Press. P.150-2

¹⁷⁶ Stewart, F. (2002). Horizontal Inequalities: A Neglected Dimension of Development [online]. Cited April 27, 2012. <http://www3.geh.ox.ac.uk/pdf/gehwp/gehwps81.pdf>

of these groups may be lack of political power, and that the cultural differences can help to construct or accentuate the group boundaries. The followers of these leaders care about political exclusion as well, but even more about their economic, social or cultural inequality¹⁷⁷. Again, political or economic problems seem to be the basis where social identity can become more important, and can eventually be the frame of the conflict. It does not appear to be the cause itself: people do not kill one another because he¹⁷⁸ maintains a different religion or ethnicity, but because he has a better position due to that particular religion or ethnicity. On the other hand, when the social division is perceived as real, a cause relating to social relations might still be helpful.

Addressing the social cause

One author specifically explains how socially motivated causes of conflict can be addressed. Tonya Putnam (2002) sees integrative solutions as the answer, although they are difficult to implement. Examples of these are introducing consociationalist or federalist systems; autonomy for a certain region; power sharing; dispersal of power to lower governments; and electoral systems that give incentives to inter-ethnic coalitions¹⁷⁹. However, there are discussions about these solutions. Timothy Sisk (2003) objects to power sharing as a long-term solution because the mutual veto of parties leads to political blackmail, which in the end causes political immobilism which in turn can lead to renewed conflict. Sisk therefore pleads for a more fluid form of democracy that allows flexible coalitions to bridge ethnic diversity¹⁸⁰. This seems to be a better option, although it will be difficult to install such a form of democracy in an ethnic divided society, as people will most probably support leaders from their own background. This stresses the importance of an electoral system that gives incentive to inter-ethnic coalitions: in that way the parties are obliged to cooperate. But again the question arises parties can be convinced to support such a system. That requires marvelous negotiation skills, and the parties should be able to achieve at least some of their goals. In that way, the parties can be motivated for such a democracy.

All these solutions take the social issue as a serious cause of conflict, because they see a solution in changing the social groups. This would resemble the constructional view: during conflict, the social identity is very important and real. But the solutions of Putnam (2002), especially stimulating inter-ethnic coalitions, try to make the shift back to the normal situation where this identity is only one of many. Autonomy seems a far-reaching solution for Bahrain, also since the protesters do not seem attached to a certain region of Bahrain but are present in many towns spread throughout the country. The other solutions try to move away from the perception that the social background of a person is important, and more towards the constructionist view where the social background is only one aspect of many; where social groups can mix. These solutions thus eventually diminish the importance of the social background.

In conclusion, social causes can relate to religion, ethnicity, or other aspects of identity. These identities can be perceived as real, but can also be one out of many. They can be manipulated by leaders or function as a means of protection. Ethnicity and religion can be absolute, but this can also be framed in this way, while there are underlying economic or political causes. Social causes can therefore play an important role, but in the situation of Bahrain they seem to be connected to other causes. The deeper problems point towards economic or political inequality. These causes will be explored below.

Socio-economic causes

As stated on page 16, economic inequality tends to promote violent political conflict¹⁸¹. The economic situation at first does not seem to be a cause in Bahrain, since it diversified its economy and is very wealthy. But the division of wealth can be analyzed further. Because this part relates to the social division of economic assets it is labeled socio-economic causes. There are many socio-economic discontent theories, such as the ones from Gurr (1970), Midlarsky (1988), and Collier (2003)¹⁸². These theories all name high inequality as the basis of rebellion and violent political conflict¹⁸³. How the economic inequality in Bahrain could be caused and addressed will be discussed below.

¹⁷⁷ Stewart, F. (2008). Horizontal inequalities and conflict [online]. Cited April 27, 2012. <http://www.undp.org.my/uploads/28072010FrancesStewart.pdf>

¹⁷⁸ Wherever 'he' or equivalents are named in this research, it is certainly not restricted to men. This one word is used for reasons of readability.

¹⁷⁹ Putnam, T.L. (2002). Human rights and sustainable peace. In: Stephen J. Stedman et al. *Ending civil wars: the implementation of peace agreements*. Boulder-London: Lynne Rienner. P. 237-271.

¹⁸⁰ Sisk, T.D. (2003). Power-sharing after civil wars: matching problems to solutions. In: *Contemporary peacemaking: conflict, violence and peace processes*. New York: Palgrave, p.140

¹⁸¹ Schock, K. (1996). A conjunctural model of political conflict: the impact of political opportunities on the relationship between economic inequality and violent political conflict. In: *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 40 (1), p.124.

¹⁸² Ramsbotham, O., Woodhouse, T., Miall, H. (2005). *Contemporary conflict resolution*. Polity Press: Cambridge, p.101

¹⁸³ Schock, K. (1996). A conjunctural model of political conflict: the impact of political opportunities on the relationship between economic inequality and violent political conflict. In: *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 40 (1), p.99.

Theories

Woodward (2002) points at the “*most obvious but most neglected lesson*” in peacebuilding: employment. High unemployment is a threat to peace¹⁸⁴. Woodward has studied unemployment in post-war situations and finds that in these cases, unemployment is a threat to peace because it causes disillusionment, lack of alternative activity, and status, or the continued availability of the unemployed for mobilization by spoilers. In non-post-war cases these motivations can be important as well. Unemployment can be both a direct and an indirect cause of conflict. In an indirect way, unemployment angers and frustrates people because of their deprived economic situation and negative future prospects. Directly, unemployed people will have time to demonstrate, as they have little to do, and they have little to lose from it. In general it can be stated that unemployment leads to crime, as was concluded by Stephen Baron (2008)¹⁸⁵. Some state that youth unemployment, or the demographic situation of large youth bulges can also be a cause of conflict¹⁸⁶. The demographic aspect is beyond the scope of this research, however, youth unemployment will be studied as a cause of conflict in Bahrain.

Woodward (2002) additionally found that, although employment is such a clear and important solution to conflict, it has been missed by the International Monetary Fund, WorldBank, and other development assistance initiatives. This is because it is a politically sensitive issue because it is transforming the system of the country; and because it is not an attractive field to sponsor. This is often why international experts are sent to these countries, although it would be better to have an indigenous workforce for this¹⁸⁷. It is therefore interesting to see what has been done in Bahrain to combat unemployment; and if indeed more Shia are unemployed than Sunni. This information would give clear suggestions on what should be done and how (especially: how it went wrong in the past, so how it should *not* be done). At this moment it is impossible to answer these questions. This will be done by means of the interviews.

There are many theories relating to income inequality as a cause of conflict. Gurr (1970) developed a theory on income inequality, relating it to three other factors. His theory of relative deprivation names these factors: absolute poverty is not a reason for conflict, but “*the tension that develops from a discrepancy between the ‘ought’ and the ‘is’ of collective value satisfaction*” is¹⁸⁸. What one has at that moment is different from ones’ expectations. There are three forms: differences between what is, and what people had in the past and was better (decremental deprivation); differences between what is now and increased value expectations of what one could have (aspirational deprivation); and between what is and what was available for a short time, but not anymore (progressive deprivation).

Schock (1996) finds that income inequality is not a cause in itself, but that it, together with economic exploitation, is positively related to political violence. This effect is higher with low levels of political institutionalization and low military sovereignty¹⁸⁹. The political institutionalization is defined by Huntington as “*the process by which organizations and procedures acquire value and stability*”. According to him, institutions are ‘*stable, valued, recurring patterns of behavior*’¹⁹⁰. It is remarkable that this theory does not mention anything about democracy. Thus if there is inequality between incomes, economic exploitation, but strong democratic or undemocratic institutions and high military sovereignty, there would be no or little political violence. If these institutions are undemocratic, it would seem then that the economic dissatisfaction is suppressed instead of addressed. The question is whether this is a solution to the problem or not. However, more on democracy will be discussed below.

Another theory relating to inequality relates this aspect to sovereignty. According to another theory of Schock (1996), income inequality and separatist potential have a greater impact on political violence in contexts in which the state’s sovereignty has been compromised by a foreign state¹⁹¹. This theory is especially interesting in the light of Bahrain’s situation, where there is a lot of Saudi influence. A logical way of addressing this cause would be to respect the state’s sovereignty. This issue is highly debated in Bahrain, in light of the interfering international community, Iran, and Saudi Arabia (or the GCC).

¹⁸⁴ Woodward, S.L. (2002). Economic priorities for successful peace implementation. In: Stephen J. Stedman et al. *Ending civil wars: the implementation of peace agreements*, Lynne Rienner, Boulder-London, p.201.

¹⁸⁵ Baron, S.W. (2008). Street Youth, Unemployment, and Crime: Is It That Simple? Using General Strain Theory to Untangle the Relationship. In: *Canadian Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice* 50(4).p.399

¹⁸⁶ See for example Harrigan (2011), Urdal (2004), and Farrington et al. (1986).

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid*, P.5-6

¹⁸⁸ Gurr, T.R. (1970). Relative deprivation and the impetus to violence. In: *Why men rebel*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. P.23.

¹⁸⁹ Schock, K. (1996). A conjunctural model of political conflict: the impact of political opportunities on the relationship between economic inequality and violent political conflict. In: *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 40 (1), p.116-8.

¹⁹⁰ Siedschlag, A. (2001). Political institutionalization and conflict management in the new Europe – path-shaping for the better or worse? Berlin: Humboldt University Berlin.

¹⁹¹ Schock, K. (1996). A conjunctural model of political conflict: the impact of political opportunities on the relationship between economic inequality and violent political conflict. In: *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 40 (1), p.126.

Summing up, two major socio-economic causes were to be found: unemployment and inequality. Inequality can work in three ways: through relative deprivation (which knows three variations); through political institutions; and through sovereignty. Unemployment, sovereignty, and relative deprivation seem possible causes in the conflict of Bahrain. Later on it will be tested to see whether these theories really apply, and how they might have been addressed. The last remaining important field regarding theories is politics, which will finally be discussed below.

Political causes

Schock (1996) states that although economic inequality tends to promote violent political conflict, the extent to which it promotes violence is enhanced or constrained by the political opportunity structure. As democracy was the major demand of those first demonstrators, it seems clear that in Bahrain the political system indeed enhanced or promoted the protests. The wish for change of the political system comes to the foreground in all media and articles, and therefore needs to be discussed extensively. Although the demonstrators have many claims, such as 'down Hamad', more governmental representation, freedom of speech, and an elected Prime Minister, these claims all relate back to democracy, which is why the political theories are labeled under the heading of democracy. Below it is firstly discussed whether democracy is related to peace and other forms of government to conflict, or not. The characteristics of democracies and autocracies will help determining and identifying the key causes of the conflict in Bahrain, what the political system of Bahrain is and whether democracy is the only political solution or not. This research then secondly moves on to discuss how the process of the way towards democracy is riddled with conflict, violence and uncertainty over the institutional structure, as groups compete to establish positions of power and legitimacy¹⁹². In case democracy would be a good solution for Bahrain, these lessons will help to implement it as peacefully as possible. An analysis will be given of what needs attention when implementing a democracy, so that chapter six can establish whether the international actors have done this, and if not, how it could be done.

Definition

Chapter five will analyze to what extent Bahrain is a democracy, but firstly a definition of the concept is helpful. Mansfield and Snyder (1995) define a democracy as minimally having periodic elections between candidates who compete fairly for the votes of a substantial portion of the adult population, and whose outcome determines who makes state policy, including foreign and military policy. 'A substantial portion' however can be interpreted in several ways, ranging from a minimal part of society to everybody. Other than that, the definition is very clear.

Theories on the political system: democracy equals peace?

Although no democracies have ever fought a war against each other¹⁹³ the link between democracy and peace is drawn into question by many¹⁹⁴. Mansfield and Snyder (1995) and Hegre et al. (2001) claim that a lack of democracy does not have to be a cause of conflict. Hegre et al. show that democracies and stark autocracies are equally unlikely to experience civil war, and that an intermediate regime is four times more prone to civil war than a consistent democracy¹⁹⁵. Therefore half-democracies do not equal peace.

There are additional views that support this, by stating that it is not democracy but the inclusiveness of a system that counts. Reynal-Querol (2004) states there is "*no evidence that democracy has any clear effect on economic development or the probability of civil wars*". Instead of looking at democracy one should consider the inclusiveness of the political systems: the ability of a system to avoid political exclusion. Democracy is just one dimension of that¹⁹⁶. The more inclusive the system, the lower the probability of civil war is¹⁹⁷. Partially free systems and autocratic systems are less inclusive, and proportional representation systems have high levels of inclusiveness¹⁹⁸. Also the level of checks and balances is important: a low level of checks and balance increases the likelihood of civil war¹⁹⁹. These claims of Reynal-Querol (2004) are very useful, and thus not only the democracy but also the inclusiveness of the system will be analyzed in chapter five.

¹⁹² Di John, J. (2008). Conceptualising the causes and consequences of failed states: a critical review of the literature. LSE: Crisis states research center, Working Paper 25, p.2

¹⁹³ Mansfield, E.D. & J. Snyder (1995). Democratization and the danger of war. In: International Security 20 (1) p.5-8

¹⁹⁴ Ibid p.21

¹⁹⁵ Hegre, H., T. Ellinsen, S. Gates & N.P. Gleditsch (2001). Toward a democratic civil peace? Democracy, political change and civil war 1816-1992. In: The American Political Science Review 95 (1) p.38

¹⁹⁶ Reynal-Querol, M. (2004). Does democracy pre-empt civil wars? In: European Journal of Political Economy 21, p.446

¹⁹⁷ Ibid p.459

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, p.453

¹⁹⁹ Ibid, p.461-2

Theories on how to implement democracy

It appears that either full autocracies or full democracies are the least prone to conflict. If one does not agree with democracy, at least the inclusiveness of the system should be addressed. What is important is that though more inclusiveness and democracy results in a more peaceful situation, the way towards these systems is not free of conflict. Many theories argue this, for example Mansfield and Snyder (1995). They state that although democracies have never fought one another, the development towards becoming a democracy is aggressive and war-prone²⁰⁰. Hegre et al. (2001) and Collier (2001) also claim that regime change implies a higher chance on conflict than a stable democracy or autocracy²⁰¹.

Regime change, being the transition from autocracy to democracy, is a clear cause for conflict. It will thus be useful to analyze whether such change is taking place in Bahrain. Mansfield and Snyder (1995) developed indicators to study the occurrence of regime change. These indicators are the openness of executive recruitment; executive constraints; and competitiveness of political participation. This means that there is a higher chance on a violent conflict when (1) recruitment of high positions is not open to any politically active person, (2) when there are little or no constraints on decision-making powers of high functions, or (3) when there is little competitiveness for policy or leadership²⁰². This all seems to apply to Bahrain since many high positions are appointed by the king, and there seems to be resistance to democratization in these circles as well (see page 17). However, this will be explored more in detail in chapter five in order to judge whether there indeed is a regime change present in Bahrain.

Addressing the political cause

Now if democracy or inclusiveness and democratization is a cause of conflict, how can this then be addressed? Theories about this will help in signaling what has been done to address this cause in Bahrain in chapter six. According to the Security Council of the United Nations, the key to maintaining a peaceful society is when the natural conflicts of society can be resolved peacefully through the exercise of state sovereignty and, generally, participatory governance²⁰³. The question is how to address the political causes of conflict, in order to achieve a peaceful society.

Enforcing democracy is a *contradictio in terminis*: it is developing the rule of law and civil society at the cost of and toward the elimination of [local] politics²⁰⁴. The will for democracy has to come from inside Bahrain. This should be kept in mind if the political system indeed is the cause of conflict.

The key, according to Roberts (2009), is to develop an approach to democratization first before applying it inadequate or incomplete. Mansfield and Snyder (1995) also state that the international community needs a strategy not so much for promoting democratization as for managing the process in ways that minimize its risks and facilitate smooth transitions²⁰⁵. The most dangerous time for a badly functioning government is when it attempts to reform itself, and repression by a regime without well-developed political institutions is likely to promote civil violence²⁰⁶.

There is a vivid discussion about the suitable pace of democratization. Paul Collier (2000) states that rapid transition to democracy is best²⁰⁷, but many other researchers disagree. Robert Kaplan and Thomas Carothers (2007) for example promote democratic sequentialism and gradualism respectively. According to Carothers, sequentialism “*promises to rationalize and defang democratic change by putting the potentially volatile, unpredictable actions of newly empowered masses and emergent elected leaders into a sturdy cage built of laws and institutions*”. He hereby means that the first step is to create laws and institutions, because the change to a complete democracy is too big in one step. Carothers argues that sequentialism fails, because it rests on two misunderstood assumptions. The first is the premise that a significant number of autocrats can and will act as generators of rule of law development and state-building. Additionally, democratizing countries are inherently ill-suited for these tasks. The best approach according to him is to implement democracy gradually²⁰⁸.

A specific debate within the discussion about the pace of democracy is that about the moment of elections. Bahrain already knows elections but there seems to be discontent about the system.

²⁰⁰ Mansfield, E.D. & J. Snyder (1995). Democratization and the danger of war. In: *International Security* 20 (1) p.5

²⁰¹ Hegre, H., T. Ellinsen, S. Gates & N.P. Gleditsch (2001). Toward a democratic civil peace? Democracy, political change and civil war 1816-1992. In: *The American Political Science Review* 95 (1) p.33 and Collier, P. (2000). Doing well out of war: an economic perspective. In: *Greed and Grievance: economic agenda's in civil wars*, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers. P.5.

²⁰² Mansfield, E.D. & J. Snyder (1995). Democratization and the danger of war. In: *International Security* 20 (1) p.9-15

²⁰³ United Nations Security Council (2001). No exit without strategy: security council decision-making and the closure or transition of United Nations peacekeeping operations. Report of the Secretary General, UN s/2001/391, New York, p2

²⁰⁴ Roberts, D. (2009). Hybrid polities and indigenous pluralities: advanced lessons in statebuilding from Cambodia. In: *Statebuilding and Interventions: policies, practices, and paradigms*. London-New York: Routledge. P.180

²⁰⁵ Mansfield, E.D. & J. Snyder (1995). Democratization and the danger of war. In: *International Security* 20 (1) p.36

²⁰⁶ De Tocqueville in Hegre, H., T. Ellinsen, S. Gates & N.P. Gleditsch (2001). Toward a democratic civil peace? Democracy, political change and civil war 1816-1992. In: *The American Political Science Review* 95 (1) p.34

²⁰⁷ Collier, P. (2000). Doing well out of war: an economic perspective. In: *Greed and Grievance: economic agenda's in civil wars*, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers. P.12.

²⁰⁸ Carothers, T. (2007). The sequency fallacy. In: *Journal of Democracy* 18 (1) p.13

Additionally, if a new political system is created, new elections will be necessary to authorize this system. Therefore it is useful to look at these theories.

Roland Paris (2004) states that first the national institutions have to be built in a post-conflict area, before elections and other democratic and market-oriented reforms can be made. His idea, *Institutionalization Before Liberalization*, has had a major impact on the peacebuilding sector²⁰⁹. It argues that democratization, when implemented too quickly, will lead to instability and a return to violence. In order to prevent this, economic and political institutions should be established first. Conflict-reducing economic policies should be adopted; civil society should be promoted; hate speech controlled; effective state institutions rebuilt; an electoral system rewarding moderation should be created, and elections should be held once the time is right (he gives indicators for when this is the case)²¹⁰. Also Lopez-Pintor (1997) and Carothers (2007) agree that elections should not be held too soon after conflicts. Elections are not a means to end conflict, and it is important to prevent people from losing confidence in elections or democracy²¹¹. Also, according to Terrence Lyons (2002), war-terminance is a short-term approach, but democratization is focused on the long term. Therefore it would be strange to want to achieve these goals in holding elections²¹². Like Paris (2004), Lyons (2002) suggests to first establish 'demilitarizing politics', which means "building norms and institutions that bridge wartime structures based on insecurity and fear". Concretely this means "strengthening interim institutions, reinforcing processes to demobilize combatants in a way that builds new institutions such as political parties and effective electoral commissions"²¹³. Political parties are very important. Lyons shows how important it is to help militias transforming into political parties, also by providing them with financial means²¹⁴. Although there was no full-blown war in Bahrain, these theories might be helpful to implement democracy carefully. A new electoral system might work for Bahrain, and it will be a big difference compared to the current situation in which political parties are prohibited. As the protesters mainly call for democracy, it seems that at least part of the solution lies in this approach.

Besides these changes in institutions and political parties, political will and commitment for change are essential²¹⁵. Horowitz (2004) points out the importance of motivation of local leaders in this. For adopting constitutional innovations he states that it is necessary that powerful actors see benefits for themselves in those innovations²¹⁶. This should be kept in mind when implementing innovations, or the attempt might fail. Regarding the importance of leaders, Mansfield and Snyder (1995) also name the importance of position of the old elite²¹⁷. Simon Chesterman (2004) stresses the importance of change in the mentality of the people. People have to adapt to the new system in order to understand and use it to its full purpose. This is also because democracy brings the state closer to the public than both the state or citizens were used to²¹⁸. According to Roberts (2009), state building will continue to fail to democratize states that emerge from violence, because the transition to democracy cannot substitute the short-term political behavior derived from needs, experiences, histories and evolutions quite different from those from which Western democracy is derived²¹⁹. Mansfield and Snyder (1995) agree on this as well. They mention that the main barriers in the process to democratization are the resistance of social groups who would lose from a full-fledged democracy, and the weakness of democratic institutions²²⁰. All these lessons will be very valuable for implementing democracy in Bahrain in the best possible way.

One of the main barriers to democracy is a special form of political will: 'bad leaders'. Bad leaders, also named spoils politics, are marked by (1) a strong desire to retain power, and defending this at all costs. There is resistance to sharing power, and sharing access to resources with the people. (2) Ethnic consciousness, organization and conflict are promoted, to eliminate the other groups and (3) violence becomes endemic and intensified, and the prime means of political action²²¹. Therefore it means that the current leaders are not willing to share power and listen to the people, and are called 'bad leaders'. This

²⁰⁹ Paris, R. (2004). *At War's End: Building Peace after Civil Conflict*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 188.

²¹⁰ Paris, R. (2004). *At war's end: building peace after civil conflict*. New York: Cambridge University Press. P.188-207.

²¹¹ Lopez-Pintor, R. (1997). *Reconciliation elections: a post-Cold War experience*. In: Krishna Kumar ed., *Rebuilding society after civil war: critical roles for international assistance*. Lynne Rienner, Boulder-London, p.44

Lyons, T. (2002). *The role of postsettlement elections*. In: Stephen John Stedman, Donald Rothchild & Elizabeth M. Cousens eds., *Ending civil wars: the implementation of peace agreements*. Lynne Rienner, Boulder-London, p.217.

²¹² Ibid p.231.

²¹³ Ibid, p.223

²¹⁴ Ibid, p.227.

²¹⁵ Säve-Söderbergh, B. & I.N. Lennartsson (2002). *Electoral assistance and democratization*. In: Fen Osler Hampson & David M. Malone eds., *From reaction to conflict prevention: opportunities for the UN system*. Lynne Rienner, Boulder-London, p.365

²¹⁶ Horowitz, D. (2004). *Some realism about constitutional engineering*. In: Andreas Wimmer et al., *Facing ethnic conflicts: toward a new realism*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Lanham, p.256.

²¹⁷ Mansfield, E.D. & J. Snyder (1995). Democratization and the danger of war. In: *International Security* 20 (1) p.36

²¹⁸ Roberts, D. (2009). Hybrid politics and indigenous pluralities: advanced lessons in statebuilding from Cambodia. In: *Statebuilding and Interventions: policies, practices, and paradigms*. London-New York: Routledge.. P.166-172

²¹⁹ Ibid dem

²²⁰ Mansfield, E.D. & J. Snyder (1995). Democratization and the danger of war. In: *International Security* 20 (1) p.22

²²¹ Allen, C. (1999). Warfare, endemic violence and state collapse in Africa. In: *Review of African Political Economy*, 26 (81), p.381

process is also related to democratization since many social groups, including the powerful ones, are likely to lose from the strengthening of democratic institutions. These include the autocratic rulers themselves, state bureaucrats of the old regime, social and economic elites, and even mass special interest groups. Many of the groups with an interest in retarding the process of democratization are also those with a parochial interest in war, military preparation, empire, and protectionism. Most of the benefits of war are disproportionately concentrated in specific groups²²². Therefore they are not willing to change their political system into a democracy, and this causes conflict. In Bahrain these theories show that it will not only be the king or Prime Minister who wants to hold on to his power, but also other groups, of which the military will be an important one to analyze.

In finding a solution to the problem of bad leaders and corruption, it is important not to rely on either of the two, as that does not create a situation of lasting peace²²³. Mansfield and Snyder (1995) show that the process of democratization is most tranquil when the elites that are threatened by the transition, the military in particular, are given a 'golden parachute'. Old elites should be kept happy and weak²²⁴. Fukuyama (2011) claims that economic growth is a prerequisite to ban corruption. It starts with a politician who dares to challenge the current opinion and builds an anti-corruption-coalition that is supported by others. You need well educated middle class voters that support this political transformation²²⁵.

Other researchers are less positive. Roberts (2009) thinks that elites tend to adopt only those parts of democracy that suit modes of political and social organization that have evolved over the previous centuries. Secondly, what is labeled 'corruption' in the West is often conventional behavior which is not represented as a problem in the popular media in those countries. Corruption originates from structural processes; endures due to contemporary circumstances and will not disappear simply as a result of importing new institutions²²⁶. This is an important bias that needs to be prevented.

But there are more theories, for instance those that suggest on how to address the political causes of conflict mentioned above. These theories could therefore also help in solving the possible political problem in Bahrain.

For example S ave-S oderbergh and Lennartson (2002) argue that additional conditions next to the political will are basic security and access to independent media²²⁷. This both was already realized at the start of the BICI commission, so a good start has been made with this. For the system Chesterman (2004) thinks the administration of justice should be a top priority²²⁸. Again, this was realized by the BICI.

Rothchild (2002) states that a primary focus on security issues during the transition to a self-enforcing peace is essential. This has been addressed by the BICI. Additionally Rothchild states that designing the representational basis of political institutions is the most crucial in the negotiations²²⁹. As there is an ongoing discussion about the voting system and about the employees from the political institutions that represent the people, it seems that Rothchild's theory is right in this regard. It is therefore significant that plenty of attention should be given to the design of the new political system in Bahrain.

Timothy Sisk (2003) and others studied the multiple options for consociational and integrative power-sharing for divided societies. There are extensive discussions about this, but a short note here is on Sisk's choice for the latter solution. For integrative solutions, ethnicity is recognized, but is not the basis of politics. This because they '*engineer a moderation-seeking, centripetal spin to the political system, one that allows for ethnicity but promotes fluid coalitions that transcend the cleavages of conflict*'²³⁰. In consociational power-sharing, ethnic groups are seen as the building blocks of society. This has led to the conflict in the first place, thus would not be the best option. This will be important to keep in mind when looking at conflict resolution.

Through the political theories it was explained that democracy is not the only form of government that has little chance on conflict, but that the situation in between democracy and autocracy on the contrary, is very vulnerable. Also a country facing regime change is vulnerable for conflict. It will be studied what situations Bahrain finds itself in, in order to understand the best options for a solution, such as gradualism, sequentialism, or a rapid transition towards democracy. Knowledge about the sequence and pace of

²²² Mansfield, E.D. & J. Snyder (1995). Democratization and the danger of war. In: International Security 20 (1) p.24-5.

²²³ Allen, C. (1999). Warfare, endemic violence & state collapse in Africa. In: Review of African political economy 26 (81), p.382.

²²⁴ Mansfield, E.D. & J. Snyder (1995). Democratization and the danger of war. In: International Security 20 (1) p.36-7

²²⁵ Fukuyama, F. (2011). In IS magazine, nr 6, p.36

²²⁶ Roberts, D. (2009). Hybrid polities and indigenous pluralities: advanced lessons in statebuilding from Cambodia. In: Statebuilding and Interventions: policies, practices, and paradigms. London-New York: Routledge. P.179

²²⁷ S ave-S oderbergh, B. & I.N. Lennartsson (2002). *Electoral assistance and democratization*. In: Fen Osler Hampson & David M. Malone eds., *From reaction to conflict prevention: opportunities for the UN system*. Lynne Rienner, Boulder-London, p.365.

²²⁸ Chesterman, S. (2004). Justice and reconciliation: the rule of law in post-conflict territories. In: You the people: the United Nations, transitional administration and state-building. Oxford: Oxford University Press. P.181.

²²⁹ Rothchild, D. (2002). Settlement terms and postagreement stability. In: Ending civil wars: the implementation of peace agreements. Boulder-London: Lynne Rienner. P.117-9.

²³⁰ Sisk, T.D. (2003). Power-sharing after civil wars: matching problems to solutions. In: John Darby & Rogert Mac Ginty eds., *Contemporary peacemaking: conflict, violence and peace processes*. Palgrave: Houndmills-New York p.149.

democratization will be paid attention to in this research. As was seen, specific attention should be paid to the people losing from democratization, as they could become spoilers of peace.

3.2.2 Direct causes

Several direct causes may have determined why the conflict in Bahrain started on that February day in 2011. Three events come to mind: residing a 'bad neighborhood' (in other words, the Arab Spring); the economic crisis; and the special meaning of February 14 in the history of Bahrain. The fourth, unemployment, was discussed under root causes.

Bad neighborhood

As described in the contextual framework, Bahrain was in a 'bad neighborhood'; it found itself in a region with many uprisings since the end of 2010. The events in these countries might have triggered the conflict in Bahrain. This is supported by facts of Hegre et al. (2001), stating that proximity of regime change can lead to conflict in other countries as well. The proximity of countries facing regime change, an independence movement, or civil war, are strong indicators for civil war²³¹.

Michael Brown (1996) however does not agree on the neighbors having such a strong effect. He states that it is not the neighbors, but mainly the badly functioning government that causes war²³². This relates to Lisa Anderson's point that the Arab Spring was not one big movement (page 21). However they both do not say that the neighbor effect *cannot* be a trigger for conflict. Thus it might have been the case in Bahrain.

Economic crisis

As discussed above, economics can be an important cause of conflict. Although that can be a long-term cause, a root cause, it is possible that the recent economic crisis since 2008 played a role in Bahrain. In Tunisia the high food prices (which relate to the economic crisis) were the direct cause of the conflict as well. Harrigan (2011) pleads that there was an implicit social contract where "*the regimes offered cheap subsidized food, housing, utilities and fuel along with guaranteed employment in a bloated public sector in exchange for political loyalty*". Since 2007 these prices have gone up, functioning as a direct cause for the conflict. Most countries facing the Arab Spring were depending heavily on imported food²³³. In Bahrain, the inflation of consumer prices however was a remarkably low number in 2011: 0.3%. But the fact that only 0.4% of GDP is earned in agriculture already shows the high dependence on imported food: according to the World Bank, Bahrain imported 92% of its food consumption in 2010. Additionally it is interesting that Bahrain and other Arab countries increased food subsidies and imposed price controls during the first half of 2011²³⁴. They might have anticipated on the Tunisian protests and wanted to prevent it from coming to their countries.

Special date

As explained in the contextual framework, February 14 2002 was a special date in the history of Bahrain. On this day Bahrain became a constitutional monarchy, and more political change was promised. The chance is therefore very high that the commemoration of this day directly caused the protests, which was also explained by some media sources²³⁵. As could be seen from box 1, the new constitution was not always lived up to, and this might have led to discontent.

Conclusion

All these theories point to possible causes of conflict, and how they can be resolved. The theories helped in getting a broader view than merely the idea that the protests had something to do with Shia being ruled by the Sunni minority. The theories explained which social, economic and democratic causes could be involved, how they create tensions and eventually conflict, and how they can be addressed. These theories should now be tested to the situation in Bahrain: which causes apply there, how, and how are they resolved by international actors? The points following in the next paragraphs should be analyzed for this case. These will function as clear indicators for the interview questions.

To go all the way back to the beginning, it is still important to keep an eye on the definition of the events in Bahrain. As the definition still is unclear at the moment, the broad term of 'conflict' is used in this research.

²³¹ Hegre, H., T. Ellinsen, S. Gates & N.P. Gleditsch (2001). Toward a democratic civil peace? Democracy, political change and civil war 1816-1992. In: The American Political Science Review 95 (1) p.41-2

²³² Brown, M.E. (1996). The Causes and Regional Dimensions of Internal Conflict. In: Michael E. Brown, ed., The International Dimensions of Internal Conflict. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press. p. 579-583.

²³³ Harrigan, J. (2011). Did food prices plant the seeds of the Arab Spring? [online]. Cited May 2nd, 2012.

²³⁴ Ianovichina, E., Loening, J. and C. Wood (2012). How Vulnerable Are Arab Countries to Global Food Price Shocks? P.4-9

²³⁵ See for example The Guardian (2011). Unrest in the Middle East – Monday 14 February [online]. Cited June 4th, 2012. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/blog/2011/feb/14/middleeast-unrest>

However if a more specific term is found, this could point to theories specifically applying to the case of Bahrain. Detailed notes should be made in the interviews to analyze people's language and what they are talking about: conflict, war, uprising, revolution, sectarianism, or something else?

From the social causes it appeared that the terms religion and ethnicity can both describe the relations between Shia and Sunni. Resulting from this many theories could apply. First it appeared that it is useful to study how ethnicity is perceived in Bahrain, as each view requires its own form of addressing. Questions that should be asked for Bahrain are: is ethnicity seen as something naturally, is it being manipulated by leaders, is it only one out of several identities, or are the groups created for self-protection? Talking to people who belong to either the Shia or Sunni side, and hearing how they perceive their identity will help in this. Brubaker and Laitin (1998) also analyzed that conflicts can be about power, but that they can be ethnicized in order to gain attention and resources from the diaspora and international actors. In order to analyze this it is foremost important to analyze the exact causes and see whether ethnicity or power lies at the base of the conflict (and of course, it can be caused by both, in which case it needs to be studied which cause is more important). After this it can be analyzed whether the diaspora and international actors give much attention to the ethnic aspect; it appears from a first impression that the media at least do this. It will therefore be important to further analyze this by talking to international actors and their ideas about the Shia and Sunni issue. Lake and Rothchild (2002) mentioned that the importance of ethnicity is caused by a collective fear of the future, and therefore this should be searched for in Bahrain, as nothing immediately seems to have caused this fear. An important aspect to analyze later on is the composition of the Bahraini society, looking at Shia, Sunni, and migrants. This should be studied because Hegre et al. (2001) and Collier and Hoeffler (2000) stated that these relations can be a cause of conflict. Therefore one needs to gain insight in how these relations were before and after February 14th, 2011, and whether this needs attention in conflict resolution. As the difference between Shia and Sunni is of a religious kind, it is important to keep in mind that religion can be seen as absolute, and that it therefore will be difficult to achieve lasting peace. What should also be realized is that this specific characteristic can be used to mobilize people. This means, that people *can* be mobilized, but that there is also an option to decrease the importance of religion, in order to live together peacefully. This was also what Putnam (2002) mentioned under her solutions for social issues, but it is also very important that both Shia and Sunni, and perhaps also the migrants, gain decision-making power. By asking the international actors what they have done it will become clear whether they addressed this point, or not, or whether this is recommendation that still needs to be fulfilled for the future.

For the socio-economic causes there are also two main categories to look for in Bahrain: unemployment and inequality. It is necessary to look at the total number of unemployment, whether it is spread equally among the Shia and Sunni, and whether there is a lot of youth unemployment. As statistics are difficult to find or to trust, knowledge from experts and local actors will be crucial in this case. As far as inequality is concerned, there are three theories that could apply to Bahrain. The first is about relative deprivation. The difference between what people have, and what they had in the past; or what they think they could have; or what was available for a short time but is now unavailable can cause discontent and prove to be a conflict cause. It is therefore important to consider the current economic situation, but also that of the past, and what people think they could possess, compared to fellow citizens for example. This points at economic inequality between Shia and Sunni. According to Schock (1996), one should also look at the degree of political institutionalization, and the state's sovereignty. This was already discussed in the contextual framework, but a deep analysis will be made in chapter five.

The political causes can be divided between the character of the system, and its internal degree of change. Additionally, there are numerous risks to watch for, in case the system should be changed. First it will be important to study the character of the current Bahraini political system. Although this has also been described in the contextual framework, the interviews can also help in analyzing the system and which characteristics of it cause dissatisfaction in Bahrain. Then especially the indicators of Mansfield and Snyder (1995) will help in exploring whether there is a regime change in Bahrain, and studying whether this was a cause of conflict. These indicators also relate to leadership and the openness of recruitment of leaders, and thus perhaps can be combined with the aspect of bad leaders in one interview question. The theories provide many warnings in regards to addressing the political causes, which are useful to prevent them from happening in Bahrain, what in the worst case scenario could probably lead to 'instability and return to violence', as Roland Paris (2004) mentions. Therefore it is hoped that the actors involved also know about these theories; but if not, this research could be a decent contribution. The idea was to first make a plan for democratization. At the moment no such plan was found, but it might be there, or be developed. Next, it is important to decide the pace of transition: all at once (Collier 2001); sequentially (Kaplan); or gradually (Carothers 2007). This research will analyze how the political changes up to today can be characterized, because that way probably was not the best solution for Bahrain, as protests erupted. According to Paris (2004) and Lyons (2002), the economic and political institutions should first be developed further before implementing a democracy. It will therefore be valuable to see which actors have paid attention to these institutions, and if not, which ones might be

suited for this task. Lastly, the political will is important to keep in mind throughout the whole process of democratization. Bad leaders, but also others taking profit from conflict and the status quo need to get attention in order to stay happy but weak. Additionally, because it will be a big change in people's lives, education about democracy can be valuable. Perhaps actors have already signaled this need, and if not, it can be a recommendation for addressing the political cause.

These aspects will be translated into interview questions and an observation guide. In this way, it will become clear what the causes of conflict in Bahrain are; and which of these have been addressed by the international actors. In short, this will answer the main research question. How the interviews and observations were done precisely will be explained in the next chapter on methodology.

4. Methodology

This chapter describes the complete process of this study. In doing so it shows the strengths and weaknesses, and so the real value of how scientific it is. By scientific, it is also meant: reproducible. Although results, especially interviews, always will be depending on the exact circumstances of that moment and for example the personality of the researcher, one should be able to gain approximately the same results by following this guide. That is what makes this research as objective as possible. This chapter is written in a chronological structure: from the first phase of choosing the exact topic, through to the data collection, and moving on to the data processing. It ends by discussing general ethical issues one is facing when doing a research like this. The researcher is very much aware of these issues, and faced many of them during her research process.

4.1 Choice and demarcation of topic

4.1.1 Topic: from refugees to causes

Although there are sufficient reasons to study the conflict in Bahrain as was argued in the introduction, this topic was not a first choice. The researcher has a broad interest in conflicts, and mainly wanted the master thesis research to be relevant for other people. Therefore, at the internship with UNHCR (the UN refugee agency) this request was made to the organization. The researcher did suggest that it is her preference to work on a geographically defined area, rather than topic area, and that the Arab Spring might be interesting since it was a new development. It was UNHCR's request to study Bahrain. The organization felt a lack of information coming from Bahrain, and was interested in the conflict. Due to the organization's work field the UNHCR was mainly interested to know whether refugees would result from the conflict. The researcher agreed on this topic. At first, the topic was narrowed towards the refugee issue: will or did there come refugees from Bahrain as a consequence of the protests?

After two months of research it unfortunately appeared impossible to study the topic of refugees resulting from the conflict in a scientific manner. Even from fellow UNHCR offices there was little information about this issue. There was either no response, or a response that said that no Bahraini applied for political asylum in the other GCC countries. Also, the flow of people from Bahrain to Saudi Arabia (a logical first choice for refugees from Bahrain, as Saudi Arabia is connected by bridge) is not being registered, as this only forms an internal GCC border. The single solution to study this topic would be to sit on the bridge, and ask people whether they are refugees. This would probably not be appreciated by the Bahraini crossing the bridge, not to mention whether this would be appreciated or facilitated by Bahrain or Saudi Arabia. This was impossible for obvious reasons. However a good start was already made by analyzing Bahrain, so the decision was made to study Bahrain, but to focus on another issues than refugees. After a search for existing research about Bahrain, it was clear that a lot was still to be done. It was decided to start at the beginning of the conflict: its causes. Additionally, their addressing by international actors was chosen to be included in this research, to aim for a more useful contribution to the solution of the conflict.

Since only little research has been performed on Bahrain, this research is a chance to make a difference. However it is also difficult to narrow the research to a topic that could be studied in the time available. Everything seemed important to study. Therefore making choices remained a challenge throughout the whole process. The first intention was to study all causes of conflict and all interventions done so far, to see which cause was not (fully) addressed. This however would be too broad. It was decided to link the mostly named causes, and so the most important ones, directly to the intervention. Secondly it was decided to make a demarcation in regard of the actors involved: only a group of international actors was studied, with a specific focus on the Netherlands. With international actors it was meant here: states and organizations that work in, or pay attention to Bahrain and were interviewed. The actions of states studied are limited to track 1 diplomacy (official governmental or intergovernmental representatives, who may use good offices, mediation, and carrots and sticks to seek or force an outcome, typically along the win-lose or bargaining line)²³⁶. As stated before, international actors were chosen because this could be studied thoroughly from the researchers' situation. However, it appeared impossible to interview representatives of two governments who play an important role in the region: Saudi Arabia and Iran. The Dutch ambassador to Kuwait advised that it was impossible to conduct interviews with these actors, and if interviews could be held, no valuable information would be shared. Regarding the ambassador's long experience in the field of diplomacy, and as it is well-known that both countries are not very open in sharing information, especially not to Western women, I relied on his advice. Additionally, it would be a risk for the Netherlands to send an inexperienced trainee to those embassies, since the relations are fragile. Because of these reasons the relations of Saudi Arabia and Iran were only studied by means of literature. This lack of information, which can be labeled as non-response, might have caused a bias in results. Although it was not the intention of the researcher, only the 'western'

²³⁶ See Theoretical Framework, p. 28

international actors were eventually studied. The participating actors were studied in a thorough manner, but it still is a recommendation for further research to include these embassies in further research. As a female Dutch trainee this was unfortunately unattainable.

These demarcations resulted in the research questions explained in the introduction. Further details of the research topic and demarcation will be discussed per research question below. First an introduction to the methodology is made.

4.1.2 General design

Topic

The method proposed by UNHCR, studying Bahrain, is called a case study. A general definition of a case study is given by Verschuren and Doorewaard: “a case study is a research where the researcher tries to get a thorough and integral insight in one or some objects or processes, limited in time and space”²³⁷. Using the method of a case study has many advantages: it provides an integral, holistic view on the situation; a case study project is more maneuverable, which is important in fast changing circumstances as they are in Bahrain; and results will be easier accepted compared to other forms of research. A disadvantage of this form of research is that the external validity is low. Although this research will mainly be of use for conflicts that resemble the situation of Bahrain, it can also be useful for other studies. The results from the root cause approach can help other conflicts, in looking at how these theories work in practice. Also, if it appears that some theories need change, this will help other conflict cases. But because the situation of Bahrain is studied in detail, it must be recognized that the outcomes of this research will mainly apply to those cases similar to Bahrain. This research can also be looked into from an angle of conflict resolution by using the root cause approach. By studying whether the international actors have used a root cause approach in their resolution initiatives, it can help them to pose this question in other cases as well: do we address the root causes, or are we fixing the symptoms of conflicts? In this regard the external validity can still be very high. The method of a case study therefore is a legitimate choice²³⁸. Another argument in support of the case study approach is that time is limited so studying more countries would not be possible.

In order to understand the reality of Bahrain, it is important to actually visit the country. As an independent researcher this would have been very difficult, perhaps impossible, since other single travelers were rejected entrance upon suspicion of activism. Therefore it was chosen to go to Bahrain through the actor mostly connected to other international actors: the Dutch network of Embassies. More on this will be described below. This resulted in getting information about the conflict in Bahrain, Bahraini, and actors that are involved in Bahrain. This was done through interviews and observation; more on this will also be explained below.

Goals

Although the research was designed from a case study on Bahrain as a starting point, other additional goals got entangled around the research as well. These have been presented in the introduction, but as a reminder they are repeated here, and below the method to achieve them is explained:

1. Empirical goal: understanding the causes of the conflict in Bahrain, and their resolution so far by international actors
2. Theoretical goal: improving theories that explain conflicts, by testing them to the reality of Bahrain
3. Policy goal: improving policy of international actors regarding Bahrain by evaluating their current policy towards Bahrain

The first goal, to know more about Bahrain, is an empirical goal, because it looks at the practice of conflict in reality and wants to understand this better. After the case of Bahrain was chosen, the contextual framework was written first, in order to fully comprehend the specific context of Bahrain. After this the subject was placed in a scientific framework. Theories on causes of conflict could help the Bahraini case, as they describe all possible causes of conflicts and their resolution, based upon years of experience. By applying these theories to Bahrain it would become obvious which causes are applying to Bahrain, and how their resolution should look like, and this in turn could be applied to the reality of the international actors' approach.

However when applying theories to a practical case such as Bahrain, the theories might not apply completely or differently when compared to other cases. Lessons can be learned about the theories themselves, their relevance and applicability. It shows how (and if) theories works in the Bahraini practice. This is the second goal of this research: to test the theories to reality. This is called empirical testing, this contradicts the form of research that develops theories²³⁹. By looking at how the theories work in Bahrain, it is learned how to utilize theories in practice; whether the theories apply in Bahrain; how theories could

²³⁷ Verschuren, P. and H. Doorewaard (2007). *Het ontwerpen van een onderzoek*. Den Haag: Lemma. P. 183.

²³⁸ *Ibid.* P.190

²³⁹ *Ibid.* P.45

be changed to suit the case of Bahrain; and consequently how they could be used for other cases. This will help and improve the scientific debate and knowledge on the causes of conflicts and their resolution, and thus will have value for the whole field of conflict studies; and not only for Bahrain. This therefore contributes to the external validity of this research as well. The method for this goal was to first analyze theories in the theoretical framework, and consequently linking and evaluating the theories to the reality of Bahrain through the empirical data.

Lastly, the research question about the international community addressing the causes is in fact testing the policy of the actors involved. This goal is evaluating the policy by comparing the reality of policy to theories on what should work in Bahrain²⁴⁰. This information was based on theories on conflict resolution (limited to the actions that address the causes of conflict; described in the theoretical framework) and the empirical data from actors that work in or with Bahrain (which actions they took to resolve the conflict; based on interviews and observations). In this way again reflections on the policy are made: the reality might give new insights for policy. This goal was chosen to help resolving the conflict in the end.

As one can see, all goals are intertwined. In the research, all theories are bundled in the theoretical framework and all interviews and where possible observations discuss both the causes and means of resolution. The chapters on results combine all insights to discuss the research questions and these goals. Also the method of a case study combines insights. By using a case study, a thorough view on the situation is possible so that the theories can be truly understood and applied, and it can be seen how the theories work in practice. In general the theories might work, but what about the details? The same holds for policy. By looking at the details, policy can be refined and improved.

Methodology

When using a case study, qualitative research methods are often used, since these provide thorough knowledge on one situation²⁴¹. This knowledge is important to fully grasp the conflict. One method for doing case studies is a desk-study, which was the start for this research, although interviews later were added. That is because a disadvantage from desk-studies is that the available data is collected for other purposes than the topic of the new research, from which a one-sided view might result. Especially in subjects related to conflict, information might be biased. Therefore several methods and several sources were combined to acquire triangulation in methods and in sources, and to create a holistic view on the Bahrain conflict²⁴². The starting points of information were written sources on the conflict; theories on the causes of conflict and how to address these causes. This was tested in reality to recent information resulting from media reports, interviews and observation.

From within the Netherlands it would be difficult to arrange interviews with (enough) key actors. There is an embassy of Bahrain in the Netherlands, but beside that there are no experts, and almost no Bahraini in the Netherlands. It was thus very important to travel to Bahrain for the field data, but also to be able to consult international actors. As mentioned before, as an independent researcher this would have been difficult, if not impossible, and even dangerous. Therefore it was decided to apply for a second internship during the Master programme at a post of the Dutch diplomatic network. Through a post like that, information both 'from the field' and from the international community would be available. The consulate in Bahrain unfortunately was too small for a meaningful internship, however the responsible embassy in Kuwait assured that enough data would be collected for the research, and thus the decision was made to go to Kuwait from February to June 2012. From then on the focus was put on answering the research questions, of which the process and methodology will now be described.

4.1.3 Research sub question 1: causes

The causes of the conflict in Bahrain is the first topic chosen. The research question is: What are the causes of the uprisings in Bahrain in February 2011?

Because of the lack of information on the conflict in Bahrain, the causes were a good starting point for research. Specifically little scientific research has been done on the protests from a conflict studies angle, using the major conflict studies theories. If it is clear what initially created the conflict, it is easier to resolve later on. Resulting from this it appeared that the causes are very relevant to study, and were therefore chosen to be discussed in this research.

This topic is limited to the factors that caused the protests in February 2011. This might seem obvious, but as the conflict continued, it became clear that the motivations for the protests at least partially changed as well. This was a challenge for the interviews, as the people who were questioned might think of the current protests and not the first protests in 2011.

²⁴⁰ Verschuren, P. and H. Doorewaard (2007). *Het ontwerpen van een onderzoek*. Den Haag: Lemma.. P.49

²⁴¹ *Ibid.* P.163

²⁴² *Ibid.* P.184-5

The causes are studied along four methods: studying conflict studies theories; literature about the start of the protests and the Bahrain history; interviews; and observations. This is done to acquire triangulation. The contextual framework is based on literature, and describes the background in which the circumstances were created for the protests. The theoretical framework, based on conflict studies theories, describes causes of conflict. This information prepared the researcher for the empirical research, the interviews and the observation. At first it was difficult to decide whom to interview. After the demarcation for international actors was made, the researcher almost decided to merely interview these actors. However, as the international actors remain outsiders, it could be possible that they did not have a complete view of the situation in the field. This would threaten the internal validity, to say something about the whole of Bahrain. Therefore it was decided that for this research question local actors were interviewed as well. This appeared to be possible very easily by means of the internship at the embassy. Many different local actors were interviewed and spoken to. In this way it is possible to make statements for the entire conflict in the whole of Bahrain. Beside interviews, additional meetings could be attended as well. These meetings could not be organized by the researcher herself but were hosted by the Dutch Ambassador of Kuwait and Bahrain. The researcher could join these meetings as assistant of the Ambassador and was requested to write reports on these meetings. These meetings were very valuable for this research, since some included key actors that were unreachable for the researcher on her own. The results of these meetings are allowed to be used in this research. These meetings are grouped under the 'observation' method. More on the exact process in acquiring these results will be discussed in the data collection below.

A challenge was that this topic is already very broad, especially since it soon became clear that many causes played a role in Bahrain. Eventually it appeared from the interviews and observations that most causes are interrelated, so at last it all is not as broad as it may seem. More on this will become clear in the next chapter where the results are discussed.

4.1.4 Research sub question 2: the addressing of causes by international community

The last research question is: which causes of conflict in Bahrain have been addressed by the international community? This question's answer is also based on several sources. The first source is the literature from the contextual framework about what was done in general. In this way it can be seen what was done by all actors involved, and what the position of the international actors was in this. The second source is the theoretical framework on how causes can be addressed according to conflict studies theories; this will help in knowing what to search for, specifically in the interviews with the international actors. The answers on what was done exactly lastly obviously come from the interviews and observations.

The main focus is put on the Netherlands for reasons of specialization; because of the background of the researcher and the possibilities for studying this perspective resulting from it. Combined with an internship at embassy of the Netherlands in Kuwait, this formed a good basis to analyze the Dutch role in Bahrain.

As the research developed, it became visible that not much had been done by the international actors to address the causes. On top of that, it appeared that the chance for the international community taking such action in the future is small. This made the research even more significant because it stresses the importance of conflict resolution in Bahrain, and defines what exactly is needed in order to prevent mistakes, in case an actor does decide to interfere or start a new project to help Bahrain. Additionally, NGOs and other actors might be able to use this research to demand for more action from the international community. In this regard, the research might prove to be very useful.

Now that the topic choices have been outlined above, a detailed insight on how the results were achieved will be given below.

4.2 Data collection

As explained above, four methods were used: literature, theories, interviews, and observation. The first two are grouped together since it both concerns written material. Below the challenges and assumptions of all methods are explained.

4.2.1 Literature study

As visible in the past chapters, many different literary sources have been used. Although this always is important in scientific research, it is of extreme importance with politically sensitive, disputed topics as conflict and when only limited existing scientific material is available (in English; see also the ethical reflection about the language issue). This all appeared to be true for Bahrain, as even the statistics are disputed. Michael Stephens, researcher at RUSI said: "*Trying to get empirical data is impossible. Any*

figures of the government are not true, unfortunately, therefore it is difficult to make a statement²⁴³. This was shown already in the contextual framework where data on the number of Shia and Sunni differs highly, depending on the source quoted. For this reason it was extremely difficult to prevent bias, and therefore the method of triangulation was used to achieve reliable results.

During the selection of sources utmost attention was paid to reliability. Every fact was double checked, as even the written history of Bahrain differs, such as dates and the story about the period under British rule.

As said, at first little information appeared available. But when discussing this with colleagues, mainly with Dana Ahmed, political officer at the Netherlands embassy in Kuwait, more sources became available. More sources were found through weblogs and social media suggested by her. Some of this information itself was not very reliable, but sources the articles referred to, were. Eventually many types of sources were used: news articles, reports from NGOs (such as Amnesty International, International Crisis Group, and the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry), books about Bahrain, and scientific literature on conflict theories for the theoretical framework. A constraint of this research is that much literature still comes from Western sources, mainly because of the language issue. However, by being in the region, more local sources were used than would have been the case when staying in the Netherlands. Even Kuwaiti newspapers for example were a source of information, as of course the Bahraini newspapers. Therefore it is tried to reduce the Western bias as much as possible.

4.2.2 Interviews

To create triangulation (to check the other sources) and gain more information, interviews were held. Advantages of holding interview are that people can have a great diversity of knowledge, and that the information can be collected in only a short time span²⁴⁴. Additionally, the information is recent, which is crucial for this study. A danger when doing interviews however is that people could give socially wished for answers, such as claiming that everyone is doing the best they can to help Bahrain and its people. This danger was dealt with as will be seen in the explanation below.

Selecting respondents

Already in the design of the research proposal possible respondents were studied. The first idea was to find interviewees through snowball sampling, because the researcher did not have any relations in Bahrain before going there. In this case it would be necessary to use other people's networks to meet more people. In the Arab world contacts are mainly met through other people's connections ('wasta') so it would be better to be introduced by somebody else, rather than sending an email out of the blue. Eventually this method of searching respondents had to be changed because only limited time could be spent in Bahrain. More on this issue will be explained under '*planning and unforeseen circumstances*' below. People from the following five categories were chosen to interviewed: the Dutch government, other governments that have deep relations with Bahrain, international NGOs involved in Bahrain, local NGOs, and researchers. The full list of interviewees can be found in attachment 1 and the number of respondents per category can be seen in table 1.

Table 1.

Actor	Number of respondents
Dutch Government	4
Embassies in Bahrain	4
International NGOs	3
Researchers	3
Local NGOs	4
Total	18

The method of finding the respondents differed per category, and therefore the interviewees will be discussed per category in the following paragraphs.

The Dutch government was chosen because eventually the focus is put on this actor. A broad spectrum of interviewees was questioned, in order to give a detailed advice on what the Netherlands could do more in regards to the Bahrain conflict. First the Dutch ambassador and consul responsible for Bahrain come to mind as useful respondents. After an orienting conversation with the Ambassador in September 2011, the snowball method was used, by asking about other possible interviewees at the Dutch government. The ambassador referred me to two other officials, one at the Ministry of Economics, Agriculture and Innovation, and one at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Although they were no Bahrain-

²⁴³ Interview with Michael Stephens, RUSI, June 10, 2012.

²⁴⁴ Verschuren, P. and H. Doorewaard (2007). *Het ontwerpen van een onderzoek*. Den Haag: Lemma. P. 183.217

specialists, the choice was made to interview them for their knowledge about the Dutch government and policy. This proved to be very useful for delivering a better advice.

Regarding 'other governments involved in Bahrain' the aforementioned problem regarding Iran and Saudi Arabia came up, which might have caused bias. It was no problem to question respondents from Western governments. Because of the connections of the Dutch embassy respondents that occupy a high function at other embassies could be interviewed. Every Western embassy that has a strong relation to Bahrain was chosen to be interviewed: the United Kingdom, United States, France, and Germany. Other embassies have less strong relations with Bahrain, and so interviews with them would not result in more information.

International NGOs that are active for Bahrain were consulted as well. This category knows a broad range of characteristics of these organizations. Large NGOs such as Human Rights Watch mainly tend to give inside information by writing reports about the actual situation. Smaller NGOs are working 'in the field' by doing projects with and for Bahraini, such as stimulate human development. Some work from within Bahrain, others work from abroad, which is either on purpose or due to the ban of the Bahraini government. From all subcategories organizations were chosen to be interviewed. Although at first sight not many international NGOs seemed to be bothered with Bahrain, it eventually appeared that numerous actually were. The actors that were chosen for an interview are either deeply rooted in the Bahrain society, or they have a different character (position and activities) than any of the other NGOs interviewed. The organizations were chosen based on the literature research. During the writing of the preparatory parts of this research, eyes were kept open in search of possible interviewees. All international NGOs active in Bahrain were listed and additionally were followed in the news. This was done in a thorough manner as following the news was the main duty of the researcher during the internship at the embassy. From this final list, the most diverse and active NGOs were chosen. In this way the full spectrum of actors could be discussed and is the internal validity as high as possible.

Local NGOs and researchers were consulted for their widespread knowledge on Bahrain, and in order to cross-check other sources with this information. The local NGOs are fully embedded in the Bahraini society and will therefore have an important view on the past and current situation in their country. The local people are important actors in the conflict. The actors interviewed again represent a diverse scala of actors: two human rights organizations (one Shia sided, one Sunni or government sided), the National Union Gathering supporting unity among the people, and a development organization. Here snowball-sampling did not work either. The embassy has less contacts than expected beforehand, and due to safety reasons these contacts were not able to refer to any other respondents. The adaption was made to chose actors based on literature research, as was described above.

The researchers interviewed are the 'colleagues' of the researcher, but are more experienced and was therefore a group that could not be left out. Although their research mostly focused on (slightly) different topics, their knowledge on the Bahrain society was very important. One researcher was chosen for his dissertation research on Bahrain of 2009, and his up-to-date weblog focusing on Bahrain's political situation. Two other researchers from a research institute cum think tank were interviewed because of their specific knowledge on Bahrain. As they are from a Western background, appointments were made by email. The interviews were held in their offices in Qatar, and because this was not Bahrain, the recorder could be used (more on this later).

The other abovementioned actors were asked to be interviewed by the researcher, or through assistance of the embassy in Kuwait. There was non-response from some international NGOs as they did not respond to the many requests that were send through email and phone by the researcher. Seen the diversity of actors and the level of saturation that was achieved, this research can still be regarded as representative. However, there will always be a bias, and every researcher will have partially different results, is the opinion of the researcher. More on this in the ethical reflection.

Questions and questioning

The theoretical framework resulted in concrete points of what the causes of the conflict in Bahrain might have been, and how these could have been addressed. Questions on many topics had to be asked to the respondents. There were questions on social, socio-economic, and political factors, the direct causes and on what the actors themselves were doing. This resulted in interview questions composed of two parts: the first part focusing on the causes, the second on intervention in the conflict. Regarding the causes it was very important to consider these, and to understand the process thoroughly, right because so many theories exist. In order to achieve this the decision was made to hold semi-structured interviews using an interview guide (which can be found in attachment 2). People will feel freer to share their thoughts in semi-structured interviews. With strict questions, respondents might think their thoughts do not directly link to the question and so are irrelevant, while with semi-structured interviews this will be prevented so that more information comes up.

In the Arab culture, it is very important to introduce one another in the interview, and to make the other feel comfortable. Therefore the interviews started with a rather long introduction. The researcher first

introduced herself and her project and then asked about the respondent's position. After that, the real interview started. This happened in an open manner. For example, the interviews start with an open question: 'what were the causes of the protests in 2011?'. The topic mentioned by the respondent then was further elaborated, by asking more questions, and testing the theories relating to that topic. If some categories of causes (social, economic, political, direct) were not mentioned by the respondent, the interviewer reminded them of these and asked about the influence of these causes.

The questions about the causes all eventually took a lot of time. Therefore the second part of the interview was shortened, by only asking what the respondent has done for Bahrain since February 2011. The researcher later interpreted these results, deciding whether these were political, socio(-economic) or other interventions. If it was not clear, more questions were asked about the approach, and about which theories this could correspond with, if any.

The interviews were mostly held at the workplace of the respondent or otherwise in a neutral area such as a coffeehouse. One interview was held through Skype, because the respondent was located in New York. The workplace is where respondents will feel most comfortable to talk freely. The other locations were chosen by the respondents, in order to let them select a place they feel comfortable with. It was asked in advance whether one could speak freely at that place, and this was the case. However, during some interviews in coffee houses, it seemed like it was not a perfect location after all as the interviewees were looking over their shoulder when answering, especially when naming the terms Shia, Sunni, and Iran. One informant told that in a previous interview, she was filmed without being asked. This illustrates that it is not widely accepted to talk about the conflict in public to 'strangers'. The interviews where the respondents did happen to become suspicious were with those respondents that know the embassy well, and they therefore trusted the interviewer. Sometimes they lowered their voice, but the impression was that they shared all their information. It was only difficult to ask for other respondents (snowball-sampling) because they wanted to protect those people.

It was offered to all respondents to remain anonymously, but only the officials of the Dutch Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation, and one NGO wanted to remain so. Still, often the names are not published by the researcher, instead, only the position or organization is mentioned. The specific name of the respondent does not add anything to the results, but can have negative consequences for him or her. To prevent and protect the respondents, names are therefore almost never published.

To prevent biased answers, the researcher thought well of the phrasing of the questions. Although only an interview guide was used, some questions were written in full as a preparation. The researcher did not want to imply certain opinions or ideas, and the questions were posed as neutral as possible. To reuse the example of the question about the causes, this is done by starting broad (what are the causes?), followed by asking about specific aspects (are there political causes?), rather than start about not having democracy, for example. After having spent some time in Kuwait, it already appeared that the conflict was not between Sunnia and Shia, and that people find it important that this is clear. Therefore also these questions were phrased carefully: are there social aspects that caused the protests? How were the relations between Sunni and Shia before the protests, how are they now? Instead of: did the Shia/Sunni difference cause the conflict? And there are more risks that these questions bring along. The position of a person can determine what he thinks the causes are. If one is Shia, there will still be a decent chance that the cause named is some form of inequality. Sunni's might name different causes. The international community might name causes that they are able to address or assist in addressing, in order to look good. The causes that one names might also have influence on the answer on the intervention. If one thinks the causes are in political inequality, he might name his own performed political activities. In order to balance such socially justified answers, a diverse group of actors and methods were used. As a preparation, a test interview was also held in order to practice.

4.2.3 Observations

Beside the interviews, additional meetings were attended through the embassy. These meetings were hosted by the Ambassador. This was done to give the researcher a broader view on the situation of Bahrain. Because they were hosted by the Ambassador and not by the researcher herself, these meetings were not official interviews. However, the information was very valuable for this research, and the results were allowed to be used. These meetings are grouped under the header of 'observation'. Observation is a technique of data collection in which the researcher in general makes observations on location with people, situations, things or processes, and lets herself guide by an observation scheme²⁴⁵. The observation scheme (things that should be looked at during the observation) was the same as the interview guide. Since the respondents were expecting the Ambassador, who is often accompanied by a colleague or assistant, there were no issues of the respondents feeling uncomfortable with the presence of the researcher. The results of the observations are together presented with the interviews in the tables.

²⁴⁵ Verschuren, P. and H. Doorewaard (2007). *Het ontwerpen van een onderzoek*. Den Haag: Lemma. P. 234

4.3 Data processing

The researcher doubted a long time about the means for recording the interviews. For the sake of the researcher's safety (voice recorders might be provocative at airport customs), the first interviews were held without a voice recorder. Some of these interviews were in the mentioned coffee houses, and seen the reaction of these respondents, it was decided not to record any further interviews that were held inside Bahrain. Instead the answers were noted down immediately, and transcribed as quickly as possible. Seen the past experience of the researcher in taking minutes the transcribed interviews will almost literally represent the interviews. If the researcher would have used a voice recorder people might have become suspicious that information would be recorded for other purposes, or that the documents might (accidentally) end up in wrong places. A voice recorder would therefore not have resulted in more information, rather less. The interviews held outside of Bahrain were recorded after permission was asked. Not a single respondent rejected. As soon as possible these interviews were transcribed as well, which was usually the same day. The observations were not recorded because some topics were related to the work of the embassy, and the main purpose of the visit was the conversation between the Ambassador and the respondent, not the topic the researcher studied.

After the first few interviews were held, the important sentences from the interviews were marked. One color was used for the causes, one for the interventions, and another for additional interesting comments. Later on these answers were put in tables, so that the answers of all respondents could be studied per question. Every question was inserted as a column, and every respondent as a row, as can be seen in table 3. However when the actual chapters with results were written (in June 2012) every interview was re-read in order not to miss any relevant sentences.

4.4 Planning and unforeseen circumstances

This research faced some big challenges, due to which the process dramatically changed. The first challenge was the impossibility to study the topic of refugees. It took a few months to conclude that. In the meanwhile the project proposal was written, as well as the introduction, contextual framework, and a part of the theoretical framework. This was in the period May – September 2011. However with a new internship coming up, the whole planning changed. From the period of September 2011 – February 2012, the preparatory parts were refined further. Before going to Kuwait in February the feedback of the supervisor was discussed. During the first two months of the internship at the Netherlands embassy these parts were revised, the interview guide was prepared, and the first interviews were held. For obvious reasons, the results could be processed after the interviews were held, and so this was done in June and July 2012.

However in April, a second obstacle came up. First, the plan was to work from Bahrain for a few weeks during the internship. This was also supported (and initiated) by the Ambassador, so it seemed like it would really happen. In April however it appeared impossible due to safety concerns from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. At the start of the research (May 2011), there had been massive protests in Bahrain, but over time this decreased, and reforms such as those recommended by the BICI were carried out, so the researcher was hopeful of a more peaceful situation upon arrival in Kuwait. However, the situation was still not completely safe as there were protests on a daily basis. Even American activists were deported²⁴⁶. In the position of intern of the Ministry it was not possible to work there independently and safely since there was no diplomatic protection. Because the Ministry thought it would not be safe to do research in Bahrain, the researcher took the advice to heart. Although some conversations were held in Bahrain, it was impossible to independently perform research the way it was intended initially. Therefore the Ambassador and one time the Deputy Head of Mission had to accompany the researcher on short visits to Bahrain. This of course was very different from the original plan to talk to many people, use snowball sampling, and take plenty of time for every interview. The plans changed, and a lot of effort was done to conduct enough interviews in time. As the visits were shorter than expected, so were the interviews. Eventually more focus was put on certain specific causes; not on all possible causes. Much workload had to be shifted to the last months of the research process due to these unforeseen circumstances. Finally, the first version of the research was handed in on July 6, right after the return from Kuwait. After the feedback on this version, the final version was dated August 15, 2012.

Ethical reflection

There are two main ethical issues that this research faces. The first is hinting at Orientalism: a Western researcher studying an Eastern country. The second is related to the moral issues facing conflict areas, especially seen from the intervention side: who does the researcher think she is to interfere in the internal

²⁴⁶ Reuters (2012). Bahraini police break up protest, deport U.S. activists [online]. Cited June 15, 2012. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/02/11/us-bahrain-protest-idUSTRE81A0EY20120211>

affairs of Bahrain? Who is the international community to act in Bahrain? Briefly, light will be shed on these two issues and how they were dealt with.

This research describes a country that the researcher was not familiar with before studying it. In that sense, it is still a Western researcher analyzing the Orient, which is paired with a lot of criticism. Edward Said is well-known for his research on Orientalism, in which he criticizes the methodology of researchers studying the Middle East, just like is happening in this research. Although it is difficult to summarize his view in short, his arguments relate to the fact that much research was done in the Middle East that only reflects the view from the Western researcher and not the real issue in the Middle East. Others describe this as follows: “*Western knowledge about the East is not generated from facts or reality, but from preconceived archetypes that envision all “Eastern” societies as fundamentally similar to one another, and fundamentally dissimilar to “Western” societies*”²⁴⁷. The view of the researcher of ‘the Other’ is projected on what he sees, and therefore his results are blurry. Is it possible to study another society without knowing the people, the language? Are in this way not only the own prejudices projected?

To prevent these classic mistakes, much was learnt about the topic, mainly through the course ‘Anthropology of Muslim Societies’ at Leiden University. The views from Geertz, Gellner, Said, Asad and others on performing research in Muslim societies were studied. The researcher became aware about this topic, and implemented it as much as possible in her thinking and the whole research process.

Secondly the Arabic language was studied, although eventually the comprehension level aimed for was not reached. Due to time constraints (the challenging and time consuming responsibilities of the embassy and writing the research), it appeared impossible to learn the language. In the end luckily everybody was very proficient in the English language, except for one respondent, so was not a major obstacle.

This research differs more from traditional anthropological research, which was accused of Orientalism. A big difference is that not only observations were done, but mainly interviews. People were explicitly asked about the meaning of the events, and in that way the drawing of wrong conclusions was prevented. However, the fact that I have “been there” was not exaggerated, as was the case in past research. The data relied on was not only the experience in Bahrain, but also other sources. Triangulation was strived for as much as possible and making generalizations was avoided. Although recommendations will be made to change existing conflict studies theories, the main focus is Bahrain and that is clearly realized. Lastly, because all theories were read before the interviews, the researcher entered the interviews with an open mind to all possible opinions. Already after a few conversations with the staff of the Dutch embassy it became clear that there is at least one other discourse than was presented in the media. This helped a lot in keeping an open mind, and trying to fully understand the views from each respondent. The next chapter will show that the views from the National Union Gathering for example are not in line with the general discourse present. By being aware of these possibilities, the bias is kept as low as possible²⁴⁸.

The second ethical issue is related to the field of conflict studies. Often, countries see the influence of other countries in these subjects as interference in the internal affairs. This accusation is not limited to the Arab region, but also happens in China for example. To combat this accusation, much interest was expressed in the respondents’ background and opinion. This research hopes to give a holistic view on the situation, based on diverse sources, both people and literature, so that none of the actors should feel insulted or misrepresented. The topic of intervention in conflicts is extremely politically sensitive, which was also experienced through this research. The first part of this research will only analyze what has been done so far, based on facts. The next step is to see what is missing, and so what can be done in the future. The interviews, even from those with international actors, showed the main actor in this would have to be Bahrain itself. Therefore this research hopes to prevent promotion for the international community to interfere in Bahrain’s internal affairs more than wanted by the Bahraini. The goal is to improve the situation, not to support the west. Timothy Sisk also argues that there are many contradictions in state building by outside actors. It would be strange to use outside intervention to foster self-government, or if international actors are to establish local ownership²⁴⁹.

²⁴⁷ King, J. (2011). Under foreign eyes. Hants (UK): Zero Books. P.3

²⁴⁸ These theories result from the readings of the course ‘Anthropology of Muslim Societies’. The book of Varisco was mainly used to show the past critique on anthropological research. Varisco, D. (2005). Islam Obscured. Boston: Palgrave MacMillan

²⁴⁹ Sisk, T.D. (2003). Power-sharing after civil wars: matching problems to solutions. In: Contemporary peacemaking: conflict, violence and peace processes. New York: Palgrave, p.305-6.

There were also other issues the researcher was afraid to encounter during this research, but that were not present in the end. Some examples will be explained here to show that the researcher was aware of these issues.

The first was the bias of the embassy. There are many rumors that diplomats stay within their own gated community and only talk to other embassies, not to the local actors. That for sure is not the case for the Dutch embassy in Kuwait. Meetings with the Ambassador were organized with NGOs, political societies, key individuals, and, in the last place, other embassies. Also the researcher was free to draw her own plan regarding the interviews, even despite the 'travel ban'. The ambassador accompanied the researcher, not the other way around.

Another obstacle that was faced but did not influence the research was that of cultural differences, and that of the inferior position of women in the Arab culture. Every respondent was open and polite to the interviewer and took her serious in her profession. The research was not hindered by the gender of the researcher.

Seen these ethical issues, their absence, and the way it was dealt with those that were present, the researcher believes in having delivered a reliable research.

5. Causes of the protests in Bahrain in February 2011

The first research question will now be answered, based on literature from the contextual framework, theoretical framework, interviews and observations. First it is analyzed which cause is or which causes are the most important in Bahrain, and how they relate to one another. Secondly the causes are discussed in depth per category, using all theories from the theoretical framework. The order of theories in the theoretical framework is used as a guide: first the root causes (social/socio-economic/political) are discussed; then the direct causes. The research question was:

What are the causes of the uprisings in Bahrain in February 2011?

5.1 Weighing the causes

The first question in the interviews was 'what were the causes of protests?' in order to see how the causes relate to one another. With this open question, respondents would think of the cause that is the most important according to them. Each category of respondents, thus the researchers, local and international NGOs, all governments, and the people observed will have an opinion on this. To create a full picture of the most important causes, all of their answers are important. In the observations the respondents came up with topics themselves, when they started telling about the conflict for example, and this information therefore says a lot about the way they see Bahrain. It is legitimate to draw conclusions from this, as most people started the observation with the explanation why and how the protests started, which resembles the question posed to interview respondents.

These were the answers to the question: what were the causes of the protests?

Table 2. Importance of causes

Actor / cause (number of respondents ²⁵⁰)	Social	Socio-economic	Political	Regional	Immigrants	Disappointment Constitution 2002	Unfounded reasons	No cause
Dutch government (2)			2	2				
Other governments (4)	2	1	4	2				
INGOs (2)		1	2					
Locals (3)		1	3					1
Researchers (4)	2	2	1					
Observations (8)		1	4	1 2 (Iran)*	2	1	1	
TOTAL	4	6	16	7	2	1	1	1

There are more answers than respondents in table 2 because some respondents named two or more causes. Regarding regional causes, two answers came up. Where there is no addition behind the number in the table, the Arab Spring is meant, because the theoretical framework labeled this a possible direct cause of conflict. However, the influence of Iran was also named by two actors. This refers to regional causes as well and therefore it is both grouped under the same heading.

Table 2 gives a clear answer on the question of what the cause was: politics. The second important cause was the socio-economic inequality. Next a direct cause was named, the Arab Spring. This is followed by the social cause, which is the struggle between Shia and Sunni. Next, the influence of Iran and the naturalization of immigrants were equally important. Lastly, three causes were named only once: the disappointment after the new constitution in 2001; unfounded reasons of the Shia; and no reason ('*out of nowhere, there were huge crowds*' according to BHRWS).

However later on in the interviews, some people changed their opinions. It appeared that they often did not know what the exact reason was, which was the most important, or that it was a combination of causes. When the first question was asked, they named only one cause for example, and later in the interview, talking and thinking about the subject for some time, the respondents added causes to nuance their first answer. The clearest example of this was of the interview with the embassy of the United States. The answer on the first question was that the Arab Spring and a lack of political advancement caused the protests. Later on, the answer to this question was: the core was political, as well as economic and social. During the interview the deeper causes came to mind, not only the short-term influence of the Arab Spring²⁵¹. The table includes all answers since both the first and latter answer are a clear indicator of the most important causes.

²⁵⁰ Not all actors interviewed could answer this question. For example, the ICRC is neutral and so does not elaborate on issues like this. Also, the officers from the Dutch Ministries lacked the knowledge about Bahrain to give a well-founded answer on the question. Therefore the number of actors that responded is shown.

²⁵¹ Interview with an official from the embassy of the United States on June 26, 2012.

A short explanation on the terms will now follow. With ‘political cause’ the respondents meant: lack of democracy, causing unequal chances for Shia and Sunni’s to have power. The main issue in this is the underrepresentation of Shia in the parliament and the judiciary and consequently their inability to make important decisions. The cause of this is the unfair electoral system, which is gerrymandering and favoring the Sunni minority; and the fact that the judges are appointed by the King. This can be labeled as political inequality. More on this cause and the theories relating to it will follow below.

The second inequality is the difference in socio-economic opportunities. This cause is more disputed because many respondents stated that not having a job does not directly means being unemployed and unable to find one; it neither means that the Shia would not want low jobs in the police and military. Even despite this, many actors did refer to the socio-economic inequality, and even if the claim of this inequality is false, it should be dealt with. A preview to the important theories is the one of Schock (1996). His theory relates the socio-economic inequality to the political causes. He stated that although economic inequality tends to promote violent political conflict, the extent to which it promotes violence is enhanced or constrained by the political opportunity structure (p.35). It looks like the socio-economic inequality was promoted by the political cause. This will be studied below.

The political and socio-economic inequalities are the most important root causes. These were triggered by the Arab Spring. However at this moment it is not clear how these causes worked exactly, and how they led up to the huge protests in 2011. In order to understand, the rest of the interviews and observations are important. Also, although the most important causes are clear now, it appeared that many theories about causes of conflict seemed to be applicable to Bahrain. The conclusion about what the causes exactly were can therefore only be given once all insights are discussed.

5.2 Root causes

After the first interview question, further questions were asked about the causes that were named by the actors to see which theory applied. If a cause that came up in the theoretical framework was not named, it was also asked if and how this cause could apply to Bahrain. The results of this are the answers of all interviewees and actors, which can be observed in table 3. This part discusses how these causes applied in Bahrain. Again the sequence of the theoretical framework is followed. For each cause first the link to the theory is made, after that, it will be analyzed what theory applies and how it applies in Bahrain.

5.2.1 Social causes

From the theoretical framework many possibilities emerged on how social issues could have caused the conflict in Bahrain. The first theories link to the way identity is seen; the second to fear of the future causing an increased importance of identity; the third to the relations between people; the fourth to religion or religionization as a cause of conflict. The main distinction is that identities can be real, or can be stimulated to be important. For the first cause the relations between people are important. For the last group of causes, the past relations are important; thus how leaders see identity and the other causes (search for power and wealth).

The first group of theories focused on the view on identity. Oberschall (2000) named four theories: (1) identities can be perceived as real; (2) the ethnic identity can be one of many identities, but become more important in conflict; (3) identities can be manipulated by leaders and (4) they can function as a means of self-protection. Brubaker and Laitin (1998) analyzed that conflicts can be ethnicized in order to gain attention and resources, whereas the actual issue is power.

Box 2. Definition

From the theoretical framework no clear definition of the events in Bahrain came to the fore. In the interviews and observations close attention was paid to the language the respondents used therefore. What appeared was the following:

Term:	Frequency in interviews/observations:
Protest	7
Conflict	1
Uprising	1
Demonstration	2
Crisis	2

Most respondents preferred to avoid a name for the events. When they were talking about February 2011, they talked about ‘it’ and ‘what happened in February’ for example. If a name had to be given, the term ‘protest’ was used most often as appears from the above table. The term ‘conflict’ was only used by the embassy of the United Kingdom. This term was perceived as very severe, which for example came up when discussing the researcher’s field of study. The picture from outside Bahrain, based on media reports, is that there is a severe conflict, exemplified by a Bahraini youngster: *“I thought from abroad: there’s a big war in my country! But there is not.”* Beside the conflict there are many positive events going on and people’s lives continue like normal. People therefore seem to prefer ‘protests’ referring to unfortunate incidents in a more positive setting. The Dutch Ambassador thought this term however was too severe as well. He labeled the first events on February 14 ‘demonstrations’.

From the theories discussed, the definition of ethnic conflict (of Besancon) however would fit Bahrain perfectly. To recall, ethnic conflict is *“episodes of violent conflict between governments and national, ethnic, religious, or other communal minorities (ethnic challengers) in which the challengers seek major changes in their status”*, or when the government is not included, the subject of the war is political power or government. In Bahrain there were episodes of violent conflict about democratization since the 1930s, as shown in the contextual framework, and as also appears from the interviews and observations. However, Bahraini will not feel comfortable with this term. Conflict however still seems a good term, because it can both refer to violent and non-violent situations, and so will be continued to be used in this research.

Table 3. Root causes of the conflict in Bahrain based on interviews

	Social			Socio-eco			Political				Other
	Shia-Sunni position	Shia-Sunni relations	migrants	unemployment	inequality	character economy	access to high jobs	political system	leaders sharing power	leaders stimulate ethnicity	Extra
NL Ambassador	+	-	+	?	?	+	+	++	+	?	Iran
NL Consul	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	Iran
embassy UK	+	--	-	-	-	-	+	++	+	+	++ region
Embassy Germany	++	+	-	+	+	+	+	++	+	-	
Embassy France	?	-	-	+	+	+	+	++	+	-	
Embassy USA	++	+	+	+	+	+	+	++	+	-	
UN	++	++	+	+	++	+	+	+	++	++	-- Iran
ICRC								++			
HRW	++	-	+	?	++	?	?	++	++	+	+ GCC (KSA)
local NGO X	+	-	-	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	
NUG	-	+	-	++	-	-	-	-	-	-	
BYSHR	++	-	-	++	++	+	+	+	+	-	
BHRWS	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	+	-	
RUSI Stephens	+	-	+	++	++	+	+	++	++	+	
RUSI Roberts	++	-	+	++	++	++	+	+	+	+	
QU Gengler	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	++	++	+	
Observations											
MoFA Bahrain		-									++ Iran
Negotiator of Kuwait			++	++		++	+	++	++		+ region
BHRS		-	++	++	++	++	+		+	+	+
Al-Wefaq		-	+					+	++		people do not feel protected
Citizen (Salmaniya doctor)	-	+		-			-	-	+		
Citizen (entrepreneur)	-										
Citizen											
Minister of State					--			--			
Conference Clingendael		-- Shehabi			++ Shehabi	++ Shehabi			++ Khalaf	++ Shehabi	+ Shehabi Iran
Conference Exeter		++ Mattar ++ Kindelberger							++ Mattar		- Zaccara Iran + Omar Moh'd Religion

Oberschall's primordial view

The first view of Oberschall (2000) is that identity is real. When people see it as real they can be very negative about others, not only individuals, but about the other group in general. This creates tension between these groups, in this case between the groups of Shia and Sunni. When directly asked about the social relations between Shia and Sunni in Bahrain, almost all respondents of interviews and observations stated that there was no hatred between Sunni and Shia before February 2011. Even Al-Wefaq, the main opposition party, states that the problem is '*not with the Sunni's, but with the government*'²⁵². Shia and Sunni are not (or at least were not, before February 2011) fighting one another: "*the sectarianism overlaps with the deficiency of equal representation in the parliament, so there lies the connection [between social and political causes of conflict]*", according to the Dutch Ambassador to Kuwait and Bahrain²⁵³. Four actors named the sectarian division a cause (see table 2). These actors, who are not from Bahrain, named other causes beside the social cause. This draws to a preliminary conclusion that ethnicity is definitely not seen as the only, or major cause, only when in combination with socio-economic or political causes.

The perception is that social relations were not a cause of conflict, because the mutual relations were fine before 2011, and because people of different groups in Bahrain live side by side, not separated. Both arguments are represented differently in fieldwork than in the literature though.

As could be seen in the contextual framework there were sectarian struggles in the past. Apparently this is not on people's minds nowadays. The contextual framework named the 1950s to 1970s as a period of sectarian struggle, but no additional information appeared on this, so it might have been another case of limited or wrong data. Also, as most respondents were between age 25 and 50, these events might have been too long ago and not severe enough to (still) be remembered.

A second argument relates to the geographic location of both groups. In the literature it appeared that people lived rather segregated, but it was unclear what the cause for this was: did people intentionally not want to live together (push-factor), or did they want to live near family and friends of the same religious community (pull-factor)? There is a variation on the opinion if people lived side by side and whether there were mixed marriages in the interviews; according to Justin Gengler (researcher at Qatar University) people did not do this, but according to the British embassy and some citizens they did²⁵⁴. Gengler performed reliable research on Bahrain in a statistical manner, and looking at his map (p.15) he seems to have found some valuable information. Perhaps the feeling of citizens is that they live side by side, because they do not live separated out of anger. They just live near their friends and family of the same sect, the pull-factor. The officer of the British embassy was also a local citizen and here might have reacted from his personal perspective. Geography in this regard does not say much about the mutual relations; it is merely an expression of people living separated, not segregated.

This all sounds positive, that people live together in harmony in Bahrain and that ethnicity is not seen as a cause of conflict. However, some local actors showed that they do perceive ethnicity as real and that therefore the relations between Shia and Sunni were the cause of conflict. They frame their answers in 'us-them' language and blame the other party for the conflict. However they only do that after first having explained that Shia and Sunni are 'colleagues' (BHRWS); that Shia and Sunni are both Bahraini and that it is not about this distinction (as the BHRWS, the other NGO, Al-Wefaq and the Bahraini Ministry of Foreign Affairs said)²⁵⁵. Then later on in the interviews, when people felt more at ease talking about the situation, they wanted their view and injustice to be heard and revealed their side in the conflict, although this was never done in an explicit manner. They mainly spoke negatively about the other party and clearly did not want to take official sides. Perhaps this also indicates that the Bahraini are very much aware that the Shia or Sunni identity is only one out of many. From the beginning of the protests, it was called that 'we are all Bahraini' and brothers, and that the distinction between Shia and Sunni was not important.

Oberschall's constructionist view

The fact that respondents were positive about the Shia-Sunni relations, but eventually did turn out to be negative about the other group, might refer to Oberschall's (2000) third view on identity. This view stated that the ethnic identity is one of several identities in normal times, but gains importance during conflict. This view seems more applicable to Bahrain than the first view because many actors, mainly the local ones, at first claim it is certainly not about ethnicity itself. It appears to be a valid argument that the people know their sectarian identity is one out of more, and that for some it became more important but that in general it is not. Another option on how this theory can apply is that sectarianism was no cause of conflict, but that the conflict transformed into a sectarian conflict later on. According to the researchers from RUSI, "*in the beginning [it was] not [sectarian], there were many Sunni's in the roundabout. There are angry*

²⁵² Ali Salman from Al-Wefaq in a conversation accompanied by the Dutch Ambassador to Kuwait and Bahrain on April 17 2012.

²⁵³ Interview with the Dutch Ambassador to Kuwait and Bahrain, June 20 2012.

²⁵⁴ Interview with Justin Gengler on June 10, 2012.

²⁵⁵ Interview with an officer of the embassy of the United Kingdom on April 17, 2012.

²⁵⁵ This follows from the interviews with these actors.

*Sunni's. Initially they called that 'Shia and Sunni are Bahraini', in the first few weeks". Unfortunately this changed later on: "...as soon as the violence started to happen [after a few weeks, when the GCC forces entered Bahrain], you felt it was sectarian"*²⁵⁶. Stephens therefore explains the conflict transformation, and a key event in this was the entering of the GCC forces.

This feeling about sectarianism gaining importance is supported by others who claim that the conflict later on developed into a sectarian conflict. The BHRS, but also citizens of Bahrain²⁵⁷ recognize the feeling that the society became more separated over time: people started boycotting each other's business, and events on the personal level such as funerals and weddings became increasingly separated along the sectarian division as well²⁵⁸.

Above it was explained that respondents opened up after the first interview questions. Some appeared positive about the Shia and Sunni relations at first, but later on appeared to take sides. This could also point to the fact that identity was not important in ordinary times, but gained influence during the conflict. The most remarkable conversations on this were with two human rights organizations, who both support and promote human rights and want to move towards a peaceful society where justice is respected. The opinions on how to accomplish this however differed radically. Two discourses about the protests were presented in the interviews: 'the protesters are taking away people's right to freedom and to live without fear of violence' versus 'people are afraid of the government and they are still torturing innocent people who only speak up for their rights'. Whereas the opinions from Shia merely refer to the government as an institution and not to Sunni people as individuals, the Sunni sided story is directly speaking in negative terms about the Shia people. Some stated that the Shia, or at least the protesters and the ones using violence, do not take proper care of their children, who in their search for activity and attention risk recruitment by Iraq and Hezbollah. It is also said that their political leaders are religious leaders as well, obeying to Iran²⁵⁹. The recruitment of children is a claim that could have evolved during the protests, but the claim about the leaders having relations to Iran, and not separating religion and politics, could be present since long and might therefore be a cause of the conflict. More on the role of leaders and the relations to Iran will be discussed below.

Sectarianism was not present before the protests and therefore was no cause of conflict: before February 2011 there were two groups, but their mutual relations were cordial. The first view of Oberschall (2000) on ethnicity (that it is real) does not give credit to the many positive opinions about the Shia-Sunni division. The third view (ethnicity is one of many identities, more important during conflict) has more chance of being a cause of the conflict, as ethnicity became more important during the conflict. This shows that the social relations between the Shia and Sunni were no cause of conflict.

Oberschall's instrumentalist view

The second view of Oberschall (2000), about leaders stimulating identity, was mentioned by some actors; they said it is mainly present at the Shia side. The Sunni are very proud that they do not have religious leaders, but they state that the Shia leaders have an important role in the conflict; they mobilize the people to demonstrate. There were several actors who came up with this aspect themselves, such as the Dutch Ambassador, the BHRWS, and the National Union Gathering. Looking from the Sunni perspective one could argue that their leaders are the government. The government also stimulates ethnicity according to two local actors (the BHRS and one other NGO) and many non-local actors: all researchers, the UN²⁶⁰ and HRW, and the British embassy²⁶¹. The government is said to stimulate ethnicity among Sunni in order to prevent them from joining the demonstrations. According to Justin Gengler: "*It's true that the government has been wary of any cooperation between the two groups. In the end, an uprising or political movement only led by Shia is never an existential threat to Bahrain. Even if they have a physical majority, they don't have guns, which you need in the end. An existential threat is if their traditional support base, ordinary Sunni's, ordinary Bahraini, were to coordinate in some reform movement. Therefore they were very careful in demonizing ordinary Sunni's taking part in protests. The government has an interest that there's no cooperation. [The state] portrayed the conflict as Shia backed by Iran trying to get the whole of Bahrain. Successfully: it's been an effective argument.*"²⁶². This view on leaders stimulating ethnicity therefore seems to be present in Bahrain, but more after February 2011 than before, and therefore cannot be labeled as a main cause of the conflict.

²⁵⁶ Interview with Michael Stephens and David Roberts, RUSI, June 10, 2012

²⁵⁷ With this is meant youngsters who had no specific background but were spoken to in Bahrain. These were 20-25 years old, graduated and had a job. They were not and did not want to be involved in the conflict.

²⁵⁸ Observation with the Bahrain Human Rights Society, April 17, 2012.

²⁵⁹ Interview with the Bahrain Human Rights Watch Society, May 26, 2012.

²⁶⁰ The UN here refers to Peter Grohmann, UN Resident Coordinator of Bahrain

²⁶¹ As results from the interviews with these actors

²⁶² Interview with Justin Gengler, June 10, 2012.

Fear and insecurity stimulating ethnicity

There were two theories that named fear as a cause of ethnicity gaining influence: the last view of Oberschall (2000), and the theory of Lake and Rothchild (2002). The last view of Oberschall (where identity is used as self-protection in circumstances of anarchy, state breakdown, and the security dilemma) seems far-fetched, or only applying after February 2011 and can so not be seen as a cause. Before this date, Bahrain did not face (a lot of) anarchy, state breakdown or the security dilemma. In this regard Lake and Rothchild's theory makes more sense. This theory states that the importance of ethnicity is caused by a collective fear for the future, Perhaps the fear of living in the same inequality for additional years caused identity to function as self-protection. Peter Grohmann from the UN in Bahrain stated that not only the government, but also the Shia profit from strong identity politics because it protects and strengthens their cause and therefore supports this view²⁶³. By having a strong identity, more people will stick together to protect themselves, and to step up for their rights. This means that the conflicting parties ethnicized the conflict themselves. Justin Gengler saw it in a different light, and related the issue of fear to the change of constitution in 2001. He stated that the popular opinion was *"that this was our one great chance and even this failed, even the king is here, do we have to wait for his son to come to power?!"*²⁶⁴. However as Gengler himself labels this as resignation, and the issue has been simmering since decades (more on history below) it does not seem reasonable to label this as fear. Additionally, people do not fear an even worse situation, but only the remaining of the status quo. This however does not seem to create a strong fear. The theories relating to fear therefore do not seem to apply to Bahrain. The emotion that is present could better be described in terms used by Gengler, which is disappointment or frustration.

Brubaker & Laitin's theory about ethnicizing conflicts

Brubaker and Laitin (1998) stated that conflict parties ethnicize conflicts that are about power in order to attract attention from the international community and the diaspora. The role of the Bahraini diaspora was not studied in this research due to lack of time and because it was not in the direct scope of this research. Additionally the Bahraini diaspora is very small and therefore probably has little influence. The participating role of the international community was studied however, and turns out to be interesting. Based on the news that was followed from May 2011 to July 2012, the impression is that the media give a one-sided view of the conflict. They mainly report about the suppression of Shia, which makes the Shia cause seem legitimate. The international community in turn anticipates on this information by mainly focusing on the Shia aspect of human rights as well. This will be seen later on in this research and was also experienced at conferences in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom²⁶⁵. This results in support for the Shia from the media, the general public, and the international community. The theory of Brubaker and Laitin (1998) therefore provided a very useful framework to look from in regards to the conflict. The international community plays an important role, but media's influence is even more significant since they create the information on which the international community mainly bases itself. The theory could be expanded by including the media. It thus would be interesting to study the representation of the Bahraini conflict in the media in further research.

Population theories

Hegre et al. (2001) and Collier and Hoeffler (2001) stated that the division between Shia, Sunni and migrants can be a cause of conflict. The theory of Collier and Hoeffler is that one ethnic group being a majority heightens the risk of conflict. This does not apply to Bahrain. Due to the lack of statistical data it is difficult to establish whether there is one ethnic group as a majority. However, based on the estimations, the three groups (Shia, Sunni, and migrants) are approximately of equal size. The relations between Shia and Sunni, where it is the major ethnic group (Shia) versus the main 'opponent', were no cause of the conflict as stated above. Hegre et al. (2001) found that ethnic heterogeneity increases the probability of civil war. This could hold for Bahrain since two respondents directly named the issue of migrants, creating more ethnic heterogeneity, as a cause (see table 2). The view of Mohammed Mattar is interesting because he sees that the sectarianism was reinforced by discrimination (this refers to socio-economic inequality and will be discussed below) and by the naturalization of more than 100.000 expats²⁶⁶. When asking about the issue of migrants specifically, more respondents recognized this as a problem in Bahrain. Eleven respondents out of eighteen confirmed that the naturalization was done to decrease the share of Shia in the population. The respondents who did not see this as a cause saw migration as a negative aspect, but not a cause of conflict. The composition of the population therefore certainly contributed to the causes.

²⁶³ Interview with Peter Grohman, UN Resident Coordinator, May 17, 2012.

²⁶⁴ Interview with Justin Gengler, June 10 2012.

²⁶⁵ The conference 'Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and the Struggle for Democracy in the Gulf and the Sectarian Divide' at Institute Clingendael, The Hague on July 9 2012 and 'The Gulf Studies Conference' at Exeter University, 16-20 July 2012.

²⁶⁶ Mohammed Mattar at 'The Gulf Studies Conference' at Exeter University, 16-20 July 2012.

Religion

The last theory that was discussed in the theoretical framework relating to social causes was about religion. Juergensmeyer (2003) and Stern (2003) named religion as a cause of conflict, considering it is about the absolute truth. Stewart (2002) added to this that conflicts can be 'religionized', as occurred in Northern-Ireland.

The role of religion appeared very interesting. The theory of Juergensmeyer (2003) about religion being a cause of conflict, and a complicated one because it is absolute, is supported by two actors interviewed: the president of the National Union Gathering and the Dutch Ambassador. The Ambassador claims that: *"If you get closer to the mosque, in a metaphorical sense, you see a clear control from the mosque about what is allowed and what not, and how Mohammed once upon a time was insulted or not. There you see that it is so deep-rooted that you actually can get a struggle between the two groups. And this is not only the case in Bahrain"*²⁶⁷. The president of the National Union Gathering also sees this regional conflict between Shia and Sunni based on religion: *"They [the Shia] attribute everything to religion and use their religious bond to reach political goals. Especially when they feel supported by certain countries. [It is the case in] all countries with Shia. They enforce their views on [the whole] community. There were relations between the Bahrain political party and the Iranian political party during the Iranian revolution. Like in Lebanon, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, it is all the same group. They are all part of this religious belief. They look forward to create a religious state, or region. They believe that then, Al-Mahdi Mubarak will come back [the final Imam who will appear on the Day of Judgment]"*²⁶⁸. *The people will be soldiers and obey his rule. When the GCC roundabout was cleared, evil feelings and hatred started. Towards Sunni's, expats, and tourists. [It is] racism, backed up by religious beliefs. The Shia however are not one group, there were extreme Shia, but also another group of more moderate Shia"*²⁶⁹. This last sentence is also very important: the Shia are not one group, certainly not later on in the conflict when the parties segmented. It seems like this discourse on religion can be placed in the context of the segmented parties as well. All Shia and Sunni might share the thought that their ideas are the truth; otherwise they would not obey to their religion. However since only two respondents mentioned religion as a cause, and the ambassador also says that it only holds when you get closer to the mosque, they might mainly refer to the most religious subgroup within the Shia. It is not the general perception. Joe Stork, Human Rights Watch, also supports this argument: *"there are religious differences [between Shia and Sunni], and some Shia and Sunni feel very strong about the differences"*²⁷⁰. The religious cause therefore does not hold for all Shia and Sunni. As a cause of this Stork names the political manipulation of the difference between Shia and Sunni. Juergensmeyer in this regard has a valid argument; but only for the most extreme religious group within the Shia and Sunni community, and there is a large group not fully supporting his argument. If his theory was right, a civil war should have occurred, and this would have continued until one group won, considering the absolute character of the religious conflict. The theory does not suit the Bahrain case, because it only holds for a small group; namely the most religious people within the Shia and Sunni community.

There was one last theory about religion that could apply to Bahrain. The theory of Stewart (2002) speaks of conflicts becoming religionized. This relates to the ethnicizing of conflicts; framing the conflict in a different name to gain more attention from the media, international community, and diaspora. But Stewart also spoke of the situation when cultural differences overlap with unequal access to political, economic or social resources. In such a situation, culture could mobilize people to participate in 'political disturbances'. Although the underlying unequal access will be studied in the following parts, this theory seems to describe the Bahraini situation very well because the Shia/Sunni label only became important later on in the conflict.

5.2.2 Socio-economic causes

Unemployment and inequality were the two major socio-economic causes which emerged out of the table. Inequality could work in several ways: because of relative deprivation, political institutions, and sovereignty.

Unemployment

Woodward (2002) stated that high unemployment can cause conflict, because unemployment causes disillusionment, lack of status, and lack of alternative activity wherefore people can be mobilized by spoilers. Other researchers pointed to youth unemployment specifically as a cause of conflict. (Youth) Unemployment can be a direct or indirect cause.

²⁶⁷ Interview with the Dutch Ambassador to Kuwait and Bahrain, June 20, 2012.

²⁶⁸ Discovering Islam (2012). Shia's Imams [online]. Cited June 22, 2012. http://www.discoveringislam.org/shia_imams.htm

²⁶⁹ Interview with Sheikh Abdullatif Al-Mahmood, president of the National Union Gathering, May 17, 2012.

²⁷⁰ Interview with Joe Stork, Human Rights Watch, June 13 2012.

Almost all respondents (17) saw unemployment as a cause of conflict, though some gave more weight to this cause than others did. Due to the lack of time no additional question could be posed on youth unemployment, however, none of the respondents named this aspect themselves either. Therefore unemployment in general is discussed here, and it is a recommendation for further research to analyze the youth unemployment, and the demographic influence of youth.

Because there are only three exceptions that did not see unemployment as a cause, the assumption that unemployment was a cause of conflict seems valid. Still, the claims of the three exceptions will be discussed first.

A local citizen, the BHRWS, and the Dutch Ambassador put the cause in perspective. The local citizen, who rather remains anonymous, works at Salmaniya hospital for about a half year. The citizen stated that even unemployed people have a chance in Bahrain as they receive 100 Bahraini Dinar each month (about 200 Euro). This however is not sufficient, since living expenses in Bahrain are higher than for example in Europe. It is therefore hardly possible to make both ends meet. These people will still lack activity and status. The second argument of the citizen was that for starting up businesses people only have to pay for their loan once they have made a profit. Although this is a good stimulant, it does not mean that the new business will be successful, especially not if the Bahraini economy is suffering. Additionally he stated that *“there is poverty, but people can ask at the charities (...) I think that’s a fair demand”*²⁷¹. This however will harm people’s status’ as well. Still, the facilities are relatively well-arranged. Unemployed people are not completely without opportunities; they can start up their own business relatively easily without paying for their loan until profit starts to take off, and there are also many trainings supporting people setting up their own business²⁷².

The Dutch Ambassador added that the will to work is needed. When asked, he related unemployment to the economic inequality: *“Statistics do not tell you the different percentages of Sunni and Shia being unemployed. If we talk about midlevel and higher positions in the government it is clear that the majority is Sunni, but it is difficult to analyze the reasons why Shia are underrepresented. Is there influence from the top decision makers to exclude Shia? Are the Shia interested in working with the Sunni in the daily governance of the country? That also remains a question. If it is politically stimulated not to work, but to demonstrate...”*²⁷³. He implies that political and religious leaders could stimulate Shia not to work. This view is supported by the National Union Gathering who named the example of the Bahrain Teachers Union (BTU). Sheikh Al-Mahmood, president of the National Union Gathering, claims that leaders of Shia movements such as labor unions, the BTU, and the Salmaniya hospital, stimulated people not to go to work but to demonstrate during the protests²⁷⁴. It is not proven that this also happens in ‘normal’, non-conflict circumstances. In this research nobody else mentioned this point and so it is difficult to prove, but of course the opinion of the Dutch Ambassador and a local citizen is not something to overlook. Unemployment might not be as important as first was thought.

The third argument of the citizen was that the claim of the Shia to not have entrance to high jobs in the government, military and police is not valid, as there are Shia with high positions in all these sectors²⁷⁵. It is true that there are Shia with high positions. There are about five Shia Ministers, out of sixteen. They do not have the most important ministries such as Foreign or Internal Affairs, and compared to the number of Shia citizens, having about one third of the seats is a relatively small amount²⁷⁶. The respondent additionally said that the Shia do not want to work in low functions of the police and the military as these jobs are outside in the heat, causing their underrepresentation²⁷⁷. Most of the jobs that take place outside are generally fulfilled by migrants, which means that there are also only a few Sunni fulfilling these jobs. Still, most respondents named an underrepresentation of Shia in these sectors. The Dutch Ambassador also mentioned that there are many successful Shia, mainly in the trade sector²⁷⁸. Again these claims are difficult to verify, as statistics lack, and it could be based on a one-sided impression.

The other point of view is that there is a lot of unemployment, and especially among the Shia. This view was summarized by Michael Stephens: *“who’s going out of work? [It’s the] Shia. Sunni’s were favored for jobs and scholarships, and Shia were crunched. That’s not to say that no Shia were supported, there were, but, not always. There’s a serious problem with unemployment and social inability. Some of these areas have nothing, people unemployed for twenty years with the best will to find work”*²⁷⁹. According to the Bahrain Human Rights Society, *“thousands of Shia have no employed position”*²⁸⁰. An explanation

²⁷¹ Citizen working at Salmaniya hospital, spoken on May 27 2012.

²⁷² Among others (such as the government), UNIDO gives such trainings for example.

²⁷³ Interview with the Dutch Ambassador to Kuwait and Bahrain, June 20, 2012.

²⁷⁴ Interview with Sheikh Abdullatif Al-Mahmood, president of the National Union Gathering, May 17, 2012

²⁷⁵ Observation with a citizen who is a doctor at Salmaniya hospital, May 25, 2012.

²⁷⁶ Interview with David Roberts, RUSI, June 10, 2012.

²⁷⁷ Observation with a citizen, May 27, 2012.

²⁷⁸ Interview with the Dutch Ambassador to Kuwait and Bahrain, June 20, 2012.

²⁷⁹ Interview with Michael Stephens, RUSI, June 10, 2012.

²⁸⁰ Observation with Bahrain Human Rights Society, April 17, 2012.

for the difference with the view of the Ambassador could be that the respondents will mostly pay attention to the sector in which the Shia are underrepresented. These areas are mainly the government, hospitals and the university. The Ambassador tends to also look from an economic perspective by including the private sector, where Shia might be less underrepresented. Still this does not make clear how many people, and how many Shia are employed and how many are not.

Statistics however can give an answer to the question whether unemployment is a cause of conflict. The contextual framework showed that in 2005, 15% of the labor force was unemployed. In 2001, 20.1% of the 15-24 year olds was unemployed²⁸¹. That both is a high percentage compared to other countries. Bahrain ranks the 146th place out of 200 countries in regards to unemployment, where the number one counts the lowest unemployment number. The BHRWS however claimed that 90% of the labor force has a job²⁸². Because of their Sunni-sided position, they have a reason to state this, and therefore the statistics of the CIA seem more reliable in this case. The CIA in general has reliable statistics, and if they don't have reliable data they don't publish it. Also, beside the three exceptions, all respondents claimed there is a lot of unemployment, and that the Shia people have lesser chance on (higher level) work than Sunni people.

Inequality

The second group of socio-economic theories was inequality. The inequality was measured by looking at economic inequality and also by looking at the inequality of government services, as the Shia claim this is very unequal in Bahrain.

Thirteen out of eighteen respondents on this question affirmed there is inequality between Shia and Sunni. Diplomatically stated the ruling opinion is that *"a significant part of the Bahraini population is structurally excluded from various aspects of society. Whether that is certain branches of government employment, or housing opportunities, or citizenship opportunities or most obviously parliamentary representation"*²⁸³. With this 'significant part of the population' Gengler means the Shia. Even according to an NGO that is not focused on human rights or politics, and which is careful to abide with the government rules, there is *"discrimination in jobs, unemployment, housing"*²⁸⁴. Joe Stork from Human Rights Watch phrases it carefully, namely that *"the Shia perceive that there's a lot of discrimination, in terms of allocation of resources"*²⁸⁵. When asked what these resources were, the expenditure on education and healthcare were mentioned, and the location of these facilities. However, discrimination works both ways in Bahrain. A Sunni student that was spoken to was rejected a scholarship from his university, while he did not even send his resume yet. The members of the committee specifically said: *'you can not apply'*. With this they referred to his Sunni background, because his grades and resume were sufficient. A former classmate of the respondent failed a class but still received the scholarship, whereas the respondent could not even finish the application process. Although this is only one example it does show that Sunni are discriminated as well, but that a lot depends on personal connections, *wasta*. This conclusion is based on the impressions of living in the Gulf region for five months. It is a place where someone for instance only receives a driving license when one has the right contacts. Driving skills do not even matter. In the professional world, one's success also depends on contacts. Chances are therefore high that this also holds for scholarships.

The Bahraini government however argues that there are good economic facilities for everybody, no matter what their sect is, and that a suffering economy therefore is not a problem: education and medical care is free for everybody. During the social housing projects in the 1970s and 1980s, the government even built good houses for Shia people. There is therefore no inequality, everybody has access to these services. In general the Minister of State who made these claims argued that the Bahraini economy is very strong: there is high economic growth, and the economy was not hit by the financial crisis, unlike Dubai for example. Bahrain was the first country in the region to open up its economy, and therefore the economy is stable²⁸⁶. As we saw from other statistics, the economy was not so stable due to the protests, but it is true that it was stable before that. Regarding the housing project, not many details could be found about this and it is therefore difficult to draw conclusions. But here again the numbers portray an important fact: 13 out of 18 respondents, equal to 72%, claim there is inequality. The next step is to look at how this relates to the theories and what they can add to the understanding of the inequality in Bahrain.

²⁸¹ Central Intelligence Agency (2011). The World Factbook: Bahrain [online]. Cited May 22, 2011. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ba.html>

²⁸² Interview with the Bahrain Human Rights Watch Society, May 27, 2012.

²⁸³ Interview with Justin Gengler, June 10, 2012.

²⁸⁴ Interview with an NGO focused on human development, March 26, 2012

²⁸⁵ Interview with Joe Stork, Human Rights Watch, June 13, 2012.

²⁸⁶ Observation with Ghanim bin Fadhal Al-Buainain, Minister of State from the Bahrain Ministry of Foreign Affairs, June 26 2012.

Relative deprivation

The first sub-group of this category is relative deprivation, a theory of Gurr (1970). Although most respondents stated there is socio-economic inequality, literature is additionally used to discuss each theory in detail.

Decremental deprivation, which is a difference between the current and past economic situation, did slightly occur. The real growth rate was 3.9% in 2010, but from 2007 onwards it was about 7%. In 2001 there was a sudden increase which only lasted that year, of more than 15% growth²⁸⁷. Perhaps the disappointment about the short lasting success of 2001, both economically and politically, led discontent in the next few years. However before 2001 the growth was lower, around 5%, so people were not very much used to this success²⁸⁸. Decremental deprivation is therefore not a very satisfactory explanation of the situation in Bahrain.

Aspirational deprivation, a difference between the current situation and increased expectations of what one could have, was definitely present in Bahrain. Not only did Shia expect to have as much as the Sunni, they also saw that they could have more democracy in 2001/2002 with the National Action Charter and a new constitution; and they even recognized a potential change in regime, which happened in Egypt as consequence of the Arab Spring. David Roberts from RUSI mentioned this last point explicitly²⁸⁹. Other respondents mentioned the influence of the Arab Spring in general. Justin Gengler pointed to the disappointment after the years 2001/2002: *“The suspicion [was] that it [the promised changes of 2002] was too good to be true, and in the end it was. It was just frustration in that the one real reform project that was supposed to make things totally different and change how politics were done in Bahrain, really was more of the same. People started not only become frustrated with this constitution but with the whole idea there could ever be reforms in Bahrain. It’s one thing to be disappointed in one document, but if you’re disappointed in the entire way things are and you don’t see any way things could change, then it’s a different sort of frustration. More sort of resignation where this was our one great chance and even this failed, even the new king is here, do we have to wait for his son to come to power?”*²⁹⁰. This explains the big frustration quite well, and explains why people were so desperate to change their situation. This also implies that the theory of Gurr is not limited to economic issues, since people were disappointed in both economic as well as political promises. His theory could therefore be extended in this direction.

To a lesser extent progressive deprivation occurred: a difference between what is and what was available for a short time, but not anymore. The constitutional experiment of 1973-1975 was an example of this, but is rather long ago. The new constitution and National Action Charter of 2001 and 2002 are more recent examples, although less strong. Democracy was not fully ‘available’ yet at the time but did come much closer. After ten years it was clear that it was definitely not available anymore though, causing the frustration explained above. Still, this could better be labeled aspirational deprivation, as it was not really available, and 1973-1975 is too long ago for most people to remember, considering the Bahraini society is very young. Aspirational deprivation therefore suits Bahrain best.

Increased importance of inequality

There were two other theories relating to inequality, both developed by Schock (1996). The first states that income inequality, together with economic exploitation, is positively related to political violence. This effect is higher with low levels of political institutionalization and low military sovereignty²⁹¹. This theory cannot be completely tested with the used research methods. The estimation is that there is little economic exploitation of Shia in Bahrain because the country is very developed in general. There are high levels of political institutionalization, and high military sovereignty (in general; for the GCC interference see below). This theory does not seem to explain the conflict in Bahrain.

The second theory of Schock (1996) likewise refers to military sovereignty. This theory argues that income inequality and separatist potential have a greater impact on political violence in contexts where the state’s sovereignty has been compromised by a foreign state. The sovereignty of Bahrain was compromised by the GCC forces. This happened however after the protests erupted, and can therefore not be seen as a cause of conflict. It is actually more an explanation of why the unrest continued. Moreover, Bahrain is a member of the GCC and it is therefore not as straightforward to state that the sovereignty was compromised. It is interesting to look at the perspective of this theory where income inequality has a greater impact on political violence where the sovereignty has been compromised. This could be interpreted in the way that income inequality became more important only after the sovereignty

²⁸⁷ Wright, S. (2008). Fixing the Kingdom: political evolution and socio-economic challenges in Bahrain. Qatar: Georgetown University. p.10

²⁸⁸ Wright, S. (2008). Fixing the Kingdom: political evolution and socio-economic challenges in Bahrain. Qatar: Georgetown University. p.10

²⁸⁹ Interview with David Roberts, RUSI, June 10, 2012.

²⁹⁰ Interview with Justin Gengler, June 10, 2012.

²⁹¹ Schock, K. (1996). A conjunctural model of political conflict: the impact of political opportunities on the relationship between economic inequality and violent political conflict. In: Journal of Conflict Resolution 40 (1), p.116-8.

was compromised, as if people were looking for more arguments for their cause. In this aspect the theory is useful: to look which demands arose later on, after the protests had already started. However this research does not focus on that. The theory is thus not applicable, as it does not describe the causes of the conflict in Bahrain.

5.2.3 Political causes

The political system could be a cause of the conflict in Bahrain, because semi-autocratic regimes, or regimes facing change, have a higher chance on conflict. Therefore this will be analyzed here.

Political system

Mansfield and Snyder (1995) defined a democracy as minimally having periodic elections between candidates who compete fairly for the votes of a substantial portion of the adult population, and of which the outcome determines who makes state policy, including foreign and military policy. According to this definition Bahrain seems to be a democracy. There are elections where all adults vote for their representatives, which are 40 parliamentarians. This number is slightly low, also because the other council is appointed by the king. However, Bahrain is a small country, and compared to other countries 40 is not a bad number, as a rough estimation shows. In the Netherlands there are 225 elected parliamentarians (first and second chamber) and about 17 million inhabitants, Bahrain has 40 elected parliamentarians but only 1,234,571 inhabitants (these data from the contextual framework are chosen because the number of people eligible to vote in Bahrain could not be found). This means in the Netherlands, each parliamentarian represents 75,555 people, and in Bahrain, 30,864. Even though this is a rough estimation, Bahrain in this regard seems more democratic than the Netherlands.

However what is not taken into account here is the electoral system, which the interview respondents deem a cause of the protests. Seven interviewees and two people observed came up with this issue themselves, out of 15 interviewees and 10 observations in total. When specifically asked, every respondent except for the government agreed on this as an important factor of inequality between the Shia and Sunni. They claim there is gerrymandering of the Shia because of the voting districts. According to Human Rights Watch, the voting districts were “*arranged in such a way that the Sunnis had a disproportionate share of the seats in the elected house, the National Assembly*”²⁹². Proof is found within the French embassy, of which an official stated that “*in 2010, Wefaq was said to have had 3000 votes, but already only in Sanabis [a Shia area] live 15000 people*”²⁹³. According to the research of Wright (2008) there are electoral districts with only 500 registered voters (who probably will be Sunni) and other electoral districts with over 10,000 voters (probably Shia) however each district delivers the same number of parliamentarians²⁹⁴. This is a big difference of course, and certainly in a multi-ethnic environment this can cause discontent.

A second reason why there is no full democracy relates to the last part of the definition: ‘*....of which the outcome determines who makes state policy, including foreign and military policy*’. All Ministers, including those in these two key positions are being appointed by the king. Currently these positions are held by H.E Shaikh Khalid Bin Ahmed Bin Mohamed Al Khalifa and General Shaikh Khalifa Bin Ahmed Al Khalifa: both members of the royal family²⁹⁵. Therefore it is not clear who determines state policy in these two fields. This was confirmed by the UN, who stated that ‘*with many things, you don't know who's in power*’²⁹⁶. Therefore the conclusion is that there is no full democracy in Bahrain. Because an intermediate regime is four times more prone to civil conflict according to Hegre et al., this seems a clear cause of the conflict. However as we know, more aspects could be important than merely democracy, such as inclusiveness for example.

Reynal-Querol (2004) argued that it is not democracy but the inclusiveness of a system that counts. Indicators of inclusiveness are the ability of a system to avoid political exclusion and democracy; the degree of freedom and autocracy in the political system; the level of proportional representation; and the level of checks and balances. It was shown that Shia are being excluded from parts of the political system; the Bahraini system is ‘partially free’; and there is no proportional representation. Since judges and Ministers are being appointed, the level of checks and balances is not very high either. Al-Wefaq stated that the king has 50% of the legislative power in hands²⁹⁷. Concluding, not only is the political system in Bahrain not fully democratic, it is also not very inclusive. These theories have given clear

²⁹² Interview Joe Stork, HRW, June 13, 2012.

²⁹³ Interview with an official at the French embassy, June 26, 2012.

²⁹⁴ Wright, S. (2008). Fixing the Kingdom: political evolution and socio-economic challenges in Bahrain. Qatar: Georgetown University. P.6

²⁹⁵ Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2012). Minister of Foreign Affairs [online]. Cited July 31, 2012.

<http://www.mofa.gov.bh/Ministry/OrganizationalStructure/MinisterofFA/tabid/115/language/en-US/Default.aspx>

Bahrain News Agency (2012). Minister of Defense meets Australian. Cited July 31, 2012. <http://www.bna.bh/portal/en/news/356690>

²⁹⁶ Interview with Peter Grohmann, UN Resident Coordinator, May 17, 2012.

²⁹⁷ Observation with Ali Salman, Al-Wefaq, April 17, 2012.

indicators to test how the political system causes discontent and this also appeared from the interviews. These theories were very useful, and do not need change.

An interesting addition to the theories is that two respondents spoke about 'cosmetic democratization'. There are many elements of the Bahraini political system that point towards democracy, and there have also been many acts of democratization in the past. However these actors stated that for every democratic measure, there is an undemocratic safety net to protect the royal family. Human Rights Watch again gave a clear overview: "*There is an elected house of parliament, but there's also an appointed legislative body, the Shura council, which of course is all appointed by the King, so allies of his, and in the unlikely event where the elected council would want to take any action that the king didn't want, the Shura council would be able to veto it. And the elected council itself, the voting districts were arranged in such a way that the Sunnis had a disproportionate share of the seats. The Shia opposition in particular again felt very aggrieved that his was not genuine*"²⁹⁸. Gengler gives an example of the legislative power: "*in practice, most legislation is introduced by royal decree, and passed to the parliament for approval. If it doesn't receive approval after 3 months, it goes back to the king and he signs it. There is no lawmaking opportunity for ordinary people: they can only obstruct*"²⁹⁹.

The issue of bad leaders³⁰⁰, which was grouped under important facts to look at during democratization in this research, was further named as a cause by the respondents of the interviews. Perhaps that is because Bahrain is still in process of democratization. Of course this also relates to the political system, but the above theories did not pay as much attention to the bad leaders as how it arose from the interviews. Six people directly referred to the Prime Minister, who has been in charge since 1971. He is seen as the most hard-line defender of keeping the regime autocratic. The Dutch Ambassador sees discontent of the people with the Prime Minister: "*the Prime Minister is appointed by the King, and that is not appreciated by the people, because it means that the king always decides who of his companions will be the Prime Minister*"³⁰¹. Even the independent NGO stated that "*we don't want the royal family out, we are not against them as a person. This does not hold for the Prime Minister*" in the sense that they do want the Prime Minister out³⁰². An officer of the British embassy though stated that it is not about the Prime Minister as an individual, but about his resistance to change and his powerful position for 41 years, which makes him one of the longest ruling Prime Ministers in the world³⁰³. As the Prime Minister bought the new financial area for only one Dinar (about two Euro), he has proven value of staying in power³⁰⁴. This also holds for the other members of the royal family: many respondents mentioned that the Khalifa's own two third of the country³⁰⁵. The most extensive explanation on what the royal family owns came from the Bahrain Human Rights Society: "*...the government owns 2/3 of the country, for example Budaiya [North-West of Bahrain], Al-Sakhir [Central Bahrain, including a palace, an airport, and the Formula One circuit], and Awali [center]. The Al-Khalifa's own 80% of the land, 80% of the business, and 2/3 of the Cabinet*"³⁰⁶. This proves the first characteristic of bad leaders according to the definition of Chris Allen, which was: '*a strong desire to retain power, and defending this at all costs. There is opposition to even sharing power, and also to share access to resources with the people*' (see p.37). The third characteristic was that violence will become the prime means of political action. This became reality after the first month of protests, and therefore was not a cause. The position of the leaders (wealthy and mighty); and their actions (stimulating ethnicity) angered the people who started the protests and therefore were causes. The most clear example of this was the slogan '*Down, down Hamad*'. However as follows from this research, the demonstrators do not want Hamad (the King) to give up the throne. Instead they want to get rid of the current system of power and the Prime Minister. Additional supportive facts already appeared from the literature: the government owns the oil company, for example, and it is not clear where the profit is going. There are also no elected Ministers, judges and Prime Minister.

There are four observations, done on Ali Al-Matrook (negotiator on behalf of Kuwait), the BHRS, Al-Wefaq and the local doctor, which see a difference in opinion or even conflict within the royal family. The Crown Prince is regarded as being progressive, the Prime Minister as conservative, and the king as being in the middle of this continuum. Al-Wefaq saw the Royal Court Minister as a companion of the Prime Minister, and the BHRS the Minister of Defense. These 'bad leaders' are seen as the ones mainly responsible for the lack of democracy. What the exact theory about bad leaders was will be discussed

²⁹⁸ Interview with Joe Stork, HRW, June 13, 2012.

²⁹⁹ Interview with Justin Gengler, June 10, 2012.

³⁰⁰ The term 'bad leaders' will not be received well by Bahrain because of its negative connotation, as if the leaders don't do anything right. That is not the perception in Bahrain. However as the term relates to the theories it is used throughout this research.

³⁰¹ Interview with the Dutch Ambassador to Kuwait and Bahrain, June 20, 2012.

³⁰² Interview with a local NGO focused on human development, March 26, 2012.

³⁰³ Der Spiegel (2012). Interview with Bahrain's Prime Minister [online]. Cited July 31, 2012.

<http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/interview-bahraini-prime-minister-prince-khalifa-bin-salman-al-khalifa-a-830045.html>

³⁰⁴ Interview with Justin Gengler, June 10, 2012.

³⁰⁵ For example, stated by Ali Matrook, negotiator for Kuwait to Bahrain, and Bahrain Human Rights Society.

³⁰⁶ Observation with Bahrain Human Rights Society, April 17, 2012.

where it was planned, which is in chapter six under the points of attention when democratizing, but it is clear that the theory will have to be adapted.

Regime change

As already resulted from the theories the political system is important as well as the transition from one system to another. In regards to the political changes in 1973 and 2001-2002 there are clear hints that the political system is undergoing change, and therefore Mansfield and Snyder's (1995) theory 'the phase towards becoming a democracy is aggressive and war-prone' might be valid. According to the definition of Mansfield and Snyder there is regime change going on in Bahrain. In previous chapters it was found that there is no openness of executive recruitment in Bahrain since many functions are appointed by the King. There are little or no constraints on decision-making powers of high functions. Lastly, there is little competitiveness for policy or leadership. Additional proof was given by Al-Wefaq, who stated that the king has full control over the army and the security sector, the media, the audit section, and the public prosecutor³⁰⁷. More about leadership will be discussed in chapter six. For now, the shift will be made to the direct causes.

Box 3. History

The protests nor the human rights violations were new in Bahrain, as was found in the contextual framework and more specifically box 1. If it would be clear when protests of the same character started, it would help in finding the cause, and so the solution to the biggest problems. However in the interviews opinions also differ on when the current flow of protests started. Every respondent agreed that the protests were not something new. However the period about which people are talking differs. The time span ranged between 'the whole history' and 2002. Most respondent stated the protests started 'some decades' ago. This probably refers to the period after 1975, as that period was additionally named by two actors. Five actors related the protests to even earlier events: 1954 (1); 1920s (3); and the whole history (1). More recently, two actors named the 1990s and three actors the period from 2002 onwards. What appears is that all years are named only a few times, and so it is clear that the opinions differed a great deal. Therefore, the historical perspective cannot help relating the causes of past protests to the current ones.

5.3 Direct causes

The theories on direct causes almost fully match the practice of Bahrain. There were elements of the effect of the Arab Spring as well as the special date, but not of the economic crisis. Instead, one additional reason was mentioned by the respondents: the family law. The results of all direct causes are presented in table 4.

5.3.1 Bad neighborhood

The Arab Spring has clearly triggered the conflict in Bahrain, yet had less influence than expected, as can be seen from table 4. People felt strengthened by the events in the region, which is why more people joined the demonstration than would have been the case in other years. Fourteen out of seventeen respondents named the Arab Spring as contributing to the conflict. However if there were no other grievances in Bahrain, there would most probably have been no protests. Gengler states that: "*there was a pool of grievances that could readily be drawn from that were independent of events going on in Tunisia or Egypt*"³⁰⁸. If there were no Arab Spring, there would still be discontent. The protests in Bahrain shared many characteristics with the Arab Spring, thus relations between the two are definitely to be found. For example, February 14 was named the Day of Rage; social media played an important role; and people took over a public square. Michael Stephens and David Roberts added that the Arab Spring had influence, and that the most important part of this influence was when Mubarak's regime fell³⁰⁹. This was a few days before the unrest in Bahrain, namely on February 11th. This especially had influence because the United States supported his fall. From that moment onwards the Bahraini's were convinced they could actually change something, according to Stephens and Roberts.

In summary it seems that although the proximity of the Arab Spring contributed to the outbreak of protests (Hegre's 2001 theory), Michael Brown (1996) seems to be right to state that it is not the neighbors, but mainly the government that was malfunctioning in the first place, and that that caused the conflict. The Arab Spring was a trigger that contributed to the exact date of the outbreak, but was no deeper underlying cause.

³⁰⁷ Observation with Ali Salman, Al-Wefaq, April 17, 2012.

³⁰⁸ Interview with Justin Gengler, June 10, 2012.

³⁰⁹ Interview with Michael Stephens and David Roberts, RUSI, June 10, 2012.

Table 4. Direct causes of the conflict in Bahrain

	Direct causes			
	Arab Spring	Economic crisis	Date	Other
Netherlands				
NL Ambassador	++	-	+	
NL Consul	+	-	+	
Governments				
Embassy UK	+	-	-	
Embassy Germany	+	-	+	
Embassy France	++	-	+	
Embassy USA	+	-	+	
INGOs				
UN	+	-	++	
ICRC	-	-	-	
HRW	-	-	-	
Local NGOs				
NGO X	+	-	+	
NUG	-	-	-	
BYSHR	+	-	+	
BHRWS	+	-	-	
Researchers				
RUSI Stephens	++	-	+	
RUSI Roberts	++	-	+	
QU Gengler	+	-	+	
Observations				
MoFA Bahrain				
Negotiator of Kuwait				
BHRS				
Al-Wefaq				
Citizen (Salmaniya doctor)	+			family law
Citizen (entrepreneur)				
Citizen				
Minister of State				
Conference Clingendael				
Conference Exeter				

5.3.2 Economic crisis

“It [Bahrain] was not even hit by the economic crisis” – Michael Stephens³¹⁰.

The influence of the economic crisis was not a major trigger of conflict. As explained above the economic situation was not good, but it had been like that for a few years already. The inequality was

³¹⁰ Interview with Michael Stephens, RUSI, June 10, 2012.

even present for decades. The recent economic crisis did not have considerable influence on the dissatisfaction in Bahrain.

Also the theories, and the indicator of food prices, which were a cause of the Arab Spring in Tunisia, do not explain the eruption of protest in Bahrain. Not a single actor named food prices as an indicator for the protests. The factor most frequently mentioned was the housing problem, so in this way Harrigan (2011) can still be right. He explained the social contract in which the regime offers cheap food and housing in exchange for political loyalty. This theory was proven for Bahrain by Stephens: "*You are loyal to the Sheikh. He gives reward, water and electricity in return, you get it for free. In Bahrain, the word for electricity and these services means charity*"³¹¹. However because there were problems in regards to housing, the regime did not need to count on political loyalty. Perhaps it is only possible to keep people satisfied by giving them plenty, and that the alternative is a complete democracy and responsible leaders. This is more a root cause discussion however, which will be continued in the conclusion.

5.3.3 Special date

As all respondents except those from the government side confirmed, the remembrance of the constitution and National Action Charter determined the exact date of the protests, February 14th, 2011. This day was the 9th anniversary of the new constitution, and the 10th anniversary of the National Action Charter. People were frustrated by the promises that were laid down in these documents, but never really met. If there would have been no Arab Spring, people would most probably have gone to the streets in Bahrain because of this, as they protested on this date in the past as well. The protests probably would not have been as massive as they were in 2011, although Gengler said that if there would have been someone killed, it would have become big on its own already³¹². The internal frustration, however, was an important cause.

5.3.4 Family law

Some actors named the family law as a direct cause of the conflict. The researcher was not familiar with this law, however this did not mean it was not important. The political debate about the family law evolved as a wider issue on power in Bahrain. The whole debate is studied by Jane Kinninmont³¹³. This research however is not the right place to discuss the issue in full. What is interesting is that there are big differences between Shia and Sunni regarding this law, which is focused on women's issues. Equally important to note is that the Shia wanted to let parts of the law be legalized by Iranian and Iraqi clerics. Although this research explicitly did not want to become involved in the Iranian issue, the influence of Iran clearly exists in Bahrain. The Minister of State who was spoken to worked together with Al-Wefaq for more than five years. He stated that for every important decision, Al-Wefaq took two days to decide; in other words, to discuss with religious leaders in Iran on what to do³¹⁴. This religious influence was also mentioned by the National Union Gathering, and the Dutch consulate³¹⁵. Apparently there is not a big distinction between religion and politics from the Shia side; and even internationally religious advice is used in national decision-making. This is something feared by the Bahraini government and therefore causes tension. For this research it was not possible to gather more information about this topic. However these facts already show that the issue exists and is not some conspiracy theory. It should therefore receive attention in conflict resolution initiatives. First, it is recommended to perform more research on this, to the extent to which that is possible as it is a very politically sensitive issue.

5.4 Conclusion

Now the answer to the first research question can be given. The question was:

What are the causes of the uprising in Bahrain in February 2011?

Political discontent was the main cause of the protests. The country is in a situation between autocracy and democracy which is four times more prone to conflict than the two ends of the spectrum (Hegre et al. 2001). The lack of democracy can mainly be seen in the fact that political leaders and judiciary personnel are mostly appointed by the king and therefore neutrality cannot be guaranteed. The Shia feel underrepresented in the Parliament which is a result of the gerrymandering voting system. Secondly, the country is not democratic, but also not very inclusive, the latter being a more clear indicator than democracy according to Reynal-Querol (2004). Thirdly, the country is in a process of democratization since decades, which is also very much 'aggressive and war-prone' (Mansfield & Snyder 1995). An

³¹¹ Ibid dem.

³¹² Interview with Justin Gengler, June 10, 2012.

³¹³ For more information about the family law, I refer to her research. Kinninmont, J. (2011). Framing the family law: a case study of Bahrain's identity politics. In: Journal of Arabian Studies 1 (1) p.53-68

³¹⁴ Observation with Ghanim bin Fadhal Al-Buainain, Minister of State from the Bahrain Ministry of Foreign Affairs, June 26 2012.

³¹⁵ Interviews with Sheikh Abdullatif Al-Mahmood, president of the National Union Gathering, May 17, and with the consulate in diverse meetings between February and July 2012.

additional aspect of the political discontent was about the leaders: there are bad leaders that are in power for too long, and are not chosen by the people of Bahrain. All above theories therefore collide with the reality of Bahrain.

However the political aspect was not the only cause. The second important aspect was the socio-economic aspect. There is high unemployment, and there are indicators that there is more unemployment among Shia than Sunni (this refers to the theory of Woodward that unemployment is a cause of conflict). Secondly there is relative deprivation, especially aspirational deprivation due to false promises to reform and the hope the Arab Spring gave to the people (Gurr 1970). Also there was a slight decremental deprivation because the economic growth decreased right before the protests, although the economic growth was not much higher before that period. The theory of Woodward (2002), and the theory of Gurr about aspirational deprivation hold for Bahrain. The other theories of Gurr and those of Schock (1996) about military sovereignty and economic exploitation do not refer to causes, but mostly to reasons why the conflict continued.

Thirdly, the social causes had impact on Bahrain as well. Hegre et al. (2001) are right in their claim that ethnic heterogeneity increases the probability of civil war. And although it was no cause, the relation between Shia and Sunni became important later on in the conflict. This was either because (1) the sectarian aspect of identity was seen as real; (2) because leaders from both sides stimulated this identity; (3) this identity became more important during the conflict or became more important due to conflict transformation; or, but less likely, (4) because of fear that the future for the Shia would not be better than it was in the past (referring to Oberschall's theories). The conflict became ethnicized by the parties and the leaders to gain more attention and support for their cause from the local population and the media (Brubaker and Laitin 2002). Lake and Rothchild's theory (1998) about a fear of the future had little value. Also Oberschall's theories did not explain the causes of conflict, but they did explain the importance of the position that the sectarian identity gained later on. The theory of Brubaker and Laitin was also partially correct as it did clarify the increasing importance of the sectarian identity, but not the cause of the conflict. These theories proved very important in order to see the named causes from different angles. This helps in understanding the different parties involved and their view on the conflict.

However these root causes would not have led to protests if it were not for the direct causes. The geographical proximity of the Arab Spring gave the Bahraini hope that they could also achieve a change (Hegre et al. 2001). This did contribute to the discontent, but Michael Brown (1996) is right in his theory that the Arab Spring would not have succeeded in Bahrain if the political situation had not given a reason for protest.

Also the date of February 14th was special for Bahrain, as the National Action Charter and constitution are from that date. This reminded people of the hope for change about ten years ago, and their disappointment for still not having the rights that were promised to them.

Two additional causes were found: influence of Iran, and the debate about the family law. There is no strict distinction between religion and politics in Bahrain. The political Shia leaders are also the religious leaders, and they have close ties with Iranian religious leaders. This angers the Bahraini government. The family law was an example of these close ties, and was an important political discussion right before the protests started.

The economic crisis had negligible effect in Bahrain and thus was no cause. Equally important to mention here is that no actor came up with the resource curse as a cause. The limits of this research are therefore smaller than was first thought.

In conclusion, most theories applied to the case of Bahrain. Two theories, namely of Brubaker and Laitin (2002) and of Gurr (1970) could be adapted. Brubaker and Laitin stated that conflicts are ethnicized to gain support from the diaspora and international community. Instead of the international community, the researcher pleads to mention the media, since this creates the image of the conflict; the image on which the international community subsequently bases its policy. Therefore the media is important in the first place. Gurr's theory about relative deprivation was proven right. Gurr mainly speaks of economic deprivation, but in Bahrain it was also, if not mainly, political deprivation and disappointment.

There were two theories of which the circumstances were present, but did not form a motivation for conflict in Bahrain. These were about identity and religion. Both were no cause of conflict, since the Shia and Sunni got along fine with each other before the protests. This changed during the protests however, under influence of leaders and the parties themselves. Perhaps it should be studied whether the struggle over identity is the cause in other cases of conflict as well, since many conflicts are framed in terms of identity. Because it was proven for Bahrain that it certainly does not have to be a cause, this could be the same for other conflicts. Juergensmeyer (2003) and Stern (2003) were not right in saying that the cause of conflict is religion because it is absolute. The aspect of religion only applies to the most religious parts of society, and not the society in general. This theory therefore has only limited value for Bahrain. Both identity aspects will be further discussed in the discussion.

Four theories did not apply to the case of Bahrain, but this does not mean that they are false. These theories are: (1) one ethnic group as a majority; (2) fear of the future; (3) progressive deprivation; and (4) the economic crisis can cause conflict. These causes were simply not present in Bahrain and therefore the theories could not be tested.

6. Addressing the causes of the conflict in Bahrain by the international community

From the causes in the previous chapter, this research moves on to look at which of the causes have been addressed, in order to solve the conflict as much as possible. The scope of this chapter is marked by the international actors interviewed, and the Netherlands in particular. The research question that leads this chapter therefore is:

Which causes of conflict in Bahrain have been addressed by the international community, the Netherlands in particular?

First the root causes that have proven to be present in Bahrain and their addressing will be discussed, in the same order as used in the previous chapters. Next, the same is done for direct causes. The theories that guide the addressing of the causes are applied to the Bahraini case, to see (how) these causes were addressed by the international actors. However it will appear that more, or different actions were taken than what solely resulted from the root cause approach. After the causes have been explained there is therefore an extra paragraph about this. Before jumping to the conclusion, specific attention will be paid to the actions of the Netherlands as this is the focal actor. As explained, due to the unexpected circumstances it was asked what the actors spoken to have done in Bahrain since February 2011. The researcher has interpreted these results herself.

6.1 Root causes

6.1.1 Social causes

The Shia/Sunni/migrant identity was no cause of the conflict, but appeared to have gained influence later on. The importance of identity was also stimulated by leaders and by the people themselves in order to gain more attention from the media and consequently the international community. Because the interviews questioned the causes and means of addressing these simultaneously, it only appeared after the interviews were over that the identity issue was not an actual cause, and that its addressing also does not belong in this thesis. However some actors interviewed are involved in the addressing of the problem between the Shia and Sunni and therefore light will briefly be shed on this. The issue of migrants was not dealt with by any actor.

Brubaker and Laitin (2002) pointed to the role of the international community that can ethnicize the conflict, and this research found this is initiated by the media. The role of the media was also mentioned by the BICI report, which stated the media at the time was 'defamatory'; censored; and gave only little access to the opposition to use media channels³¹⁶. According to official sources the BICI recommendation about liberalizing rules regarding media are being implemented. This will be very important. A French company, IMCA (International Media Consultants Associates), is involved in the execution of the recommendations. Bahrain has chosen this organization, and the French embassy does not explicitly work with IMCA³¹⁷. More information about this cooperation was therefore not available through the French embassy, however political pressure from the French government could help to push the implementation by the Bahraini government. Because the international media mainly focuses on the Shia-Sunni relations, the international community also focused on this. International organizations appear to be mainly occupied with the Shia perspective. Although this is important, and it is difficult to see a perspective less focused on human rights violations as viable, if one is not based in Bahrain, it would be good for these organizations to critically look at their position, seen their risk to ethnicize the conflict.

Lake and Rothchild (1998) stated that ethnic conflicts face ethnic activists and political entrepreneurs, with whom should be dealt to address this cause. The position of leaders also relates to the view of Oberschall (2000), saying that leaders ethnicize conflicts. This was true for the situation in Bahrain, but the international community has not paid attention to these leaders. Especially with the Shia bias in mind, it is important to critically analyze these leaders.

Oberschall's views showed how ethnicity can have influence on a conflict. Since a democracy implies expressing one's opinion freely, the means of addressing the views on ethnicity is by discussing them. If people are aware of the possibility of leaders and other people ethnicizing a conflict, they could look more critically towards those leaders. The people will be less vulnerable for hate speech from leaders and draw their own conclusion, for example that not all Shia or Sunni are bad, only the hardliners are. The British embassy pays attention to the social relations between people. They are organizing a school project called 'Me and the Others' which is focused on the acceptance of people that are different than you. This is for children going to primary and secondary school, and therefore creates awareness about social acceptance at a young age. Also, the embassy sent Bahraini key figures to Northern Ireland to learn from the protests over there³¹⁸. On a small scale, this will contribute to balancing the extreme views on

³¹⁶ Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (2011). Report of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry, p.401

³¹⁷ Interview with an officer of the French Embassy, June 26, 2012.

³¹⁸ Interview with an officer of the embassy of the United Kingdom, April 17, 2012

ethnicity that started to evolve during the conflict. It would be interesting to look for more theories describing how awareness could be created and how functional these projects actually are. That is a recommendation for further research. Beside the British project no actors interviewed dealt with the issue of leaders specifically.

The issue of migrants has not been specifically addressed by the international community. The only project was the one of the British embassy about tolerance in general. To combat the negative view towards migrants, a first step would be to gain an insight in the statistics. This will show whether there indeed is inequality in the acquisition of citizenship; if migrants are the majority in the police and army; and if these people are Shia, Sunni, or from another background. As this is not clear at the moment, the perception could be different from the reality. If the migrants indeed have a preferred position compared to the Shia, the next step would be to address it. The most logical step here would be to reform the police or military. This is already being implemented by the BICI, but as it raises much discussion, it would be good to provide the critics with more details. Recently the police hired 500 new employees, but there is for example only little insight in the background of these people.

Tonya Putnam (2002) named additional ways of addressing the social causes. She named the following options: introducing consociationalist or federalist systems; autonomy for a certain region; power sharing; dispersal of power to lower governments; and electoral systems that give incentives to inter-ethnic coalitions³¹⁹. Timothy Sisk (2003) warned for the mutual veto of parties leading to political blackmail and pleaded for a more fluid form of democracy that allows flexible coalitions to bridge ethnic diversity. These means of addressing were not applied in Bahrain by the international community. This would mean that the government would drastically have to change its system. Autonomy for a certain region is no solution for Bahrain, because the country is more or less a city-state, and all citizens feel connected to the whole country. The other options would be good to resolve the feeling of the Shia of being underrepresented though. These are more political options however, and will be discussed in the political paragraph.

6.2 Socio-economic causes

Chapter five showed that unemployment and inequality both contributed to the outbreak of protests in Bahrain. This part of the research looks forward to whether or not international actors addressed the unemployment and inequality issue, but also looks forward to possible solutions.

Wright (2008) found that unemployment could be the consequence of the economic growth being too low. Unemployment could thus be decreased by stimulating economic growth. None of the respondents has stimulated the Bahraini economy more or have given special attention to it compared to the situation before the protests. UNIDO for example has projects about starting up businesses, but no additional consideration was given to this after February 2011³²⁰. One simple measure could for instance be to promote the business sector more among its citizens, as there are useful arrangements to start up one's own business. Based on this research it is not possible to state whether these arrangements are well-known among the population (and then especially the Shia) but this could be a measure easy to implement. The international community could link these businesses to foreign companies, in order to give the business a chance to become successful. That is a key task of embassies, and would only require a small shift in policy. The Gulf is one of the twenty key regions of the policy of the Dutch Ministry for Economic Affairs, Agriculture, and Innovation and therefore paying more attention to Bahrain would fit in this policy³²¹.

Because the facts on unemployment remain disputed, it would thus be essential to gain more insight in the issue. This could be done by analyzing whether everyone wants to work or not; and if Shia would also want to work in the lower sectors of the security sector for example. This is a task for local NGOs and the government however, as the international community does not have full access to Bahrain.

The second socio-economic cause that applied to the case of Bahrain was inequality. The Bahraini people found themselves hopeful after the government announced drastic reforms, but were extremely disappointed when the reforms appeared not to be completely implemented in society. A logical solution to this would be to prevent the false hope in the future: either promises should not be made at all, or they should be carried out like promised. This is an internal affair for the Bahraini government, as they made these promises in the first place. It is therefore not a surprise that the international community did not address this cause. This also holds for the other forms of relative deprivation, where the Shia felt deprived compared to the situation that their fellow Sunni citizens appear to be in. This cause was also left unaddressed by the international community. The Netherlands however did speak about this topic with government officials for example. And although this does not directly address the issue, it could be an

³¹⁹ Putnam, T.L. (2002). Human rights and sustainable peace. In: Stephen J. Stedman et al. *Ending civil wars: the implementation of peace agreements*. Boulder-London: Lynne Rienner. P. 237-271.

³²⁰ Learned through meetings with UNIDO for the purposes of the internship.

³²¹ Interview with an officer of the Dutch Ministry for Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation, January 27, 2012.

important measure that the international community could address in diplomatic conversations. For reasons of privacy it is unknown, but assumed, that the other embassies do the same. Where the Netherlands mostly asked questions about the issue, a measure to specifically address this issue would be to ask for change with the government.

The theory of Schock (1996) has proven that income inequality and separatist potential have a greater impact on political violence where the state's sovereignty has been compromised by a foreign state. Although the GCC is not a foreign state and the definition of this action is debated, it would be wise to not compromise this sovereignty in the future. This holds for the GCC troops, but could also be a warning for the United States as their military presence in Bahrain is big, even though because it is for their own cause. A big difference is that the United States has been present for a long time, and that the GCC troops only arrived in March 2011. Moreover, the GCC was explicitly focused on Bahrain and its internal politics, contrary to the United States that is present because of their fifth fleet.

Not only did economic inequality exist in the most literal sense of the word, in money, but it also existed in goods. The issue of unequal access to government facilities such as housing, schooling and medical care, is highly debated in Bahrain. It could be well possible that some embassies have addressed this point in political conversations with the Bahraini government, as the Netherlands for example did. In these conversations it was asked what the facts are: is it true that inequality exists? The embassies interviewed did not specifically mention this issue, probably because it concerns private conversations with the Bahraini government. Addressing the issue itself would not be very logical since it is an internal affair. Because the government claims that there is equality in the access to these services, it would be good for the government to promote and underpin this claim with statistics and facts. The international community will prefer this, instead of individuals stating it is simply not true.

6.3 Political causes

It is clear that political change is needed in Bahrain. This part looks at what the international actors have done regarding the political causes.

As the theories of Hegre et al. (2001) show, it would be good to either have a complete democracy, or a complete autocracy. It was shown that unfortunately, Bahrain is in between, which is a risky position. To address this Bahrain would have to make a choice: either go back to their previous situation of being an autocracy, or finish the democratization process and become a democracy. It would be most logical to continue the democratization process, because people in Bahrain and the international community will not support an autocracy. Democracy moreover leads to a more stable and less violent situation in the long run.

To address the political cause, the criteria of democracy should be analyzed to see which of these are addressed in Bahrain. Two issues in this were the electoral system and the appointed ministers. These issues are not addressed by any of the actors spoken to, nor were any other initiatives found in the literature. Lake and Rothchild (1998) could have been very right in their theory that designing the representational basis of political institutions is the most crucial in negotiations, because it is a very widely debated issue in Bahrain and is thus seen as important. Both researchers from RUSI questioned the fact whether fair voting systems actually exist at all; each system favors one group over the other³²². The electoral system is a politically sensitive issue, and it is the question whether the Bahraini government will allow this to change.

Regarding the inclusiveness, Bahrain should focus on including everybody in politics. According to the criteria of Reynal-Quarol (2004), Bahrain could strive for more political freedom and democracy; higher proportional representation; and a higher level of checks and balances. The embassy of the United States has a project to assist the Justice ministry in capacity building, which refers to the last point. More details on this could unfortunately not be shared, yet it is a clear indicator that they are occupied with these reforms. Other initiatives were not found.

The other political cause was regime change. Again the criteria could help in searching for initiatives done by the international actors. The criteria were: the openness of executive recruitment, executive constraints and competitiveness of political participation (Mansfield & Snyder 1995). Neither of these points is being addressed. However, here the question also arises whether it is the task of the international actors to address these, or that it is an internal affair. This will be discussed in the conclusion of this chapter as well as in the following chapter.

The theoretical framework also discussed points that should receive attention during democratization. These also address the cause of political transition and will therefore be discussed in the following paragraphs.

³²² Interview with Michael Stephens and David Roberts, RUSI, June 10, 2012.

Before starting the democratization process it was considered to be important by Roberts (2009), Mansfield and Snyder to develop an approach or strategy first. But a plan like that is not present at the moment. However it does remind one of the BICI report, although that unfortunately did not address the root causes. Since the format of that report was well received by almost all key actors, a second BICI report would be a good recommendation. The international community, having experience in implementing democracy, could assist in developing this plan.

There were many discussions about the suitable pace of democratization: rapid transition (Collier 2001), sequentialism (Kaplan), or gradualism (Carothers 2007)? Bahrain has been implementing democracy sequentially in the past: step by step. Big steps were made in 1973, 2001, and in 2011 under the BICI reforms. It seems this approach has failed, as the changes of 2001-2002 led to unrest. However, the protests occurred mainly because the promises were not lived up to, and had thus nothing to do with the pace of democratization. For the Bahraini society, the most important matter will be to promise change and also carry this out. However, it is important not to continue the democratization process in the earlier pace of sequentialism, as people may associate this with the past where no changes were made. Therefore it would be an option to implement democracy either very rapid (based on Colliers ideas) or gradually (Carothers). To prevent disappointment the above mentioned plan could provide people with a clear guidance of what to expect. Citizens can also directly question their leaders if they do not persist in following the plan, rather than waiting ten years and exploding of anger, which happened in 2011. None of the spoken actors occupy themselves with the discussions about this approach. Additionally it remains the question whether the Bahraini government would want all this change. Since the international community is in conversation with the Bahraini government through regular diplomatic channels it could point more clearly to the advantages of having democracy in these conversations. This will be tough because it might be seen as interference in internal affairs. However as the theories of Hegre et al.(2001), Reynal-Querol (2004), Mansfield and Snyder (1995) and others prove it would be the best solution for Bahrain. It will however require excellent diplomatic skills to deliver this message. The researcher estimates that these diplomatic skills are present, at least at the Dutch embassy.

Since Bahrain has elections, it might seem strange consider a suitable moment of holding elections. If however political changes are made, it will be important that there is a government representing the people and the new situation. Following Paris' (2004) ideas, other measures should be taken before changing the government. The officer of the British embassy also agreed that first the system will have to change before elections should take place, because "*if there would be elections now, people would vote along sectarian lines*". This could stimulate the sectarian tensions that are developing.

According to Paris, economic and political institutions should be established first. Many of these are already in place, like the office of the public prosecutor that was established after the BICI report. However there are hints that these institutions are not fully democratic, but also depend on *wasta* and relations to the king. The first significant step would be to make these independent of the royal family. This was also supported by Chesterman (2004) who named the importance of institution building in the judicial sector. Beside the United States also the BICI paid attention to this.

Another idea of Paris (2004) was to implement conflict-reducing economic policies. As stated above, none of the actors spoken to were involved in such policies.

Another of Paris' ideas was to promote civil society. Many NGOs are controlled by the government, which is not the case in democracies. This should thus change as well. Again, this issue is not being addressed by the actors interviewed.

According to Paris, hate speech should be controlled. This was implemented by the BICI as described above, which again shows that Bahrain is on its way to democracy.

Both Lyons (2002) and Paris (2004) pointed out the importance of the electoral system and the moment of elections, as was discussed above. Terrence Lyons added to these political changes a strengthening of interim institutions and demobilization of combatants in a way that builds new institutions. As will appear later, the conflict parties should be treated as serious participants. Members of Al-Wefaq could for example be included in the new or reformed institutions. And though the party is not merely for Shia, its members are mainly from this sect. If the party would be truly inter-ethnic, it could also become a political party. This also holds for the February 14th movement. Lyons' recommendation regarding demilitarizing politics was partially followed by the ICRC. Trainings for the military to create awareness about human rights were coordinated by the ICRC for instance³²³. That will help in developing an accountable army where the sectarian background of an opponent does not matter in case of protests.

Another topic that is important during democratization is political will. In the National Dialogue many local leaders were included, which was suggested by Horowitz (2004). However, people felt that more leaders were representing the Sunni sect than the Shia, and that some 'local leaders' had nothing to

³²³ Interview with Gérard Peytrignet, ICRC, May 30, 2012.

do with politics³²⁴. As Mansfield and Snyder (1995) and Roberts suggested, it will be important to take good care of the old elite. They are the ones who have been leading Bahrain in the past centuries and therefore will not simply give up their power. In case they are not taken care of they could become spoilers of the new system. Additionally, they have the knowledge and experience Bahrain needs. Resulting from the above discussion, a good solution would be to first reform the institutions, and subsequently the new leaders can be elected. In this way the current leaders can still compete for power, but then it is up to the people to choose their the Prime Minister and other ministers. Relating to this it is equally important to educate the new leaders. The Dutch Advisory Council on International Affairs recommends that attention is being paid to the fact that democracies not only mean power based on elections, but that democracy also should guarantee 'fundamental rights' regarding women, political dissidents, and religious and ethnic minorities³²⁵. Since most people are fond of the king and the Crown Prince, Bahrain could remain a constitutional monarchy. An elected Prime Minister could have the political power, together with the parliament of course. The current Ministers and Prime Minister, in case they are not elected, should be certain of a good alternative, for example in business. This will be their 'golden parachute' which was suggested by Mansfield and Snyder (1995). This process should be guided step by step, perhaps with help of an external mediator. However before this can happen, it will take years, probably at least another ten, to reform the institutions. That is probably the reason why the actors interviewed were not involved in any of the issues directly relating to democracy. The topic is being discussed in diplomatic conversation, for example by the Dutch Ambassador who asked about the position of the Prime Minister, but there are no other initiatives going on³²⁶. The fact that these changes will take years will be tough on the Bahraini people. To make the circumstances bearable however, the above mentioned plan would help and provide guidance. In that way the people know what to expect, and that they can encourage their leaders to be responsible, and remind them to follow the reforms. This also relates to the point of Chesterman (2004) about the role of the general public. People will have to adapt to the new system because it is a big change. To promote this, workshops are held by some international actors. Four Bahraini organizations were sent to the United Kingdom for an exchange project; and the United States does trainings on confidence building (again, more details could not be shared). These are small steps on the way to democracy.

Lastly there were a few other theories that provide guidance for a smooth democratization process. Säve-Söderbergh and Lennartson and Rothchild (2002) mentioned basic security as a first step. The BICI already done a lot to provide this. Not only does the BICI help prevent human rights violations, it also reforms the security sector to include more Shia. Although the situation has improved, some issues still remain unsolved. Especially NGOs point out to the continuing violations of human rights. According to the BYSHR and BHRWS, horrible acts are continuing every day³²⁷. In order to promote democracy it is important to continue with the implementation of the BICI recommendations.

Chesterman (2004) referred to the importance of administration of justice, which was discussed above as being dealt with by the embassy of the United States and the BICI.

Timothy Sisk (2003) lastly mentioned integrative power-sharing. As discussed before, this issue should be discussed by the conflict parties before implementing it. They will have to come to a solution together in order to make the democracy work.

Direct causes

Direct causes are difficult to address, as they are mainly sporadic occurrences. The Arab Spring is being dealt with in each specific country. It is an external factor that cannot be addressed to help Bahrain specifically. This special date of February 14th also is simply there. When this day is coming up, conflict precautions could be made though in order to prevent protests from escalating once more. In this regard it is equally important to keep an eye on other controversial issues, such as the family law has proven. Of course, the process of lawmaking is also related to democratization.

Although the issue of Iran is more an indirect cause, the cause was found because of the family law (a direct cause) and therefore is being discussed here as well. No international actor mentioned anything about their policy regarding Iran because it is a politically sensitive issue. This they sometimes already mentioned without the researcher specifically asking about it. More research on the relations with Iran would be necessary to be able to give more clear recommendations on what can and should be done.

³²⁴ This appeared an interesting discussion. In the interview with BYHRS (June 26, 2012) they claimed that the 'Basket Weavers Association' and the 'Sailing Club' were part of the Dialogue. However on the website of the Dialogue no such association is found. Still, the Sea Ports Union and the consumer protection society for example do not seem to be necessary for such a dialogue, which could point to including more people to balance the share of Shia in it. Bahrain National Dialogue (2011). Participants list [online]. Cited August 8, 2012. <http://www.nd.bh/en/index.php/the-dialogue/participants-list#pfiguers>

³²⁵ Advisory Council on International Affairs (2012). De Arabische region, een onzekere toekomst [online]. Cited August 10, 2012. <http://www.aiv-advies.nl/> p.30

³²⁶ Interview with the Dutch Ambassador to Kuwait and Bahrain, June 20, 2012.

³²⁷ Interviews with employees of BHRWS and BYHRS, June 26, 2012.

Additionally no activity came up that pays attention to the separation of religion and politics among Bahraini leaders. Making people aware about this separation will be a part of the democratization process. This probably is of later concern, resulting from the discussion above.

It seems like the international actors have done little to address the causes of conflict in Bahrain. A reason for this is that they, and the Bahraini government as well, see the addressing of the political and economic causes as an internal affair. That might explain the little effort of the international actors spoken with. However, De Tocqueville (2001) seems right in his claim that 'the most dangerous time for a bad government is when it attempts to reform itself' because that is what the Bahraini government was doing up until now. International assistance could therefore prove useful. From the conversations it fortunately appeared that more was done than the actions proposed by the theories, and this thus will be explored below. First, however, specific attention is paid to the actions of the Netherlands, in order to answer the research sub question.

Action of the Netherlands

All policy of the Netherlands starts with reliable information. This is very hard to gather, as this research proves as well. Through the conversations of the Honorary Consul and the visits of the Ambassador to Bahrain they try to see "*where and how the tension develops, and to analyze where the Netherlands can contribute to decrease that tension*"³²⁸. Also the Advisory Council on International Affairs (AIV in Dutch) gathers information in order to advice the government. This might seem double work because media also report on the situation in Bahrain. However as was analyzed before, the media can ethnicize a conflict. The Ambassador mentioned an additional argument why the media cannot fully be relied upon: "*remarkable is that you can follow the international press, but that every source has its own story. The excitement to make a good story sometimes does not collide with the reality*"³²⁹. Collecting news and information on the field is therefore an important task of the embassy. According to the Ambassador this is tough, even for embassies, as "everybody holds their cards close to their chest".

The next step is to judge the situation based on this information. The embassy has "*a sharp eye for abuses and the treatment of people, and the extent to which human rights are being harmed in that*"³³⁰. The embassy collects reliable information and then reports to the Ministry in The Hague, on which it bases its policy.

This policy was further discussed with an officer in the Ministry. Since the start of the last Cabinet, October 2010, the foreign policy of the Netherlands knows a specific pillar for the Arab Spring. The Netherlands "*wants to be seen in the region*", and wants to work on "*areas of Dutch expertise and where the Netherlands have additional value*"³³¹. Focus areas of policy currently are the freedom of religion or philosophy; women's rights; freedom of expression, including online freedom of expression; Corporate Social Responsibility and labor rights; LGBT rights (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgenders); and support of human rights defenders. However sometimes policy is carried out in EU-relations.

After the policy is agreed upon, the embassy is again the actor to transfer the message to Bahrain. According to the Ambassador, he "*tries to sell democracy with the right arguments on the table. This is a red thread you stick to in all contacts with Bahrain*"³³². The most clear example of this policy are the meetings with the Bahraini Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Ambassador has spoken about three or four times with this Ministry, including the Vice Minister, since February 2011. In these meetings the Ambassador explained the Dutch foreign policy and urged the Ministry to respect human rights in Bahrain.

Beside this, the Netherlands has stimulated EU-meetings and joint statements, especially regarding human rights. This was for example done relating to the incidents at the Salmaniya hospital (incidents described on p.23). Additionally, the EU has given some statements regarding Bahrain to condemn the violence for example³³³.

Furthermore the embassy is working on the implementation of certain projects, however more information on this could not be shared yet.

Other actions

Beside the Netherlands, other actors have undertaken additional activities in Bahrain that do not directly relate to the theory. These will now be shortly discussed.

³²⁸ Interview with the Dutch Ambassador to Kuwait and Bahrain, June 20, 2012.

³²⁹ Ibid dem.

³³⁰ Ibid dem.

³³¹ Interview with an official of the Dutch Ministry for Foreign Affairs, January 20, 2012.

³³² Interview with the Dutch Ambassador to Kuwait and Bahrain, June 20, 2012.

³³³ See for example the statement of September 30, 2011: EU (2011). Statement by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton on the recent trials in Bahrain [online]. Cited August 8, 2012.

http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/egypt/press_corner/all_news/news/2011/20111002_1_en.htm

The State of Kuwait helped during the first month of conflict by assisting in the negotiation process. A solution was almost found, in which the Al-Khalifa's would remain in power, but the parliament would be chosen by the public, similar to the Kuwaiti system. However at the last minute the Saudi Crown Prince blocked the initiative³³⁴. This was probably done because Saudi Arabia also has a significant Shia population, who also demonstrated for democracy. They would probably fear that the Shia people in Saudi Arabia would also want more democracy.

All actors spoken to are in conversation with the Bahraini government, and they are pressing for dialogue. Even though the actors mostly do not address the causes themselves, they press for the Bahraini government to find a solution, together with the opposition.

Relating to previous information, the BICI has mainly focused on security, and the prevention of future human rights violations. Box 1 showed that this is definitely needed in Bahrain. Improving security does however not address a root cause but mainly is a symptom of an ill-functioning government.

Conclusion

The research question that was aimed to answer in this chapter was:

Which causes of conflict in Bahrain have been addressed by the international community, the Netherlands in particular?

Resulting from the above overview, some small aspects of the causes have been addressed by the international actors and the Netherlands. However in general, the causes have not been addressed. The fields where the main interventions have been made is in the security sector, the political system, the media, but also in social tolerance. But this last aspect was not even a cause in the first place. The main actors, based on this research, were the BICI, United States, United Kingdom, and ICRC.

The previous chapter concluded that the social aspect (relations between Shia and Sunni) was not a cause of the conflict, but did gain influence later on. The British embassy has initiated some projects to create tolerance among the Bahraini population, which therefore addresses this aspect. These are only small projects though and thus it will not resolve the whole conflict. It is however, perhaps a first step to a more comprehensive approach, where other actors can connect to as well. That is a opportunity for the future. Also the issue will gain importance as the conflict is heading towards more sectarianism. This might trigger other actors to become involved, since ethnicity was also important in Northern-Ireland, the Balkans, and many other conflicts. No actor interviewed has any project relating to the relations between the native and migrant population. In Kuwait there are workshops on the position of migrants, but as far is known there are no projects about the relationships between the people in Bahrain or Kuwait.

The international actors have not contributed to address the socio-economic causes (inequality between Shia and Sunni; unemployment). There are projects that have to do with these issues, but these have been there for a long time span already, and there are no projects specifically addressing these socio-economic causes of conflict. A first step to address this cause would be to get more reliable insight in matters, which is only possible with (assistance of) the Bahraini government. It would be important to get reliable data on how many people, and of which background are unemployed. At this moment there are only suggestions, which makes unemployment a disputed topic. On the other hand it remains the question whether the government of Bahrain will ever allow these data to be found, and it would therefore not be convenient to wait for that. Instead the international participants should start acting now. Although it will mainly be an internal affair of Bahrain, as it relates to the economic structure of the country, the experience of the Dutch embassy has learned that economic diplomacy is key within the field of work of embassies. Therefore it would not be so strange for the international actors to pay explicit attention to economic cooperation with the end goal of helping the conflict to resolve. Economic assistance could also be given on the condition of political change. Everybody in Bahrain now realizes the economy is suffering due to the protests. Large business deals could be made on the precondition of starting the dialogue for example. Other economic means could be to specifically focus on empowering Shia, for example by locating a project in a Shia area. Of course, everybody should be able to apply for such a project so that there is no discrimination against Sunni or migrants. None of these projects are happening at the moment and this therefore will be a recommendation to the international actors. More recommendations will follow in the concluding chapter though.

The main causes of the protests in Bahrain were political; such as the lack of democracy. Some small efforts have been made to address this cause. The embassy of the United States is involved in reforming the judiciary, however as more details could not be shared, the strengths and weaknesses of this program remain unclear. The ICRC has helped in reforming the military, which will structurally prevent human rights to be violated in the future. Again this is a small solution with no connection to other reform projects. Kuwait has tried to come to an overall solution, but unfortunately failed. As this regional friend failed, it looks like an overall solution is not in sight. Especially because the large Saudi Arabia has blocked the changes to come, a grand overall solution, though badly needed, has little chance.

³³⁴ Observation with Ali Matrook, negotiator for Kuwait to Bahrain, May 9 2012.

Therefore the small efforts of the international actors spoken to are certainly not worthless; they might be the only solution possible. Although the impression now is that almost no cause has been addressed, that is not the full picture. Through diplomatic conversations the international actors discuss the conflict with the government and asks critical questions. Especially individual cases of Mahdi Abu Dheeb and Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja were important in this, because there were direct links between these individuals and the west. Al-Khawaja had a Danish passport beside his Bahraini passport, and because Abu Dheeb was part of the teachers union, Education International stepped up for its colleague (see p.26). These individuals have caused the international community to be more critical towards the Bahraini government. However the momentum of these two cases should not be lost, and further progress should be made.

What will be important is to not choose sides, as one then will be rejected by the other party. The government maintains the power, and the current relations with the international community is good, especially on the economic level. Therefore international actors will not abandon the government. And, as explained before, the current government has all knowledge of Bahrain, and the leaders could become spoilers if they are abandoned by the international community. That is why the Bahraini government needs to be involved. Because huge changes are required to create sustainable peace, and international intervention is often unwanted, the government should be the lead actor.

The government side can therefore not be chosen by the international community. On the other hand, the democracy movement should not be abandoned either. The international actors could support the government as lead actor by delivering clear recommendations on what works, as was shown in this research, thereby supporting this movement. A second suggestion is to get more involved in the negotiation process. A first step would be a dialogue between the partners to start deciding on where to go. This has been going on since the start of the conflict, which is very good and shows goodwill from all sides. However it did not turn out on a solution yet, which is why international support should try to make the change. They can pressure Al-Wefaq to remain within the dialogue, and pressure the regime to create true change; not merely cosmetic. After and during these negotiations, a plan as suggested by Roberts and Mansfield and Snyder (1995) should be developed by these actors. Again the international community could assist in this.

The question then arising is whether the international community will undertake action. The feeling that arose from each interview and observation was positive: people were very concerned about Bahrain; nobody saw a direct solution without true change, but did want to see such a change happen. Therefore it is clear that the international actors want this political change. However there are always other concerns involved, for example economic trade, military trade, and the conflicts in the region in which the countries are involved. But the economic trade could be able to help Bahrain, as was discussed above. This certainly does not exclude the political solution; it might even catalyze towards political change.

The military support of the West was very controversial and gained much media attention as stated before. After a lobby from NGOs the Dutch government has agreed to change the policy of military export. However the implementation of this is doubted³³⁵. Of course, it would be strange to both have military support from the West and pushing for solutions at the same time. However some nuances should be made here, which shows that the issue might not be as important as it seems. Military support can also include radars and other non-violent techniques for example, as was suggested by an officer of the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation³³⁶. Secondly, he came up with the alternative: if not teargas is being delivered by the international community, what will they shift to, bullets? Probably they will not search for milder alternatives, but only tougher ones. Additionally, the weapons the Bahraini government wants will still be available through other channels, such as China or Russia for example, or from the conflicts in the region. A possible embargo from the West would therefore not change the situation very much. The chances are also low for the embargo to happen, because it concerns different departments of governments. For the Netherlands it is divided among two ministries, and during the internship at the Netherlands embassy it was experienced that coordination between Ministries is not very strong, to say the least. Therefore in practice the Ministry of Defense will be concerned with military trade and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with the diplomatic assistance to resolve the conflict. Fact remains that it would make a strong signal to stop the military trade, and that it is hypocritical to support both the conflict (through military trade) and its solution, and that.

Of course bilateral policy also depends on other influences. The United States are currently very active in the region, which could decrease the chance for another project in the same region, as long as it is not necessary. These are factors that are part of the political game, and extremely difficult to deal with. The only solution is to press the importance of more action regarding Bahrain.

³³⁵ Campagne tegen Wapenhandel (2012). Kritische analyse Nederlands Wapenexportbeleid gepubliceerd [online]. Cited August 3, 2012. <http://www.stopwapenhandel.org/node/1254>

³³⁶ Interview with an officer of the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation, January 27th, 2012

A last problem that can arise is the unity of actors. All Bahraini want to solve their problems, but their approach causes discussion, if not more conflict. The international community does not form one block that agrees on solutions that would work for Bahrain. Saudi Arabia has a strong influence and has its own opinion on how to solve the issue. Its role will be crucial to achieve and sustain peace. Kuwait might be willing to assist but will also be dependent on Saudi Arabia. This is therefore a key actor that should be convinced to join in the democratization process. Also the West is not one block: the United States might have different views on what to do (first) than European countries, and the European countries also often have different views. Coordination of assistance will be needed therefore: one or a limited number of actors should take the lead.

Countries that would be suitable to take the lead in dealing with Bahrain should be countries that have close ties with the country, such as the United States and the United Kingdom, as they maintain military interests and colonial relations with Bahrain. Their relations are longstanding and will therefore be a reliable partner for Bahrain. Of course, lessons learned, for example in Iraq and Afghanistan, should be applied to this new case, to prevent those mistakes and to prevent a Western bias on democracy, as was also suggested by the Advisory Council on International Affairs³³⁷. To make it more regional it would not be a bad idea to include Kuwait, and perhaps also Saudi Arabia. When the latter actor is included it will be difficult to make decisions however. On the other hand, when Saudi Arabia is excluded it will probably disturb the relations with Bahrain, and Bahrain cannot survive without that support. Therefore Saudi Arabia either has to be convinced in advance of the whole process, or it should be included in the process.

³³⁷ Advisory Council on International Affairs (2012). De Arabische region, een onzekere toekomst [online]. Cited August 11, 2012. <http://www.aiv-advies.nl/> p.30

7. Conclusion and recommendations

After all data is presented it is possible to answer the (sub)research question(s), to reflect on the research goals and on this research and give recommendations for further research. That will be discussed in this order below.

7.1 Research goal 1: understanding Bahrain

The answers to the research sub questions were found in chapters five and six, and these form the answer to the main research question as well. Therefore they form the results of the first research goal; the empirical goal to understand the causes of conflict in Bahrain and their resolution. To repeat, the sub research questions were :

1. *What are the causes of the uprising in Bahrain in February 2011?*
2. *Which causes of conflict in Bahrain have been addressed by international actors, the Netherlands in particular?*

The main research question combines these results:

What caused the uprising in Bahrain in February 2011 and how have these causes been addressed by the international community, the Netherlands in particular?

In Bahrain, it appeared that the root causes were not the main topic of interest: the respondents were thinking ahead. However, the root cause approach can certainly add value as was shown in this research. The causes appeared to be complicated and mixed together, and provide opportunities for conflict resolution. Most theories were proven, by combining literature, interviews and observations.

Political causes

The main cause of conflict was political discontent: this cause was named the most by the respondents. The theories of Hegre et al. (2001) were proven, meaning that a situation between autocracy and democracy, which Bahrain is in, is very prone to conflict. Besides not being fully democratic, Bahrain neither is inclusive, which was proved by Reynal-Querol's theory (2004). Lastly, the process of democratization, which Bahrain has been experiencing for several decades, is also an indicator for conflict, as Mansfield and Snyder (1995) proved. Additionally the respondents named 'bad leaders' a cause of political discontent. To address the political causes, small efforts were made by the international actors interviewed. Assistance is given in reform of the judiciary by the embassy of the United States, and the ICRC has been helping to reform the military.

Socio-economic causes

Secondly, socio-economic inequality and unemployment were causes of conflict. Woodward's theory applies, there namely is high unemployment, and this is unequally spread among Shia and Sunni. Not only do Shia face more unemployment, they face economic and social inequality (in the sense of receiving goods and services from the government) as well. Additionally, a significant share of the population was disappointed in the promises for democracy in 2001 and 2002, and the fact that change did appear in other Arab Spring countries, this causing aspirational deprivation (Gurr's theory). Decremental deprivation occurred slightly, because the economic growth decreased right before the protests. However, the economic growth was not much higher before that period and therefore was no strong cause. Not any of these root causes has been addressed by the international actors spoken to, nor was anything found in the literature. This because they see the economic situation mainly as an internal problem, which Bahrain needs to address. However, as the Bahraini government did not specifically address this problem either, and embassies are also very much involved in international trade this forms an opportunity for conflict resolution.

Arab Spring

The third important cause was a direct one: the Arab Spring. The geographical proximity of the Arab Spring gave the Bahraini hope that they could achieve change (Hegre et al.2001). This cause cannot be addressed and so this was not done by any of the international actors.

Social causes

A fourth cause of conflict was the social aspect, because the ethnic heterogeneity contributed to the outbreak of protests (theory of Hegre et al.2001). While the conflict transformed, other social causes, mainly the sectarian divide between Shia and Sunni, increased in importance. However this was no cause. Remarkable therefore is that this aspect is being addressed through small projects of the British embassy. They have one project on primary and secondary schools about social acceptance, and organized an exchange with Northern-Ireland for the key figures of the Bahraini society. The United Kingdom draws a relation to the conflict in Northern-Ireland, as it has many similarities to the conflict in

Bahrain. Because much attention is paid to mutual relations between Catholics and Protestants in the Irish conflict, the United Kingdom mainly pays attention to the social aspect in Bahrain as well.

Special date and the family law

The exact date of the outbreak of the conflict, February 14th 2011, was determined by the events on that day nine and ten years ago; the National Action Charter and the constitution. This direct cause can neither be addressed by the international community.

The political discussions about the family law, and the ideas of Shia leaders about including Iranian leaders in these decisions, caused political agitation right before February 14th. This cause was also not addressed by the international actors spoken to.

In the end the main cause relates to the different position of Shia and Sunni in the society. Most people framed this in the political viewpoint, and in the end, the political system laid down the 'rules' for this inequality: underrepresentation in the government, which is why the Shia cannot profoundly step up for their own rights, and therefore not change their position. The inferior position of Shia has been created decades ago. Since the 1930s approximately the same protests as those present now were simmering in Bahrain, erupting about every decade. In February 2011, it was nine, ten years ago that the king had made structural reforms which were not completely lived up to; the Arab Spring was roaming through the region; and the family law caused political turbulence, especially seen the influence of Iran. These factors explain why the protests started on February 14th, 2011.

Addressing the causes

The causes have mostly not been addressed directly. That not only depends on paying attention to these causes, but also on other aspects. The first aspect is who the right actor for these activities is (mostly the Bahraini government, according to the government itself and the international actors); the second aspect is the agenda of the international community; and the last aspect is whether the Bahraini government wants the recommended political change. Despite the lack of the causes being addressed, Bahrain is certainly not left abandoned by the international actors. There are more forms of assistance given to Bahrain to help overcome the conflict. Kuwait has helped to come to an overall solution in the first months of the conflict, but unfortunately failed. The BICI commission has caused structural reforms in parts of the government and security sector, which is aimed to prevent human rights violations in the future. On the diplomatic level a lot is done, probably by all international actors spoken to, and certainly, as was proven, by the Netherlands. Through bilateral and multilateral contacts (through the EU) they pressured the Bahraini government to pursue political reform, and they base their policy on reliable information.

The fact that a problem is being addressed which was no root cause, shows that the root cause approach is not always followed up. The embassy of the United Kingdom addressed a problem which was no root cause, but occurred due to the transformation of conflict. This was probably done because the British embassy saw its added value in this field, because of their experience with social issues. As well as the Netherlands, they will look from their own perspective and look at their strengths with which they can help another country.

The fact that the social issue gained importance during the conflict also shows that the root cause approach does not provide for solving all problems. Problems that occurred during the conflict are not being addressed, which is a weakness of the approach. The root cause approach can probably be seen as a first step: go back to where it went wrong and solve that, but additional means might be required. These means will especially be needed when a conflict is long lasting, since the influence of leaders and media can then add to the problems.

7.2 Research goal 2: improving theories

By applying the chosen theories to the case of Bahrain, much was learned, not only about Bahrain, but about the theories as well. The circumstances are specific to Bahrain, but can to some extent certainly be helpful for other conflict areas.

Theories that apply to Bahrain

This research proved that in the case of Bahrain, the indicators for conflict were: a political system that is partially autocratic and partially democratic (theory of Hegre et al. 2001); a non-inclusive political system (Reynal-Querol 2004); political change (Mansfield and Snyder 1995); bad leaders (Allen 1999); false promises, leading to aspirational deprivation (Gurr 1970); unemployment (Woodward 2002); ethnic heterogeneity (Hegre et al. 2001); the proximity of conflicts in the region (Hegre et al. 2001 and Brown 1996); the family law (named by the respondents); and a special date that is politically sensitive (found by the researcher and respondents).

The theories naming these causes are therefore very important, and this research again proved this. Almost all causes could be indicators for conflict in areas out of Bahrain as well. The only exception could be the family law issue, as this was specific for Bahrain. However if one looks further, it could be stated that political tension about a new law could be a cause of conflict; and that searching for international assistance for national issues could be a cause as well. In this light even this cause could be applied to other cases. Therefore in case one or more of the named indicators are occurring in a country, this means a threat to peace. The term 'a threat to peace' is used on purpose: although conflict occurred in Bahrain, it is not proven that in every case where these indicators arise, conflict will erupt. Further research will be needed to study if conflict arises in every case where these indicators are present. The results of this research do show that when one or more of these issues arise, the risk on conflict increases. It is true in all probability, though not proven, that the more indicators are present, the higher the chance on conflict. One cause for discontent will probably be understood by a countries' population, however if a lot is 'wrong' in their eyes, they will be more willing to do something about it in either the peaceful or violent way. In Bahrain it was not only the political cause; nor was it only the deprivation or unemployment; but it was the accumulation of all these factors that led to the conflict. When one or more of these indicators arise in a region, attention should therefore be paid to these issues, and preferably action to be taken to prevent conflict. In Bahrain, conflict prevention was not visible from the outside, but after the protests evolved, there was interest to intervene .

Theories proved false in Bahrain

Although it is important to know which theories can cause conflict, it is equally important to understand which theories proved false in the case of Bahrain. The circumstances that were described by these two theories occurred in Bahrain, however they were not a cause of the conflict, which they should be according to the theories. These two theories will now be discussed in detail.

The circumstances under which identity can cause conflict were present, but these were not seen as causes by the respondents. Before the protests the mutual relations between Shia and Sunni were good and formed no cause. What did form a cause, and also relates to the two different groups, is that the one group was preferred over the other. However this caused frustration from the deprived group (Shia) against the government, and not against the Sunni's. The relations changed during the protests, under influence of leaders and the parties themselves. This means that the theory of Oberschall does not relate to the cause of conflict, but it describes the later stage in the case of Bahrain. Further research is needed to study whether this also is the case in other conflicts. If these social causes are no cause in other conflicts either, the theory should be changed. A possible outcome is that the theory describes factors that develop during conflicts, and therefore are no cause. Another possibility is that this situation only occurred in Bahrain but not in other conflict areas, or only in a limited number, and that the theory still can be correct.

Juergensmeyer and Stern were not right that the cause of conflict is religion in Bahrain. The aspect of religion only applies to the most religious parts of society and not the society in general, and therefore has only limited value here. This important new insight could help understanding other conflicts. It shows that a difference in religion does not have to be a determinant of conflict. This also relates to Huntington's thesis about the clash of civilizations, which states that the future conflicts will be between these civilizations. Although Huntington does not frame this as a determinant, he does attach a lot of value to religion as a cause of conflict: "*civilizations are differentiated from each other by history, language, culture, tradition, and, most important, religion*"³³⁸. Huntington claims the most intense and wide conflicts will be between these civilizations (Islam is one civilization), but also within these³³⁹. This last claim therefore does not apply to Bahrain, which opens up further discussion about the theory. However again this is beyond the scope of this research and therefore further investigation is needed because Bahrain could be an exception. However in almost every religion it is the clerics who are the most convinced, and who are mostly occupied with the difference with other religions. This was for example experienced on an interfaith dialogue course in India where all major religions were studied by the researcher. Regular believers are not very occupied with this, and seem more tolerant towards other religions. Beside the effect this has on the view on conflicts, it will also change the view on religion in general, for example in the Netherlands. When it is clear that the clerics are mainly involved in the religious struggle, the view towards the Islam could become more positive for example.

Theories that should be adapted to apply to Bahrain

Two other theories tested applied almost in full but could be adapted, namely those of Brubaker and Laitin and of Gurr.

³³⁸ Huntington, S.P. (1993). The clash of civilizations? In: Foreign Affairs 72(3). P.25.

³³⁹ Ibid p.38

Brubaker and Laitin stated that conflicts are ethnicized to gain support from the diaspora and international community. Instead of the international community, the researcher pleads to name the media, since this creates the image of the conflict; the image on which the international community subsequently bases its policy. Therefore in the first place the media is important. This research was not focused on the role of the media in the conflict of Bahrain, however, since the news was followed for more than one year, a well-based impression exists. This impression is that the media had a lot of influence on the conflict, and sometimes misrepresented the conflict. Background information is left out, and the purely violent actions are left out as well. Because both the non-violent and violent demonstrators call for democracy and suppression of the Shia, the media see their cause as valid. The media do not consider the fact that the violent youth seeks activity, but thereby spoils the conflict by using violence, increasingly aimed at the other sect. The first protests were supported by a huge part of the population, and it is clear that democracy is the best way forward. However over time, violent protests, or merely violence of youth gangs, have spoiled this movement towards democracy. Violence is not a means to accomplish democracy because it makes the government even more wary of democratic change, as they do not want to reward the violence and thereby upset the Sunni. The violent protesters therefore rather phish a solution away than drawing it closer. These violent protesters usually are adolescents and the term 'recreative rioting' comes to mind; the question is whether they are looking for 'fun' (because of unemployment) or whether they truly want democracy. Also they mainly seek attention from the media and police. There are strong rumors³⁴⁰ that these youngsters provoke the police as much as possible, and then cry out to the media when the policemen defend themselves and thereby hurt the so-called innocent Shia protesters who merely want democracy. The official of the French embassy said that in June 2012 one protest was not given attention from the police, which neither led to media attention therefore, and the protest then evaporated quickly. Therefore the theory of Brubaker and Laitin should be adapted: conflicts are not ethnicized to receive attention from the international community, but from the media. As a consequence of this, attention from the international community is also received. To prevent violent protests, it could be tried to let the police not pay attention to small 'protests'.

Gurr was very right in his theory about relative deprivation. He however mainly speaks of *economic* deprivation, whereas in Bahrain it was also, if not mainly, *political* deprivation and disappointment. Especially the promise of the National Action Charter and the new constitution had a share in the feeling of deprivation: people were disappointed in these political promises that did not happen. Additionally, there was economic deprivation going on as well. Therefore it is pleaded to incorporate both economic and political deprivation in Gurr's theory. But again, further research should first analyze whether Bahrain is the rule or the exception.

7.3 Research goal 3: improving policy

Although no overall policy was found for Bahrain, and the actors mainly focus on small projects, there is certainly room for improvement. First the recommendations for addressing the causes are made, after which some general points of attention will be reflected upon. It would be impossible to discuss all possible recommendations, which is why the focus is related to the scope of this research: neutrality of actors; political will to take action; link with military trade policy; link to general foreign policy; unity of actors; potential lead actors, and the current situation regarding conflict resolution.

There appeared some 'gaps' between the found causes and the approach of the international community. When these gaps are filled, the conflict will decrease in size and strength.

Addressing the political causes

Regarding the political cause, the international community could push harder to get the BICI recommendations fully implemented. Much progress has been made, but the claim of the opposition that these are only artificial is to some extent valid. Deeper reforms, such as greater government accountability and the national reconciliation program are not (fully) implemented, and the opposition claims this is the case for other recommendations as well, about which the facts are difficult to verify. An easy means could be to point to the international treaties that were signed by Bahrain, but that are not followed up. The best solution however would be to truly change the political system and install democracy. Chapter six already mentioned this, and stated that the international community could pressure the government and opposition parties to do this. This would mainly be a task for the United Kingdom and the United States (more on actors below). Another point of focus, when democracy is chosen, is to create awareness and understanding of what democracy is. This was suggested by Chesterman. Workshops on democracy, what it is, and what is expected from the people could be organized. This should be guided well, for example in schools, universities, through media, and perhaps by means of projects of NGOs about democracy.

³⁴⁰ Interview with the Dutch Consul, June 26, 2012

Addressing the socio-economic causes

There are a number of gaps between socio-economic causes and their resolution that can be filled. The economic growth in general should be stimulated. The best area for this would be the private sector. This at the same time can decrease the unemployment. There are already good arrangements in Bahrain, namely that loans for beginning one's own business only have to be paid once profit starts to take off, but people could be stimulated to take more advantage of this. Additionally, the international community could plead for equal access to government facilities. If the Bahraini government is right in that the access is equal, it would be a good idea to show this by bringing facts or statistics to the table.

Addressing the social causes

The social issue is gaining more and more importance. It was no root cause, but the conflict has increased the sectarian division. It is therefore good that attention is being paid to the mutual relations by the British embassy. At first sight there seem many similarities to the Northern-Ireland conflict. First of all more information would be useful to analyze to what extent this is the case, and to see what can be learned from Northern-Ireland. Then it should be further analyzed what the United Kingdom is currently exactly doing, to see how their exchange project might be expanded. For now, it can be stated that shared experience of Bahrain and Northern-Ireland seem important, because we need to learn from past mistakes, and because it is less focused on pointing to the mistakes of Bahrain. It is not the Orientalist West pointing out what should be done in Bahrain, but presented as a mutual problem of which both could learn.

Addressing the direct causes

Not all direct causes can be addressed as explained. However, extra attention could be paid to the problems when a special date is coming up, or when there is increasing unrest in the region. These are moments when the (announcement of) reforms can make the change between a peaceful course of such a day or period, or one with even more violence than is usual at that moment.

The issue of Iran is very politically sensitive, as explained before. The chance of other actors becoming involved in the relations between Iran and Bahrain is therefore small. Again additional research will be needed first, however, the impression is that when the separation of religion and politics will increase, the issue will lose its importance. If religious leaders have contact with Iranian religious leaders, that will be less of a problem than when this is related to the Bahraini politics. Accomplishing this will be very difficult though, as it means that it will have to be pointed out to the Shia religious leaders, such as Isa Qassim, that he should stick to either politics or religion. Here the question also arises whether it is a Western view to separate these two fields, or that the two can be combined in another way as well. Not enough information on this is yet available and further research will therefore be required.

General recommendations

Now some general comments will be made on how to approach Bahrain. As mentioned before, the respondents were mainly looking forward and were therefore eager to discuss the future of Bahrain, and the threats and opportunities for conflict resolution. This part is therefore mainly based on the conversations (interviews and observations) with the local people; experts; and international actors, combined with own insight.

What will be important for future policy regarding Bahrain is to not choose sides, as one then will be rejected by the other party. This was not the case in Bahrain up to now, but in other Arab Spring countries this did happen.

The Bahraini government should not be abandoned, because it has the power, and the current relations with the international community are good, especially on the economic level. Therefore it is also in the interest of the international actors to support this actor. And, as explained before, the current government has all knowledge of Bahrain, and the leaders could become spoilers if they are abandoned. That is why the Bahraini government needs to be involved. Because huge changes are required to create sustainable peace, and international intervention is often unwanted, the Bahraini government should be the lead actor in any resolution.

On the other hand, the democracy movement should not be abandoned either. The international actors could support the government as lead actor by delivering clear recommendations on what works, as was shown in this research, and so thereby support this movement. A second suggestion is to get more involved in the negotiation process. A first step would be a dialogue between the partners to make a decision on which track to take. Such a dialogue was present since the start of the conflict, which is very good and shows goodwill from all sides. Nothing came out of that however, which is why international support might make the change instead. International actors can pressure Al-Wefaq to stay within the dialogue, and pressure the regime to create true change; not merely cosmetic. After and during these

negotiations, a plan as suggested by Roberts, Mansfield and Snyder (1995) should be developed by these actors. Again the international community could assist in this.

The question then arising is whether the international community will take action. The feeling that arose from each interview and observation was positive: people were very concerned about Bahrain. Although no actor saw a direct solution without true democratization, they did want to see such a change. Also the effort of the international actors discussed above shows their will for change. However there are always other concerns attached, for example economic trade, military trade, and the conflicts in the region in which the countries are involved. The economic trade however could even help Bahrain, as was shown above. This certainly does not exclude the political solution; it might even catalyze towards political change.

However, the military support of the West was very controversial and gained much media attention as stated before. After a lobby from NGOs the Dutch government has agreed to change the policy of military export. The implementation of the plans is doubted however³⁴¹. Of course, it would be strange to both have military support from the West and pushing for solutions at the same time. However some nuances should be made in this, which shows that the issue might be not as important as it seems. Military support can also include radars and other non-violent techniques for example, as was suggested by an officer of the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation³⁴². Secondly, he made the argument of the alternative: if not teargas is being delivered by the international community, what will they shift to, bullets? Probably they will not search for milder alternatives, but only tougher ones. Additionally, the weapons the Bahraini government wants will still be available through other channels, such as China or Russia for example, or from the conflicts in the region. A possible embargo of the West would therefore not change much. The chances for such an embargo are also low, because it concerns different departments of governments. For the Netherlands it is divided among two ministries, and during the internship at the Netherlands embassy it was experienced that coordination between Ministries is not very strong, to say the least. In practice the Ministry of Defense will be concerned with military trade, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with the diplomatic assistance to resolve the conflict. Fact remains that it is hypocritical to support both the conflict (through military trade) and its solution, and that it would make a strong signal to stop the military trade.

Daily Tribune June 25, 2012
Source: *Jacqueline van Dooren*



Of course policy regarding Bahrain also depends on other influences beside goodwill. The United States are currently very active in the region, which decreases the chance for another project in the same region, as long as it is not necessary to intervene. As was seen, the Netherlands have clear policy guidelines and if Bahrain would not fit in such policy of a country, the chance for political action is small. As the main cause, the political system, is seen as an internal factor by the international community it does not see itself as the main actor to address the cause. The Bahraini government, at least the king, agrees on this as could be seen on the front page of the Daily Tribune of June 25th, 2012. The other motive of the international community is that it was fully occupied with bigger conflicts in the region, like Syria and Libya. This is understandable, but as said, Bahrain is important, and when conflict mediation and resolution is successful here, it could be an extra stimulant for the other conflicts too. These are factors that are part of the political arena, extremely difficult to deal with. This research might help in giving clear indicators and stressing the importance of assisting Bahrain.

Another remark is that the problem of unity of actors can arise. All Bahraini want to solve their problems, but their approach causes discussion, if not more conflict. The international community does not form one block that agrees on solutions that would work for Bahrain. Saudi Arabia has a strong influence but will not be fond of

a democratic Bahrain, fearing its own Shia minority. However, its role will be crucial to achieve and sustain peace. Kuwait might be willing to assist but will also be dependent on Saudi Arabia. This is therefore a key actor that should be convinced to join in the process. As mentioned, the West is also not one block: the United States might have different views on what to do than European countries, and the European countries also often have different views. Coordination of assistance will be therefore be needed: one or a limited number of actors should take the lead.

³⁴¹ Campagne tegen Wapenhandel (2012). Kritische analyse Nederlands Wapenexportbeleid gepubliceerd [online]. Cited August 3, 2012. <http://www.stopwapenhandel.org/node/1254>

³⁴² Interview with an officer of the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation, January 27th, 2012.

Countries that would be suitable to take the lead in dealing with Bahrain should be countries that have close ties with the country, such as the United States and the United Kingdom, as they maintain military interests and colonial relations with Bahrain. To make it a regional owned process Kuwait, and perhaps Saudi Arabia could be included. When the latter actor is included it will be difficult to make decisions however. On the other hand, when Saudi Arabia is excluded it will disturb its relations with Bahrain probably, and Bahrain cannot survive without that. Therefore Saudi Arabia either has to be convinced of the whole process in advance, or it should be included in the process.

But as appeared, it all mainly depends on Bahrain's own efforts. The current situation does not look good to address the causes: there is a political deadlock since March 2012 (officially since June 2011). There is no 'event' or special date coming up, and almost everybody seems to be comfortable with this stalemate. The protests are ongoing, but are limited to villages. The Sunni people are uncomfortable with more reforms towards the Shia and so support the status quo. The Shia have been and are being silenced with small reforms. Nobody is satisfied, but nobody is extremely furious anymore, and the government seems not able to move in any direction to change this situation without causing more protests. The crown prince seems to be very modern and to support political change. He has already tried conflict mediation, and seems to be the only actor in a high-levelled function that could and would intervene. His position could be supported by the international community.

7.4 Recommendations for further research

As this research was a first scientific research on the root causes, it encountered many other issues that can be studied in the future. Some of these recommendations would have been useful for this research, such as including the embassies of Saudi Arabia and Iran; youth bulges and youth unemployment; exploring the factor Iran and religion more in-depth; and including the resource curse, although this last issue did not come up in the interviews. This research really was a first step: much more is needed to understand Bahrain and give more and better recommendations on how to solve the conflict.

The role of the media would be important to study more thoroughly. The media provide a one-sided story and it is not clear how they get their information, because Bahrain is very closed off to foreigners who want to analyze the conflict. It is important to study this as it creates the image of the conflict with the general public, and actors who make policy on Bahrain. The Netherlands also bases its policy on its own research, however, as many NGOs cannot enter the country they cannot do the same, and are depending on the media. This might lead to misinformed policy, addressing the wrong aspects, or leaving issues unaddressed. It is important to study this on a short term to prevent such mistakes.

Also the separation between religion and politics is an interesting topic, as some (Sunni oriented) actors say that religion and Iran have major influence on the Shia. If there indeed is a limited separation between the fields, the international community could help in changing this, as they have experienced this in the past themselves. The right actors for this would be local researchers from the region, since those are more familiar with Islam and the separation of religion and politics. On the other hand Bahraini researchers could be placed in either the Shia or Sunni box and could therefore miss information.

It would equally be interesting to do a more in-depth study on the factor of identity, and the stimulation of this identity in other conflict areas. Perhaps it should be studied whether the struggle over identity is the cause in other cases of conflict as well, since many conflicts are framed in terms of identity. Because it was proven for Bahrain that it certainly does not have to be a cause, this could be the same for other conflicts. This would require an in-depth study on several conflict areas. Also, the UN was the only actor mentioning that the Shia could have their own reasons to stimulate people's identity; which was in order to mobilize people. This reasoning has been proven for the Sunni side (the government prefers to see the Shia against them, rather than both Shia and Sunni), but not for the Shia side.

Generally, much has been learned from this research. As the research was developing, it appeared that each cause was important and interesting to study thoroughly. Choices had to be made to make a delineated, clear research that could be studied in the time available. Since many demarcations were made, the research has resulted in many recommendations for further research. Bahrain is a topic rather unexplored which gives many opportunities for further important research, and this research was a first step in the exploration of the topic. As so many causes were important, and the conflict still has not ended, it occurred to the researcher once again that the more you learn, the less you know.

Literature

Advisory Council on International Affairs (2012). De Arabische region, een onzekere toekomst [online]. Cited August 11, 2012. <http://www.aiv-advies.nl/>

Al Jazeera (2012). Clashes in Bahrain on protests anniversary [online]. Cited June 12, 2012. <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/02/20122148441179977.html>

Al Jazeera (2011). Bahrain activists in 'Day of Rage' [online]. Cited June 14, 2011. <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2011/02/2011214925802473.html>

Bahrain 'arrests rights lawyer and doctors' [online]. Cited June 15, 2011. <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2011/04/20114161822138150.html>

Bahrain's king orders end to emergency rule [online]. Cited June 14, 2011. <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2011/05/2011581342480276.html>

Bahrain sentences protesters to death [online]. Cited June 15, 2011. <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2011/04/201142881322769709.html>

Saudi Arabia's intervention in Bahrain [online]. Cited May 23, 2011. <http://english.aljazeera.net/programmes/insidestory/2011/03/2011316105616297611.html>

Shouting in the dark [online]. Cited August 4, 2011. <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/2011/08/201184144547798162.html>

Allen, C. (1999). Warfare, endemic violence and state collapse in Africa. In: Review of African Political Economy, 26 (81), p.381

Amnesty International (2011). Stop U.S. arms sales to Bahrain [online]. Cited December 28, 2011. <http://takeaction.amnestyusa.org/siteapps/advocacy/ActionItem.aspx?c=6oJCLQPAJiJUG&b=6645049&aid=516688&msource=W1210EAMNA1&tr=y&aid=9765100>

Anderson, L. (2011). Demystifying the Arab Spring – parsing the differences between Tunisia, Egypt and Libya. In: Foreign Affairs 90 (2). Cited May 2nd, 2012. <http://www.ssresourcecentre.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/Anderson-Demystifying-the-Arab-Spring.pdf>

Bahrain Center for Human Rights (2012). List of people killed in Bahrain since 14th February 2011 [online]. Cited July 5th, 2012. <http://bahrainrights.org/en/node/3864>

Bahrain Embassy to Japan http://www.bahrain-embassy.or.jp/en/?page_id=14

Bahrain Human Rights Monitor (2012). Reactions of Civil and Political Societies to Bassiouni's Report [online]. Cited June 14, 2012. <http://www.bahrainmonitor.org/civil/v-034-01.html>

Bahrain Independent Commission for Inquiry (2011). Report of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry.

Bahrain Minister of Oil and Gas (2011). Diversification of Bahrain's economy [online]. Cited May 19, 2012. <http://www.marcopolis.net/diversification-of-bahrains-economy.htm>

Bahrain National Dialogue (2011). About the National Dialogue [online]. Cited June 17, 2011. <http://www.nd.bh/en/>

Bahrain News Agency (2012). Exemplary Bahraini-Saudi ties praised [online]. Cited February 16, 2012. <http://www.bna.bh/portal/en/news/492412>

Bahrain News Agency (2011). HM King Hamad Receives BICI's Report and Delivers a Keynote Speech [online]. Cited December 28, 2011. <http://www.bna.bh/portal/en/news/481652>

Bahraini Census 2010 (2010). General Tables [online]. Cited December 23, 2011. http://www.census2010.gov.bh/results_en.php

Bahrain Center for Human Rights (2011). Religious Freedom for Shia in Bahrain : "Systematic Oppression and Marginalization" [online]. Cited May 26, 2011. <http://www.bahrainrights.org/node/1442>

Baron, S.W. (2003). Self-Control, Social Consequences, and Criminal Behavior: Street Youth and the General Theory of Crime. In: Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency 40 (4). P.403-425.

BBC (2011). Bahrain Profile [online]. Cited June 12, 2011. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/country_profiles/790690.stm

Besancon, M.L. (2005). 'Relative resources: inequality in ethnic wars, revolutions and genocide'. In: *Journal of Peace Research*, 42 (4).

Big Think (2011). Pearl Square: the new Tahrir Square? [online]. Cited August 9, 2012. <http://bigthink.com/think-tank/pearl-square-the-new-tahrir-square>

Bjorgo 'root causes of terrorism' p.3 [http://books.google.nl/books?hl=nl&lr=&id=mIUp866 - AUC&oi=fnd&pg=PA1&dq=root+causes+conflict&ots=vvE8ZAIR2d&sig=fSuzGfqMb3AdrEN_Uaa980yCgo#c#v=onepage&q=counterpart&f=false](http://books.google.nl/books?hl=nl&lr=&id=mIUp866-AUC&oi=fnd&pg=PA1&dq=root+causes+conflict&ots=vvE8ZAIR2d&sig=fSuzGfqMb3AdrEN_Uaa980yCgo#c#v=onepage&q=counterpart&f=false)

Brubaker, R. and D.D. Laitin (1998). Ethnic and nationalist violence. In: *Annual Review of Sociology*, 24 p.425.

Bushra, S. (2011). Supporting Bahraini Apartheid is not in America's interest [online]. In: *Stanford Progressive*, June 2011. Cited May 2, 2012. <http://www.stanford.edu/group/progressive/cgi-bin/?p=1673>

Carothers, T. (2007). The sequency fallacy. In: *Journal of Democracy* 18 (1) p.13

Central Intelligence Agency (2012). The World Factbook: Bahrain [online]. Cited May 22, 2012. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ba.html>

Chesterman, S. (2004). Justice and reconciliation: the rule of law in post-conflict territories. In: *You the people: the United Nations, transitional administration and state-building*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. P.181.

Cleary, M.R. (2011). Democracy and Indigenous Rebellion in Latin America. In: *Comparative Political Studies* 2000 33: 1123

Collier, P. (2000). Doing well out of war: an economic perspective. In: *Greed and Grievance: economic agenda's in civil wars*, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers. P.12.

Collier, P. and A. Hoeffler (2000). Greed and Grievance in civil war. World Bank policy research paper 2355, p.26.

The Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (2012). Foundations and objectives [online]. Cited February 14, 2012. <http://www.gcc-sg.org/eng/index895b.html?action=Sec-Show&ID=3>

Cottrell. A.J. (1980). *The Persian Gulf States*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, p.167

Cramer, C. (2006) Chapter two, 'Categories trends and evidence of violent conflict. In: *Civil war is not a stupid thing: accounting for violence in developing countries*. London: Hurst & Company. P.59-62

De Standaard (2011). Sjiïetische oppositie gaat partiële verkiezingen in Bahrein boycotten. [online]. Cited June 29, 2011. http://www.standaard.be/artikel/detail.aspx?artikelid=DMF20110813_007

De Tocqueville in Hegre, H., T. Ellinsen, S. Gates & N.P. Gleditsch (2001). Toward a democratic civil peace? Democracy, political change and civil war 1816-1992. In: *The American Political Science Review* 95 (1) p.34

Di John, J. (2008). Conceptualising the causes and consequences of failed states: a critical review of the literature. LSE: Crisis states research center, Working Paper 25, p.2-3

Discovering Islam (2012). Shia's Imams [online]. Cited June 22, 2012. http://www.discoveringislam.org/shia_imams.htm

The Economist (2011). Bloodshed in Bahrain: A Gulf state that is an odd man out [online]. Cited June 2011. <http://www.economist.com/node/18187110>

Education International (2012). Bahrain: BTA court case postponed for fourth time to 30 May [online]. Cited July 5th, 2012. http://www.ei-ie.org/en/news/news_details/2154

Election Guide (2011). Country profile: Bahrain [online]. Cited June 2nd, 2012. <http://electionguide.org/country.php?ID=18>

Elsevier (2011). Iran veroordeelt geweld tegen betogers in Bahrein [online]. Cited August 1, 2011. <http://www.elsevier.nl/web/Nieuws/Buitenland/291864/Iran-veroordeelt-geweld-tegen-betogers-in-Bahrein.htm?rss=true>

Europe 1 (2011). D'où vient la "révolution du jasmin" ? [online]. Cited June 9th, 2011. <http://www.europe1.fr/International/D-ou-vient-la-revolution-du-jasmin-375743/>

European Union (2012). The EU & The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) [online]. Cited July 5th, 2012. http://eeas.europa.eu/gulf_cooperation/index_en.htm

Europees Parlement (2011). Human rights resolutions: Tibet, Bahrain, Syria [online]. Cited December 28, 2011. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/nl/pressroom/content/20111026IPR30422/html/Human-rights-resolutions-Tibet-Bahrain-Syria>

Formula 1 (2011). Bahrain 2011 reinstated, as India becomes season finale [online]. Cited December 22, 2011. <http://www.formula1.com/news/headlines/2011/6/12132.html>

Fukuyama, F. (2011). Op de rug van het verleden. In: IS magazine 6, p.36.

Gengler, J. (2011). Ethnic conflict and political mobilization in Bahrain and the Arab Gulf. University of Michigan. P.61

The Guardian (2012). Bahrain police battle biggest protests in weeks [online]. Cited June 14, 2012. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/jun/08/bahrain-police-battle-protest>

The Guardian (2011). Algerian riots resume over food prices [online]. Cited June 13, 2011. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/jan/07/algeria-riots-food-prices>

Arab spring: an interactive timeline of Middle East protests [online].
Cited June 13, 2011.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/interactive/2011/mar/22/middle-east-protest-interactive-timeline>

Arrests and deaths as Egypt protest spreads across Middle East [online].
Cited June 15, 2011.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/feb/14/middle-east-iran-bahrain-yemen>237-271.

Bahrain's king orders investigation into human rights abuses at protests

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/jun/29/bahrain-king-human-rights-protests>

Bahrain puts medical staff on trial for treating injured protesters [online].
Cited June 16, 2011.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/jun/06/bahrain-puts-medics-on-trial>

Unrest in the Middle East – Monday 14 February [online]. Cited June 4th, 2012.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/blog/2011/feb/14/middleeast-unrest>

US embassy cables: Bahrain's relations with Iran

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/us-embassy-cables-documents/164906>

The path of protest

Tunisian president vows to punish rioters after worst unrest in a decade

Gulfnews.com (2011). Bahrain renames former Pearl Roundabout [online]. Cited March 19, 2012. <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/bahrain/bahrain-renames-former-pearl-roundabout-1.814302>

Gurr, T.R. (1970). Relative deprivation and the impetus to violence. In: Why men rebel. Princeton: Princeton University Press. P.23.

Harrigan, J. (2011). Did food prices plant the seeds of the Arab Spring? [online]. Cited May 2nd, 2012. http://fsaw2012.ifpri.info/files/2012/01/Abstract_JaneHarrigan_DidFoodPricesPlanttheSeedsoftheArabSpring.pdf

Hegre, H., T. Ellinsen, S. Gates & N.P. Gleditsch (2001). Toward a democratic civil peace? Democracy, political change and civil war 1816-1992. In: The American Political Science Review 95 (1)

The Hindu (2011). Bahrain's Pearl Square becomes the new Tahrir [online]. Cited August 9, 2012. <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/article1460435.ece>

Horowitz, D. (2004). *Some realism about constitutional engineering*. In: Andreas Wimmer et al., *Facing ethnic conflicts: toward a new realism*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Lanham, p.256.

Ianchovichina, E., Loening, J. and C. Wood (2012). How Vulnerable Are Arab Countries to Global Food Price Shocks? P.4-9

International Crisis Group (2011). Crisiswatch, 93. Cited May 1st, 2011. [http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/CrisisWatch/2011/cw93.ashx](http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/CrisisWatch/2011/cw93.ashx)).

International Organisation for Migration (2012). Bahrain [online]. Cited February 12, 2012. <http://www.iom.int/jahia/Jahia/bahrain>

Irish Society (1995). Sociological perspectives. Institute of Public Administration: Ireland. P.643

King, J. (2011). Under foreign eyes. Hants (UK): Zero Books. P.3

Kuwait Times (2012). Bahrain sunnis warn government over dialogue at rally. February 23, 2012, p.8. Political risks to watch in Bahrain. May 1st, 2012, p.8.

Lake and Rothchild 1996:41 in Ramsbotham, O., Woodhouse, T., Miall, H. (2005). Contemporary conflict resolution. Polity Press: Cambridge, p.93-4.

Lopez-Pintor, R. (1997). *Reconciliation elections: a post-Cold War experience*. In: Krishna Kumar ed., *Rebuilding society after civil war: critical roles for international assistance*. Lynne Rienner, Boulder-London, p.44

Lyons, T. (2002). *The role of postsettlement elections*. In: Stephen John Stedman, Donald Rothchild & Elizabeth M. Cousens eds., *Ending civil wars: the implementation of peace agreements*. Lynne Rienner, Boulder-London, p.223

M. Juergensmeyer (2003). Terror in the mind of God. Berkeley: University of California Press. P.150-2

Mansfield, E.D. & J. Snyder (1995). Democratization and the danger of war. In: International Security 20 (1) p.9-15

Michael E. Brown, "The Causes and Regional Dimensions of Internal Conflict," in Michael E. Brown, ed., *The International Dimensions of Internal Conflict* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996), pp. 579-583.

The National Commission (2012). Highlights of the National commission for the BICI report recommendations [online]. Cited June 15, 2012. http://translate.google.nl/translate?sl=ar&tl=en&js=n&prev=t&hl=nl&ie=UTF-8&layout=2&eof=1&u=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.biciactions.bh%2Fwps%2Fportal%2FBICI%2F%21ut%2Fp%2Fc5%2F04_SB8K8xLLM9MSSzPy8xBz9CP0os3h_Rw9Pd3d3A3d_s1BLA8-AMGdPk1A3QwMDA6B8pFm8hYGJo6EnUN49wNEIKG_oaehiYWhsYGZlJG64vLu5JUje1cLVOcjU2MDEmlDucJBr8duOYgIW80HyBjiAo4G-n0d-bgp-QW5ohEFmQDoAWjXjBw%21%21%2FdI3%2Fd3%2FL2dJQSEvUUt3QS9ZQnZ3LzZfODA0QTFJRzBHO FZBMjBJUDVHMzIUMzAwMDc%21%2F

New York Times (2011). Bahrain's Economic Plans in Jeopardy [online]. Cited May 22, 2011. <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/24/world/middleeast/24iht-m24bfinancial.html>

Niblock, T. (1980). Social and economic development in the Arab Gulf. Croom Helm: London, p.74.

NOS (2012). VS hervat leveranties aan Bahrein [online]. Cited May 22, 2011. <http://nos.nl/artikel/372301-vs-hervat-leveranties-aan-bahrein.html>

Grote demonstratie in Bahrain [online]. Cited June 14, 2012. <http://nos.nl/artikel/374469-grote-demonstratie-in-bahrein.html>

NRC Handelsblad (2012). Protesten en arrestaties in Bahrein in aanloop naar Grand Prix [online]. Cited June 14, 2012. <http://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2012/04/19/protesten-en-arrestaties-in-bahrein-in-aanloop-naar-grand-prix/>

NU.nl (2011). Sjieten lopen weg uit overleg Bahrein [online]. Cited June 29, 2011. <http://www.nu.nl/onrust-midden-oosten/2563725/sjieten-lopen-weg-overleg-bahrein.html>

Oberschall, A. (2000). The manipulation of ethnicity: from ethnic cooperation to violence and war in Yugoslavia. In: *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 23 (6), p.982-4.

Paris, R. (2004). *At War's End: Building Peace after Civil Conflict*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 188.

Polachek, S.W. (1980). Conflict and Trade. In: *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 24 (55), P.60.

Putnam, T.L. (2002). Human rights and sustainable peace. In: Stephen J. Stedman et al. *Ending civil wars: the implementation of peace agreements*. Boulder-London: Lynne Rienner.

Ramsbotham, O., Woodhouse, T., Miall, H. (2005). *Contemporary conflict resolution*. Polity Press: Cambridge,

Reformatorisch Dagblad (2011). *Confrontatie Iran en golfstaten lijkt kwestie van tijd* [online]. Cited May 23, 2011.

http://www.refdag.nl/nieuws/buitenland/confrontatie_iran_en_golfstaten_lijk_kwestie_van_tijd_1_565201

Reporters Without Borders (2012). Bahrain [online]. Cited March 19, 2012. <http://en.rsf.org/bahrain-12-03-2012,42055.html>

Reuters (2012). Bahrain forces patrol capital on revolt anniversary [online]. Cited June 12, 2012. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/02/14/us-bahrain-protests-anniversary-idUSTRE81D0J220120214>

Bahraini police break up protest, deport U.S. activists [online]. Cited June 15, 2012.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/02/11/us-bahrain-protest-idUSTRE81A0EY20120211>

Bahrain king dismisses opposition as disunited [online]. Cited 13 February 2012.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/02/12/us-bahrain-king-opposition-idUSTRE81B0CV20120212>

Reynal-Querol, M. (2004). Does democracy pre-empt civil wars? In: *European Journal of Political Economy* 21, p.446

Roberts, D. (2009). Hybrid polities and indigenous pluralities: advanced lessons in statebuilding from Cambodia. In: *Statebuilding and Interventions: policies, practices, and paradigms*. London-New York: Routledge. P.179

Rothchild, D. (2002). Settlement terms and postagreement stability. In: *Ending civil wars: the implementation of peace agreements*. Boulder-London: Lynne Rienner. P.117-9.

SAMIRAD (2011). King Fahd Causeway (Bahrain Causeway) [online]. Cited May 23, 2011 <http://www.saudinf.com/main/g13.htm>

Säve-Söderbergh, B. & I.N. Lennartsson (2002). *Electoral assistance and democratization*. In: Fen Osler Hampson & David M. Malone eds., *From reaction to conflict prevention: opportunities for the UN system*. Lynne Rienner, Boulder-London, p.365

Schock, K. (1996). A conjunctural model of political conflict: the impact of political opportunities on the relationship between economic inequality and violent political conflict. In: *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 40 (1), p.116-8.

Shatz, A. (2011). Whose Egypt?. [online]. Cited February 16, 2012. <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v34/n01/adam-shatz/whose-egypt>

Siedschlag, A. (2001). *Political institutionalization and conflict management in the new Europe – path-shaping for the better or worse?* Berlin: Humboldt University Berlin.

Sisk, T.D. (2003). Power-sharing after civil wars: matching problems to solutions. In: John Darby & Rogert Mac Ginty eds., Contemporary peacemaking: conflict, violence and peace processes. Palgrave: Houndmills-New York p.149.

Stern, J. (2003). Terror in the name of God - Why Religious Militants Kill. New York: HarperCollins Publishers. p.282

Stewart, F. (2002). Horizontal Inequalities: A Neglected Dimension of Development [online]. Cited April 27, 2012. <http://www3.qeh.ox.ac.uk/pdf/qehwp/qehwps81.pdf>

Strobl p.25

The Sunday Times (2011). For Bahraini Shi'ites, a long trudge to equality [online]. Cited May 23, 2011. http://sundaytimes.lk/110227/Timestwo/t2_17.html

U.S. Department of State (2012). Background note: Bahrain [online]. Cited May 31, 2012. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/26414.htm>

U.S. Department of State (2011). 2010 Human rights report: Bahrain [online]. Cited June 1st, 2011. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2010/nea/154459.htm> p.16-17

United Nations Security Council (2001). No exit without strategy: security council decision-making and the closure or transition of United Nations peacekeeping operations. Report of the Secretary General, UN s/2001/391, New York, p2

United Nations Treaty Collection (2011). United Nations Treaty Series Online Collection [online]. Cited December 22, 2011. <http://treaties.un.org/Pages/UNTSONline.aspx?id=3>

U.S. Department of State (2012). Background note: Bahrain [online]. Cited May 31, 2012. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/26414.htm>

Verlinden, P. (2000). Oman en de emiraten aan de Golf. KIT Publishers: Amsterdam. P. 6

Verschuren, P. and H. Doorewaard (2007). Het ontwerpen van een onderzoek. Den Haag: Lemma. P. 183.

Villa van Staden (2012) Cited June 12, 2012. <http://www.villavanstaden.nl/route1.html>.

Washington Post (2011). Bahrain's Pearl Statue is gone, but it remains an icon of democracy [online]. Cited February 16, 2012. http://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/bahrains-pearl-statue-is-gone-but-it-remains-an-icon-of-democracy/2011/05/10/AFKcnh2G_story.html

Woodward, S. (2002). Economic Priorities For Peace Implementation. In: IPA Policy Paper Series on Peace Implementation, P.5-6

WP Clipart (2012). Cited June 12, 2012. http://www.wpclipart.com/education/supplies/paper/notepad_page.png.html

Attachments

1. List of interview and observation respondents
2. Interview and observation guide

1. List of interview respondents

Category of respondents:	Function/Organization:	Name, if possible:
Government of The Netherlands	Dutch Ambassador to Bahrain (located in Kuwait)	Dr. Ton Boon von Ochssée
	Dutch Consul to Bahrain	Mr. Jaap Vaandrager
	Official at the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation	X
	Official at the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs dealing with human rights	X
Government of countries active in Bahrain	French Embassy to Bahrain	X
	British Embassy to Bahrain	X
	USA Embassy to Bahrain	X
	German Embassy to Bahrain	X
International NGOs	The United Nations Mission in Bahrain	Peter Grohmann
	The International Committee of the Red Cross	Gérard Peytrignet
	Human Rights Watch	Joe Stork
Local NGOs	NGO X	X
	National Union Gathering	Sheikh Abdullatif Al-Mahmood
	The Bahrain Youth Society for Human Rights	Vice-President and others
	The Bahrain Human Rights Watch Society	Salman Nasser
Researchers	Royal United Service Institute	David Roberts
	Royal United Service Institute	Michael Stephens
	Qatar University	Justin Gengler
Observations	Ministry of Foreign Affairs Bahrain	Dr. Dhafer Al Umran
	Negotiator on behalf of Kuwait	Ali Al-Matrook
	Bahrain Human Rights Society	X
	Al-Wefaq	Ali Salman
	Citizen (Salmaniya doctor)	X
	Citizen (entrepreneur)	X
	Citizen	X
	Minsiter of State	
	Conference at Clingendael	Abdulahdi Khalaf – Ala'a al-Shehabi Mohammed Mattar – Hala Kindelberger – Omar Mahmood Mohamed – Luciano Zaccara
	Gulf Studies Conference at Exeter University	

2. Interview and observation guide

1. Introduction of myself and research
2. Introduction of the interviewee

Easy questions to start up and make them feel comfortable

- Can you describe the relations between your country/organization and Bahrain? What is the focus of your policy?
- What are recent projects?

3. Causes

- What are the causes of the protests?
- Direct causes?
 - Arab Spring
 - Economic crisis 2008
 - Special date

- Indirect causes?

- Social

To keep in mind: shia-sunni position (politically and economically), relations between shia-sunni and changes in this, migrants?

- Economic

To keep in mind: unemployment, inequality, characteristics of Bahraini economy

- Politics

To keep in mind: access to high positions, political system and inclusion, leaders unwilling to share power, leaders stimulate ethnicity.

4. Addressing the causes

- What did you do since February 2011, related to the protest?