

# BAHRAIN in Perspective

## An Orientation Guide



Technology Integration Division  
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DEFENSE LANGUAGE  
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## CHAPTER 1: GEOGRAPHY

### Introduction

The nation of Bahrain—about 3.5 times the size of Washington, D.C.—is an archipelago of 36 islands.<sup>1, 2</sup> Bahrain Island is the largest, constituting about 87% of the country’s land area.<sup>3</sup> Two of the other largest islands—Muharraq and Sitra—are connected via causeways to Bahrain Island, and the three islands together are home to the majority of the Bahraini population. To the southeast, near the eastern coast of Qatar, are the Hawar Islands, which were awarded to Bahrain in 2001 in an international settlement of a long-standing land dispute. These islands are nearly uninhabited, but it is believed that they possibly hold petroleum and natural gas reserves.<sup>4</sup>



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Trading boats and modern tower

Bahrain, the Middle East’s smallest nation by area, has long had an outsized role in the region’s historical events because of its tradition as a trading center on the Persian Gulf.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, “Bahrain: Geography,” in *The World Factbook*, 7 January 2013, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ba.html>

<sup>2</sup> Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State, “Background Note: Bahrain,” 28 August 2012, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/26414.htm>

<sup>3</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica*, “Bahrain: Land,” 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/49072/Bahrain>

<sup>4</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica*, “Bahrain: Land,” 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/49072/Bahrain>

<sup>5</sup> Jane Kinninmont, “Bahrain’s Re-Reform Movement,” *Foreign Affairs*, 28 February 2011, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/67553/jane-kinninmont/bahrain-s-re-reform-movement?page=show>

## Geographic Regions and Topographic Features

Apart from Bahrain Island, the islands of Bahrain are rocky and flat. The terrain on Bahrain Island includes a generally north–south-trending central plateau dotted with isolated hills that rise to 134 m (440 ft) at Jebel al-Dukhan (“Mountain of Smoke”), the nation’s highest point of land. (Several human-made structures in Manama are significantly taller than Jebel al-Dukhan.) The land surrounding the central plateau dips away in all directions, forming an interior basin around the plateau, before rising modestly to form an asymmetrical low ridge ringing the central plateau and the interior basin.<sup>6, 7</sup>



© Miss Copenhagen / flickr.com  
Plateau and mountains

Finally, a low-lying coastal plain of maximum elevation 10 m (33 ft) encircles this plateau-basin-ridge structure on all sides.<sup>8</sup> Salt marshes (also known as *sabkhas*) flank the southern and southwestern sides of the coastal plain.<sup>9, 10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Saeed A. Mohamed, “Bahrain,” Ramsar Sites Information Service, n.d., <http://ramsar.wetlands.org/Portals/15/BAHRAIN.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Sadelmelik, “Topographic Map of Bahrain. Created with GMT from Public Domain SRTM Data,” 8 July 2007, <http://www.worldofmaps.net/uploads/pics/topographie-bahrain.png>

<sup>8</sup> Saeed A. Mohamed, “Bahrain,” Ramsar Sites Information Service, n.d., <http://ramsar.wetlands.org/Portals/15/BAHRAIN.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> R. P. Willis, “Geology of the Arabian Peninsula: Bahrain,” U.S. Geological Survey Professional Paper 560-E (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1967), E4.

<sup>10</sup> Eric Hooglund, “Chapter 3: Bahrain,” in *Persian Gulf States: Country Studies*, ed. Helen Chapin Metz (Washington, DC: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1993), <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstty:@field%28DOCID+bh0028%29>

## Climate

Bahrain's climate consists of two distinct seasons, summer and winter, separated in the spring by a short transition period of unsettled weather known as the *sarrayat*.<sup>11, 12</sup> During the harsh summer months (April to October), Bahrain's weather is marked by daily high temperatures often reaching 35°C (95°F), high humidity, and almost no rainfall.<sup>13</sup> Heat exhaustion is a potential problem for those visitors not used to the severe heat and humidity at the height of summer (early June to mid-September).<sup>14, 15</sup>

During Bahrain's winter season (November to March), temperatures are much more mild, with average mean temperatures from December to March of 21°C (70°F). Winter rains average 7.5 cm (3 in), although the annual variance is wide.<sup>16</sup> On average, 10 days per year in Bahrain experience measurable amounts of rain.<sup>17</sup>



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Dust Clouds

Strong *shamal* winds blow throughout the year, generally in a northwest direction, and sometimes bring blinding dust from Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Some shamals in winter last for 3 to 5 days and produce the strongest winds and highest seas in the Gulf.<sup>18, 19, 20</sup> The winter shamals often occur on the back end of an approaching cold front. They frequently follow on the heels of *kaus* winds blowing from the south-southwest ahead of the front. These *kaus* winds are less likely to produce large amounts of dust in Bahrain.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Bahrain Meteorological Service, "Bahrain Climate," n.d., <http://www.bahrainweather.com/BahClimatelog.aspx>

<sup>12</sup> *Bahrain News*, "April Warmer than Normal Say Experts," 4 May 2012, <http://bahrain.dxbwebsite.com/april-warmer-than-normal-say-experts/>

<sup>13</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "Bahrain: Climate," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/49072/Bahrain>

<sup>14</sup> BBC Weather, "Bahrain," 2012, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/weather/hi/country\\_guides/newsid\\_9383000/9383683.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/weather/hi/country_guides/newsid_9383000/9383683.stm)

<sup>15</sup> Jenny Walker et al., "Bahrain: Climate & When to Go," in *Oman, UAE & Arabian Peninsula*, 3rd ed. (Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2010), 101.

<sup>16</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "Bahrain: Climate," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/49072/Bahrain>

<sup>17</sup> Bahrain Meteorological Service, "Bahrain Climate," n.d., <http://www.bahrainweather.com/BahClimatelog.aspx>

<sup>18</sup> L. Aurelius et al., "The Impact of Shamal Winds on Tall Building Design in the Gulf Region," *Alhosn University Journal of Engineering and Applied Sciences* 1, no. 1 (December 2007).

<sup>19</sup> Bahrain Meteorological Service, "Bahrain Climate," n.d., <http://www.bahrainweather.com/BahClimatelog.aspx>

<sup>20</sup> Naval Research Laboratory, "Local Hazardous Weather Conditions," n.d., [http://www.nrlmry.navy.mil/port\\_studies/mideastports/MinaSalman/ihazcond.html](http://www.nrlmry.navy.mil/port_studies/mideastports/MinaSalman/ihazcond.html)

<sup>21</sup> Naval Research Laboratory, "Local Hazardous Weather Conditions," n.d., [http://www.nrlmry.navy.mil/port\\_studies/mideastports/MinaSalman/ihazcond.html](http://www.nrlmry.navy.mil/port_studies/mideastports/MinaSalman/ihazcond.html)

## Bodies of Water

Bahrain is strategically located in the Persian Gulf: the world's most heavily trafficked area that petroleum from the Middle East must transit to reach the open seas.<sup>22, 23</sup> Lacking perennial streams, rivers, lakes, or dams, the main island of Bahrain is fed by the Dammam aquifer, part of a regional aquifer system with its recharge area in central Saudi Arabia. The Bahraini groundwater discharges at the northwestern part of Bahrain Island. The water once came from springs, but as water demand increased, the springs stopped flowing. Today, Bahraini groundwater is pumped out through wells.<sup>24</sup>



© Fuad Al Ansari  
Dohat Arad Oasis

Most of Bahrain's groundwater is now used for irrigation purposes, and for livestock needs. Slightly more than 50% of Bahrain's industrial water usage comes from groundwater as well.<sup>25</sup> Some municipal water still comes from groundwater sources.<sup>26</sup> But Bahrain's groundwater is increasingly brackish because of saltwater intrusion, so the water must be treated before it can be used for drinking.<sup>27</sup>

Today, desalinated ocean water is the source of tap water provided to more than 80% of Bahrain's population.<sup>28, 29</sup> Although the government reports that the water is safe for human consumption, travelers are advised not to drink unbottled water unless it has been boiled, filtered, or chemically disinfected.<sup>30, 31</sup> But general tap water throughout Bahrain is reportedly safe for

<sup>22</sup> Vince Sinning, "Country Information: Bahrain," Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Bahrain to the United Nations, n.d., <http://www.un.int/bahrain/country.html>

<sup>23</sup> Naval Support Activity Bahrain, "Military Installations: NSA Installation Overview," 18 December 2012, [http://www.militaryinstallations.dod.mil/MOS/P?p=MI:CONTENT:0:::P4\\_INST\\_ID,P4\\_CONTENT\\_TITLE,P4\\_CONTENT\\_EKMT\\_ID,P4\\_CONTENT\\_DIRECTORY:5230,Installation%20Overview,30.90.30.30.0.0.0.0.1](http://www.militaryinstallations.dod.mil/MOS/P?p=MI:CONTENT:0:::P4_INST_ID,P4_CONTENT_TITLE,P4_CONTENT_EKMT_ID,P4_CONTENT_DIRECTORY:5230,Installation%20Overview,30.90.30.30.0.0.0.0.1)

<sup>24</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (AQUASTAT), "Bahrain," 2008, <http://www.fao.org/nr/water/aquastat/countries/bahrain/index.stm>

<sup>25</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, AQUASTAT, "Bahrain: Table 3," 2008, <http://www.fao.org/nr/water/aquastat/countries/bahrain/index.stm>

<sup>26</sup> Global Water Intelligence, "7. Bahrain," n.d., [http://www.globalwaterintel.com/client\\_media/uploaded/files/DSM\\_2010\\_sample\\_chapter.pdf](http://www.globalwaterintel.com/client_media/uploaded/files/DSM_2010_sample_chapter.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> Hasan Al Shuwaikh and Mahmood Mahmood, "Trade Information Packet: Kingdom of Bahrain" (San Diego: World Trade Center, September 2011), 32–36, [http://wtcsd.org/Resources/WEMI/TIPs%20and%20water%20reports/110913\\_Bahrain\\_TIP\\_and\\_water\\_report.pdf](http://wtcsd.org/Resources/WEMI/TIPs%20and%20water%20reports/110913_Bahrain_TIP_and_water_report.pdf)

<sup>28</sup> Soman Baby, "80pc 'Receive Potable Water,'" *Gulf Daily News* (Bahrain), 19 July 2008, <http://www.gulf-daily-news.com/NewsDetails.aspx?storyid=223521>

<sup>29</sup> Talea Miller, "Can Seawater Solve Our Water Woes?" PBS, 8 August 2011, <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/rundown/2011/08/can-seawater-solve-our-water-woes.html>

<sup>30</sup> MD Travel Health, "Bahrain: Food and Water Precautions," 2011, <http://www.mdtravelhealth.com/destinations/asia/bahrain.php#5>

<sup>31</sup> World Nomads, "Food and Water Safety in Bahrain," 11 August 2010, <http://journals.worldnomads.com/safetyhub/story/75754/Bahrain/Food-And-Water-Safety-In-Bahrain>

cooking.<sup>32</sup> The U.S. Naval Support Activity (NSA) Bahrain military base purchases treated water from the City of Manama, and the water is further purified to meet U.S. standards of quality control established by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.<sup>33</sup>

### Cities

The majority of Bahrain’s population lives in a single metropolitan area on the northern half of Bahrain Island. Yet the numerous cities in this small area have distinctive demographic and cultural patterns, just as the neighborhoods of a large city may differ significantly within a few blocks.

City	Census 2001	Estimated Population 2012 <sup>34</sup>
Manama	143,035	297,502
Muharraq	91,307	176,583
Hamad Town	52,718	133,550
Riffa	79,550	115,495
A’ali	47,529	100,533
Sitra	34,317	72,601
Jidhafs	30,099	66,588
Isa Town	36,833	61,293

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<sup>32</sup> Naval Support Activity Bahrain, “Coming to Bahrain? Here are Some Frequently Asked Questions,” 13 May 2012, <http://www.cusnc.navy.mil/command/Bahrain%20FRG%20FAQs.pdf>

<sup>33</sup> Naval Support Activity Bahrain, “Final Drinking Water Consumer Confidence Report,” March 2010.

<sup>34</sup> *World Gazetteer*, “Bahrain: Largest Cities and Towns and Statistics of Their Population,” 2012, <http://www.world-gazetteer.com/wg.php?x=1,300,648,286&men=gcis&lng=en&des=gamelan&geo=-33&srt=ptan&col=abcdefghijklmno&msz=1,500>

## Manama

Manama, Bahrain's capital, occupies the northeastern corner of Bahrain Island. The city's ultra-modern skyline largely disguises the fact that Manama has appeared in Islamic historical chronicles since the mid-14th century.<sup>35</sup> Beyond the written historical record, local ruins clearly reveal Manama to have been inhabited by ancient civilizations for millennia.



© Mahmood Al-Yousif  
Manama

Today, new high-rise residence/office towers, luxury hotels, and high-end retail centers characterize Manama's coastal Seef district. To the west of this area sits Qal'at al-Bahrain (Bahrain Fort), the Rosetta Stone of Bahrain's ancient past. Here a restored Portuguese-built fortress tops an artificial hill, under which lies an archeological sequence tracing nearly 4,300 years. Archeologists believe that this UN World Heritage Site may have been the capital of the ancient Dilmun civilization, and that the surrounding region may have been the ancient burial grounds of the Sumerians and other Mesopotamian civilizations.<sup>36, 37</sup>

Most of the modern city of Manama is surrounded on three sides by the waters of the Persian Gulf. Since 1971, the U.S. has maintained a military base in Manama, the name of which was changed to the Naval Support Activity (NSA) Bahrain in 2000.<sup>38</sup> The city also is home to the joint headquarters of the U.S. Naval Forces Central Command and the U.S. Fifth Fleet.<sup>39</sup> Less than 2 km (1.2 mi) northwest of the NSA facilities is the striking Al Fateh (Grand) Mosque, the largest mosque in Bahrain and one of the largest in the world.

Manama's northern coast hosts the city's business and financial district. In recent years, large futuristic skyscrapers such as the Bahrain World Trade Center and the Bahrain Financial Harbour have given this part of the city a skyline akin to other modern Persian Gulf metropolises (e.g., Dubai and Doha). Just south of the business district is the Manama Souq, the city's bustling old bazaar that provides a dramatically different shopping experience than the air-conditioned malls in Seef.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Jenny Walker et al., "Bahrain: Manama," in *Oman, UAE & Arabian Peninsula*, 3rd ed. (Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2010), 111.

<sup>36</sup> UNESCO, "World Heritage List: Qal'at al-Bahrain—Ancient Harbour and Capital of Dilmun," 2012, <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1192>

<sup>37</sup> C. C. Lamberg-Karlovsky, "Dilmun: Gateway to Immortality," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 41, no.1 (January 1982): 45–50.

<sup>38</sup> Naval Support Activity Bahrain, "Military Installations: NSA Installation Overview," 18 December 2012, [http://www.militaryinstallations.dod.mil/MOS/P?p=MI:CONTENT:0:::P4\\_INST\\_ID,P4\\_CONTENT\\_TITLE,P4\\_CONTENT\\_EKMT\\_ID,P4\\_CONTENT\\_DIRECTORY:5230,Installation%20Overview,30.90.30.30.0.0.0.0.1](http://www.militaryinstallations.dod.mil/MOS/P?p=MI:CONTENT:0:::P4_INST_ID,P4_CONTENT_TITLE,P4_CONTENT_EKMT_ID,P4_CONTENT_DIRECTORY:5230,Installation%20Overview,30.90.30.30.0.0.0.0.1)

<sup>39</sup> Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Central Command/U.S. Fifth Fleet Combined Maritime Forces, "Command," n.d., <http://www.cusnc.navy.mil/command/command.html>

<sup>40</sup> Jenny Walker et al., "Bahrain: Manama," in *Oman, UAE & Arabian Peninsula*, 3rd ed. (Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2010), 109–121.

### *Muharraq*

The first stop for visitors to Bahrain is Muharraq, the location of Bahrain International Airport. Muharraq lies on an island and is connected by two short causeways to northeastern Manama. (A third causeway connects the Hidd Industrial Zone and adjacent deep-water port at the southern end of Muharraq Island to the Juffair district of Manama.<sup>41</sup>) Though somewhat overshadowed by Manama today, Muharraq was from the late 17th century until 1923 the seat of Bahrain's government and the residence of the ruling family.<sup>42</sup>

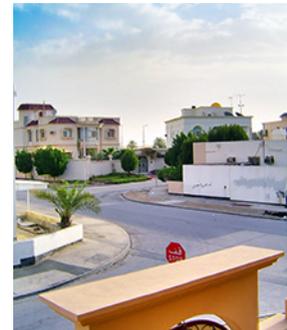


© Michele Solmi  
Old City, Muharraq

The city's old sections still feature some of the best examples of Bahrain's traditional architecture. Government and private sponsors have spearheaded efforts to restore and promote these remnants of Bahrain's historical past.<sup>43, 44</sup> More recently, with the opening of the King Hamad University Hospital and an adjacent medical school, government officials hope that Muharraq will emerge as a leading medical training center for Bahrain.<sup>45, 46</sup>

### *Hamad Town*

Named after Hamad ibn Isa Al Khalifa, the king of Bahrain, Hamad Town was established by the Bahraini government in 1984 as an affordable residential area southwest of downtown Manama.<sup>47</sup> The city is laid out in a north-south direction that builds off the 22 roundabouts of Sheikh Hamad Avenue, skirting several ancient burial grounds in the city.<sup>48</sup>



© Yonis Attiya  
Hamad Town

<sup>41</sup> Mercator Media, "Part of the Masterplan," 28 October 2009, [http://www.portstrategy.com/features101/area-survey/port-profile/khalifa-bin-salman/kbsp\\_all\\_part\\_of\\_the\\_master\\_plan](http://www.portstrategy.com/features101/area-survey/port-profile/khalifa-bin-salman/kbsp_all_part_of_the_master_plan)

<sup>42</sup> Tore Kjeilen, *LookLex Encyclopedia*, "Al-Muharraq," n.d., <http://looklex.com/e.o/muharraq.htm>

<sup>43</sup> Heather Anderson, "Discovering Muharraq's Hidden Charms," n.d., <http://bahrainguide.org/content/view/28/84/>

<sup>44</sup> Ministry of Culture, Kingdom of Bahrain, "The Opening of the First Renovation Phase of Al Qusairiya Suq," 2012, <http://www.moc.gov.bh/en/header/Events/Events2012/ARCHITECTURE/Name.6586.en.html>

<sup>45</sup> *Gulf Daily News* (Bahrain), "New Hospital Vows Best Services for All," 5 February 2012, <http://www.gulf-daily-news.com/NewsDetails.aspx?storyid=323072>

<sup>46</sup> Mandeep Singh, "Skills Centre," *Gulf Daily News* (Bahrain), 24 December 2011, <http://www.gulf-daily-news.com/NewsDetails.aspx?storyid=320224>

<sup>47</sup> Tore Kjeilen, *LookLex Encyclopedia*, "Hamad," n.d., <http://i-cias.com/e.o/hamad.htm>

<sup>48</sup> Lamya Haider, "Analysis of Hamad Town Urban Planning Using GIS Techniques," 2007, <http://www.gisdevelopment.net/proceedings/mest/2007/papers/day2/p43.pdf>

*Riffa*

Riffa, near the center of Bahrain Island, is divided into western and eastern parts. It is a primarily Sunni city.<sup>49</sup> King Hamad ibn Isa Al Khalifa and Prime Minister Sheikh Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa have palaces in the west part of Riffa.<sup>50</sup> Riffa is the home of the Bahrain Defense Forces headquarters, the National Stadium (the country's largest football venue), all the nation's golf courses, and the 19th century Riffa Fort.<sup>51, 52</sup>



© Stefan Krasowski  
Riffa

*A'Ali*

Northwest of Riffa, A'ali is a largely Shi'ite city most famous for the large swath of Dilmun-era burial mounds and tombs on its western side.<sup>53</sup> Many beautiful clay pots have been recovered from some of these tombs, and A'ali remains known for its pottery industry, although a much smaller percentage of the town's residents make a living from it than in decades past.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Reuters, "Sheikh Khalifa Must Stay, Says Top Bahrain Cleric," 28 September 2011, <http://m.arabianbusiness.com/sheikh-khalifa-must-stay-says-top-bahrain-cleric-422515.html>

<sup>50</sup> MapsofWorld.com, "Riffa Bahrain," n.d., <http://www.mapsofworld.com/cities/bahrain/riffa.html>

<sup>51</sup> Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies, U.S. Department of Defense, "Bahrain Defense Force Command and Staff College Briefing," n.d., <http://nesa-center.org/en/node/584>

<sup>52</sup> MapsofWorld.com, "Riffa Bahrain," n.d., <http://www.mapsofworld.com/cities/bahrain/riffa.html>

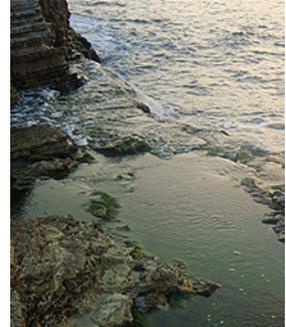
<sup>53</sup> Michael Slackman, "In a New Age, Bahrain Struggles to Honor the Dead While Serving the Living," *New York Times*, 17 September 2009, [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/18/world/middleeast/18bahrain.html?\\_r=1&ref=world&pagewanted=all](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/18/world/middleeast/18bahrain.html?_r=1&ref=world&pagewanted=all)

<sup>54</sup> Archie D'Cruz, "Feats of Clay," n.d., <http://www.bahrainguide.org/BG3/pottery.html>

## Natural Hazards

Bahrain is one of the world's safest places in terms of danger from natural hazards.<sup>55</sup> Like its Persian Gulf neighbors, such as Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain is virtually free of danger from earthquakes, volcanoes, flooding, tsunamis, major tropical storms, or other natural events that can produce numerous deaths and extensive damage. High winds sometimes can generate dust storms and sandstorms that cause delays at the airport and increase hospital visits by asthma patients and the elderly, but the overall effect of these storms is more a nuisance than a catastrophe.<sup>56</sup>

But rising sea levels and temperatures may threaten Bahrain's future.<sup>57</sup> According to estimates, 7–22% of Bahrain's land could be lost to the sea by the end of this century.<sup>58</sup> Bahrain, already one of the hottest places in the world during summer months, also may be getting hotter.<sup>59</sup>



© The World Wants a Real Deal / flickr.com  
Ebbing ocean

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<sup>55</sup> Jeremy Singer-Vine, "The Safest Countries in the World," *Slate*, 24 March 2011.

<sup>56</sup> Geoffrey Bew, "Dust Storm Hits Bahrain," *Gulf Daily News* (Bahrain), 19 April 2008, <http://www.gulf-daily-news.com/NewsDetails.aspx?storyid=214992>

<sup>57</sup> *Gulf Daily News* (Bahrain), "We Are Ready for any Disaster," 18 May 2009, <http://www.gulf-daily-news.com/NewsDetails.aspx?storyid=250817>

<sup>58</sup> Mandeep Singh, "Rising Sea Levels Threaten Bahrain," *Gulf Daily News* (Bahrain), 23 November 2011, <http://www.gulf-daily-news.com/NewsDetails.aspx?storyid=317739>

<sup>59</sup> Mandeep Singh, "Rising Sea Levels Threaten Bahrain," *Gulf Daily News* (Bahrain), 23 November 2011, <http://www.gulf-daily-news.com/NewsDetails.aspx?storyid=317739>

## Environmental Concerns

Dealing with waste—household, industrial, agricultural, and medical—is one of Bahrain’s pressing environmental challenges. Bahrain Island is small and has limited space for solid waste disposal, especially when such waste is growing at an annual rate of more than 18%.<sup>60</sup> Presently, solid waste is handled at three sites at the southern end of Bahrain Island: a landfill for household, agricultural, and non-hazardous industrial waste; a second landfill for hazardous industrial waste; and an incineration facility for hazardous medical waste.<sup>61</sup>



© Mahmood Al-Yousif  
Garbage dump

Bahrain’s coastal environment has suffered from the introduction of land-based industrial and domestic pollutants into the shallow offshore waters. Dredging, land reclamation, and illegal dumping of construction materials also have stressed the coastal marine habitats.<sup>62</sup> In particular, the coral reefs that once existed along Bahrain Island’s northern and eastern coasts have almost all died off.<sup>63</sup> Bahrain’s fishing industry has in turn been forced further into Gulf waters to find catch, which has led to disputes with Qatar over Bahraini fishing boats venturing into Qatari territorial waters.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> The Public Commission for Protection of Marine Resources, the Environment and Wildlife, Kingdom of Bahrain, “Bahrain National Assessment Report on Implementation of the Mauritius Strategy (MSI) of the Barbados Programme of Actions (BPOA),” November 2009, 18–19, [http://www.sidsnet.org/msi\\_5/docs/inputs/Bahrain-MSI\\_2009-Report.pdf](http://www.sidsnet.org/msi_5/docs/inputs/Bahrain-MSI_2009-Report.pdf)

<sup>61</sup> Raj Unnikrishnan, “Inadequacies in Waste Management Spur Eco Challenges in Bahrain,” 26 December 2011, <http://greenlichen.com/2011/12/inadequacies-in-waste-management-spur-eco-challenges-in-bahrain/>

<sup>62</sup> The Public Commission for Protection of Marine Resources, the Environment and Wildlife, Kingdom of Bahrain, “Bahrain National Assessment Report on Implementation of the Mauritius Strategy (MSI) of the Barbados Programme of Actions (BPOA),” November 2009, 20, [http://www.sidsnet.org/msi\\_5/docs/inputs/Bahrain-MSI\\_2009-Report.pdf](http://www.sidsnet.org/msi_5/docs/inputs/Bahrain-MSI_2009-Report.pdf)

<sup>63</sup> Adele O’Shea, “Bahrain: Are Coral Reefs History?” *Gulf Daily News* (Bahrain), 1 July 2007, <http://www.gulf-daily-news.com/NewsDetails.aspx?storyid=186580>

<sup>64</sup> Mazen Mahdi, “Bahraini Fishermen Blame Development for Forcing Them into Gunsights of Qatar,” *National* (United Arab Emirates), 13 May 2010, <http://www.thenational.ae/news/world/middle-east/bahraini-fishermen-blame-development-for-forcing-them-into-gunsights-of-qatar#full>

Bahrain's farmlands, mostly located along Bahrain Island's western and northern margins, are experiencing various degrees of desertification, the process by which agriculturally productive land becomes barren and unable to support plant growth. Increasing soil salinity is a major part of the problem. Increasing urbanization has led to overpumping of groundwater and a drop in the water table, which in turn has accelerated the process of saltwater intrusion from adjacent coastal waters.<sup>65</sup>

In addition, some of Bahrain's remaining arable land has been converted to other uses, such as housing and recreation, further reducing the already small amount of land suitable for agriculture. Bahrain's government has reacted by placing tighter regulations on agricultural land-use conversions and putting programs into effect to help forestall further salinization of arable land.

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<sup>65</sup> The Public Commission for Protection of Marine Resources, the Environment and Wildlife, Kingdom of Bahrain, "Bahrain National Assessment Report on Implementation of the Mauritius Strategy (MSI) of the Barbados Programme of Actions (BPOA)," November 2009, 20, [http://www.sidsnet.org/msi\\_5/docs/inputs/Bahrain-MSI\\_2009-Report.pdf](http://www.sidsnet.org/msi_5/docs/inputs/Bahrain-MSI_2009-Report.pdf)

## Chapter 1 Assessment

1. Bahrain Island contains almost 90% of all the land in Bahrain.

**TRUE**

The nation of Bahrain is an archipelago of 36 islands in the Persian Gulf between coastal Saudi Arabia to the west and the Qatar Peninsula to the east. Bahrain Island is by far the largest of Bahrain's islands, constituting about 87% of the country's land area.

2. Bahrain Island is the only island in Bahrain that contains some elevated geographical features.

**TRUE**

Apart from Bahrain Island, the islands of Bahrain are rocky and flat. The terrain on Bahrain Island includes a central plateau dotted with isolated hills that rise to 134 m (440 ft) at Jebel ad-Dukhan, the nation's highest point of land.

3. Afternoon rainstorms are frequent in Bahrain during summer months.

**FALSE**

During the harsh summer months (April to October), almost no rainfall is recorded in Bahrain. During the winter season (November to March), rains average 7.5 cm (3 in), although the amount of rainfall varies from year to year.

4. Strong *shamal* winds sometimes produce blinding dust storms and sandstorms in Bahrain.

**TRUE**

Strong *shamal* winds blow throughout the year, generally in a northwest direction, and sometimes bring blinding dust from Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Some shamals in winter last for 3 to 5 days and produce the strongest winds and highest seas in the Gulf.

5. Most of Bahrain's municipal drinking water is supplied from groundwater.

**FALSE**

Today, desalinized ocean water is the source of tap water provided to more than 80% of the population of Bahrain. Although the government reports that the water is safe to drink, travelers are advised not to drink unbottled water unless it has been further purified.

## CHAPTER 2: HISTORY

### Introduction

Bahrain, the Middle East's smallest nation by area, has long had an outsized role in the region's historical events because it traditionally was a trading center on the Persian Gulf. As the first Gulf sheikdom to develop an oil-based economy, Bahrain's modern educational and governmental institutions were developing while some of its Gulf neighbors, such as Abu Dhabi and Dubai, were essentially sleepy coastal villages.<sup>66</sup>



© Al Jazeera English / flickr.com  
Unrest in Bahrain, 2011

In recent years Bahrain has been in the news because of widespread social unrest that has spawned frequent demonstrations and calls for governmental change. What seldom is mentioned is that political activism and street protests have a long tradition in Bahrain, dating at least to the 1920s. The current unrest in Bahrain and the escalating violence that it has provoked have been linked to the island nation's slow pace of democratic reform. A related underlying issue is Bahrain's religious demographics—in particular, that the majority are members of Islam's Shi'a sect. Some Bahraini Sunnis, as well in neighboring Sunni kingdoms such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar, are concerned that an elected Bahraini parliament unchecked by the power of the country's Sunni monarchy might quickly steer the nation toward a pro-Iranian government. To understand the current unrest, a look at Bahrain's history prior to independence may reveal how it became a Shi'a-majority Arab nation led by a Sunni family originally from the Arabian interior.

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<sup>66</sup> Jane Kinninmont, "Bahrain's Re-Reform Movement," *Foreign Affairs*, 28 February 2011.

## Early History

### *Dilmun*

Visitors to Bahrain Island who venture outside modern downtown Manama are often amazed by the thousands of burial mounds scattered around the northern half of the island. It is believed that at one point over 100,000 such mounds existed on Bahrain, but this number has decreased in recent decades as increasing urbanization has led to the razing of some of these ancient cemeteries. The mounds are burial chambers built during the Bronze Age, a time when archeologists believe that northern Bahrain was the center of the Dilmun civilization, one of the Persian Gulf's earliest known trading centers. The sheer number of these tombs from the third and second millennia B.C.E. has led at least one noted researcher to propose that Dilmun may have served as a place of interment for other civilizations.<sup>67, 68</sup> In an irony, Dilmun is also described in ancient Sumerian mythology as the place where the epic hero Gilgamesh went in his quest for eternal life.<sup>69</sup>



© Michele Sotri  
Burial mounds

The Dilmun era lasted from roughly 3,200 B.C.E. to 600 B.C.E, although some written references to Dilmun date to nearly 4,000 B.C.E.<sup>70</sup> The little written information that exists about Dilmun comes from Mesopotamia (modern Iraq), where Dilmun was referenced in Sumerian, Babylonian, and Assyrian inscriptions as well as the Gilgamesh myths.<sup>71</sup> The highest number of these inscriptions comes during the early second millennium, a period before the beginning of Dilmun's decline around 1,800 B.C.E. It is conjectured that a fall in trade traffic to Mesopotamia and the development of a new Red Sea trade route between India and the Mediterranean Sea contributed to Dilmun's reduced importance.<sup>72, 73</sup>

<sup>67</sup> C. C. Lamberg-Karlovsky, "Dilmun: Gateway to Immortality," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 41, no. 1 (1982): 45–50.

<sup>68</sup> Elisabeth C. L. During Caspers, "Dilmun: International Burial Ground," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 27, no. 1 (1984): 1–32.

<sup>69</sup> Wolfgang Saxon, "T. Geoffrey Bibby, Discoverer of Gilgamesh's Island, Dies at 83," *New York Times*, 20 February 2001.

<sup>70</sup> Harriet Crawford, "Chapter 1: The Setting," in *Dilmun and Its Gulf Neighbours* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 1.

<sup>71</sup> Jenny Walker et al., "Bahrain: History: Early Civilisation," in *Oman, UAE & Arabian Peninsula*, 3rd ed. (Footscray, Victoria, Australia: Lonely Planet Publications, 2010), 102–103.

<sup>72</sup> Harriet Crawford, "Chapter 1: The Setting," in *Dilmun and Its Gulf Neighbours* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 3–4.

<sup>73</sup> William Smyth, "Chapter 1: Historical Setting: Trade in the Gulf," in *Persian Gulf States: Country Studies*, 3rd ed. (Washington, DC: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1992).

### *Pre-Islamic Period*

By the end of the second millennium B.C.E., Dilmun may have regained some of its importance because the rise of the Assyrian Empire in Mesopotamia increased trade throughout the Persian Gulf region.<sup>74</sup> But Dilmun largely faded from historical view during the first millennium B.C.E.

From around 600 B.C.E through about 640 C.E., the Persian Gulf region fell under the influence of three successive dynasties originating in Persia (Iran): the Achaemenid, Parthian, and Sassanid Empires.<sup>75</sup> The Greek admiral Nearchus passed through the Persian Gulf region during the late fourth century B.C.E., and from then until the coming of Islam in the seventh century C.E., Bahrain was known in the West by its Greek name Tylos.<sup>76</sup> Today this span of Bahraini history is often referred to as the Tylos period. During the later part of this era, many of the local inhabitants practiced Christianity, and Bahrain was the seat of two bishoprics of the Nestorian (Eastern) sect of Christianity.<sup>77</sup>



© Mohd Azil Abdul Malek  
Museum miniature Tylos fortress

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<sup>74</sup> William Smyth, “Chapter 1: Historical Setting: The Gulf in the Ancient World,” in *Persian Gulf States: Country Studies*, 3rd ed. (Washington, DC: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1992).

<sup>75</sup> Malcolm C. Peck, “Chronology,” in *Historical Dictionary of the Gulf Arab States*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2008), xx-xxi.

<sup>76</sup> Nestorian.org, “Bahrain: The Pre-Islamic Period,” n.d.,

<sup>77</sup> Nestorian.org, “Bahrain: The Pre-Islamic Period,” n.d.,

## Islamic Era

### *Islam and the Qarmatians*

Bahrain's location adjacent to the Arabian Peninsula gave it proximity to Mecca and Medina, where Islam arose under the Prophet Muhammad in the first half of the seventh century. According to traditional accounts the Abd al-Qays tribespeople, who inhabited Bahrain at the time, converted to Islam during Muhammad's lifetime (628 C.E.).<sup>78</sup>



© Aamer Javed  
Traditional Shi'a mosque

A few decades after Muhammad's death, Islam split into two main sects—the Shi'a and Sunnis—that divided initially on the question of Islamic leadership succession after Muhammad. Over time the Shi'a, who believed that the Islamic religious leader, or Imam, must be a direct descendant of Muhammad, fissured into several sub-sects based on differing interpretations of the lines of descent for the Imam. One of these sub-sects was the Ismaili Shi'a. During the late ninth century C.E., followers of Hamdan Qarmat, leader of an Ismaili Shi'a splinter sect in Mesopotamia (Iraq), established a base in Bahrain.<sup>79</sup> The Qarmatians, as they came to be known, were radical in their religious beliefs and particularly hostile toward other Muslim sects. They were also known for the egalitarian nature of their society.<sup>80, 81</sup> The Qarmatians staged raiding parties on pilgrims traveling via caravan to Mecca. They eventually overran Medina and Mecca in 930 C.E., stealing the venerated Black Stone from the Kaaba, Islam's most sacred site.<sup>82</sup> The stone was held for ransom for more than 20 years.<sup>83</sup>

<sup>78</sup> Eric Hooglund, "Chapter 3: Bahrain," in *Persian Gulf States: Country Studies*, 3rd ed. (Washington, DC: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1992),

<sup>79</sup> Note that for much of the Islamic period, "Bahrain" was a regional designation, including not only the Awal Islands (present-day Bahrain) but also parts of the eastern Gulf mainland from modern Kuwait to Oman. In particular, the nearby oasis region of Al-Hasa and the coastal settlement of Qatif, both in present-day Saudi Arabia, were long part of historical "Bahrain."

<sup>80</sup> Juan Cole, "Chapter 3: Rival Empires of Trade and Shi'ism in Eastern Arabia," in *Sacred Space and Holy War: The Politics, Culture and History of Shi'ite Islam* (London: I. B. Taurus, 2005), 32.

<sup>81</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "History of Arabia: Arabia Since the Seventh Century: The Umayyad and 'Abbasid Periods: The Qarmatians," 2012,

<sup>82</sup> IslamicLandmarks.com, "Hajr al-Aswad," n.d.,

<sup>83</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Black Stone of Mecca," 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/68328/Black-Stone-of-Mecca>

### *Local Dynasties*

The Qarmatians lost political power to Sunni Muslim tribes in the second half of the 11th century, marking the beginning of several centuries when Bahrain was ruled mostly by local Sunni tribal leaders or Gulf maritime powers. An exception was the period from 1305 to 1450, when the Shi'ite Jarwanid dynasty ruled Bahrain as a vassal state of the Sunni kings of Hormuz.<sup>84, 85</sup> Overall, Shi'a Islam continued to be the dominant Muslim sect in the Bahraini region in number of followers. But over time, the local Bahrainis moved away from the radical form of Ismaili Shi'a practiced by the Qarmatians to Twelver Shi'a (a Shi'ite sect with a different Imam succession).<sup>86</sup> Throughout this tumultuous time of frequent political shifts, the islands of Bahrain were best known throughout the Gulf region for their lucrative pearl beds that lay just offshore. The freshwater springs that emerged from under the seabed near the Bahrain coast gave these pearls a distinctive color and luster that added to their value.<sup>87</sup>

### *Portuguese and Persian Domination*

The so-called Age of Exploration in Europe, beginning in the late 15th century, resulted in a rush by European naval powers to establish trade outposts. Bahrain and neighboring regions of the Persian Gulf were swept into a period of frequent naval battles and shifting alliances between European rivals and local Gulf rulers. The first Western ships to enter the Gulf region were those of Portugal, which conquered the main island of Bahrain in 1521 and built a fort (*Qal'at al-Bahrain*) along the northern shore atop a mound of ruins that archeologists believe may include the ancient capital of Dilmun.<sup>88, 89</sup> Less than a century later (1602), the Persian Safavid Empire, a Twelver Shi'a state, ousted the Portuguese and laid their own claims to Bahrain.



© Lauren Rauk  
Qal'at al-Bahrain

The decline of the Portuguese presence in the Gulf did not signal that European trading interests in the region were diminishing. After Safavid Shah Abbas' conquest of Bahrain, he carved out an alliance with the British East Indies Company to take back the island of Hormuz from the Portuguese. Around the same time, the fleets of the French and Dutch East Indies companies were trying to establish their trading concessions in the Gulf.<sup>90</sup> Local powers—in particular, Oman—were also involved in the tussle for Gulf supremacy, and around 1717 the Omani briefly

<sup>84</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, “History of Arabia: Arabia Since the Seventh Century: The Umayyad and ‘Abbasid Periods: The Qarmatians,” 2012,

<sup>85</sup> Juan Cole, “Chapter 3: Rival Empires of Trade and Shi’ism in Eastern Arabia,” in *Sacred Space and Holy War: The Politics, Culture and History of Shi’ite Islam* (London: I. B. Taurus, 2005), 33.

<sup>86</sup> Juan Cole, “Chapter 3: Rival Empires of Trade and Shi’ism in Eastern Arabia,” in *Sacred Space and Holy War: The Politics, Culture and History of Shi’ite Islam* (London: I. B. Taurus, 2005), 32–33.

<sup>87</sup> LonelyPlanet.com, “Bahrain: History: Early Civilisation,” n.d.,

<sup>88</sup> UNESCO, “Qal’at al-Bahrain—Ancient Harbour and Capital of Dilmun,” n.d.,

<sup>89</sup> Juan Cole, “Chapter 3: Rival Empires of Trade and Shi’ism in Eastern Arabia,” in *Sacred Space and Holy War: The Politics, Culture and History of Shi’ite Islam* (London: I. B. Taurus, 2005), 38.

<sup>90</sup> Rosemarie Said Zahlan, “Chapter 1: The Gulf in History,” in *The Making of the Modern Gulf States* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 5.

took control of Bahrain from the Safavids until Nadir Shah regained it for the Persians a few decades later.<sup>91</sup> This constant state of conflict took a toll on the Bahrain Island population---by 1763 a geographer of the time estimated that the island's 360 towns and villages had been reduced to 60 as the result of decades of warfare and economic plight.<sup>92</sup>

## Al Khalifa Era

### *Origins of Al Khalifa Rule*

The ruling families of the present-day nations of Bahrain and Kuwait trace their history to the same Arab tribal confederacy: the Bani Utub.<sup>93</sup> Originally located in the central part of the Arabian Peninsula, the Bani Utub migrated in the 17th century to escape famine and inter-tribal conflict, and eventually ended up in what is today Kuwait.<sup>94</sup> In the 1760s, two sections of the tribe—Al Khalifa and Al Jalahimah—moved from Kuwait to the Qatar Peninsula and established a successful pearling trade at Az Zubarah, on the peninsula's northwestern coast. Al Khalifa quickly became the dominant group in Qatar. In 1782, Az Zubarah was attacked by the forces of Sheikh Nasr Al Madhkur, an Omani who served as ruler of Bahrain from his base in Bushehr (on the Iranian coast). Al Khalifa fighters, led by Sheikh Ahmad bin Muhammad and assisted by other affiliated Bani Utub tribes, defeated the attackers of Az Zubarah. Al Khalifa forces subsequently launched a successful counterattack against Bahrain in 1783, taking full possession of the main island. Al Khalifa were now in control of Bahrain, a situation that remains today.<sup>95</sup> Upon the conquest of Bahrain, Shaikh Ahmad bin Muhammad took the title of *hakim*, which all rulers of Bahrain were called until 1971 when the title was changed to *emir* upon Bahraini independence.<sup>96</sup>



Courtesy of Wikipedia  
Map of Bahrain, c. 1745

The first decade or so of Al Khalifa rule of Bahrain was generally peaceful, although a split in the Bani Utub tribal alliance proved troublesome. Ahmad bin Muhammad retained his base at Az Zubarah on the Qatar Peninsula and delegated a senior family member to oversee affairs in Bahrain. Also located on the Qatar Peninsula but no longer in Az Zubarah were members of Al Jalahimah, who broke with Al Khalifa out of dissatisfaction with their share of the spoils from the Bahrain invasion.<sup>97, 98</sup> Sheikh Rahmah bin Jabir Al Jalahimah in particular emerged as Al

<sup>91</sup> Fuad I. Khuri, "Chapter 2: The Scramble," in *Tribe and State in Bahrain: The Transformation of Social and Political Authority in an Arab State* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 18.

<sup>92</sup> Juan R. I. Cole, "Rival Empires of Trade and Imami Shi'ism in Eastern Arabia, 1300–1800," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 19, no. 2 (May, 1987): 195.

<sup>93</sup> Royal Arabian Studs of Bahrain, "The Ruling Family," n.d.,

<sup>94</sup> Alan de Lacy Rush, ed., "Introduction," in *Ruling Families of Arabia—Bahrain: The Ruling Family of Al-Khalifah* (Cambridge, UK: Archive Editions, 1991), 4:xv,

<sup>95</sup> Fuad I. Khuri, "Chapter 2: The Scramble," in *Tribe and State in Bahrain: The Transformation of Social and Political Authority in an Arab State* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 22–25.

<sup>96</sup> James Onley, "The Politics of Protection in the Gulf: The Arab Rulers and the British Resident in the Nineteenth Century," *New Arabian Studies* 6 (2004): 63.

<sup>97</sup> Jon Mandaville, "Rahmah of the Gulf," *Saudi Aramco World*, May/June 1975.

Khalifa's most vengeful opponent. The sheikh's "pirate ships" targeted Bahraini interests for decades until 1826, when he suicidally blew up his ship and a Bahraini flagship grappled to it rather than surrender.<sup>99</sup>

### *Pre-Protectorate Power Struggles*

The decades after Sheikh Ahmad bin Muhammad's death in 1795 featured numerous struggles to dominate the Gulf's limited economic resources (primarily pearls, dates, shipbuilding, and custom duties from trade).<sup>100</sup> Bahrain, with its superior pearl beds and good harbors, trailed only Muscat as Eastern Arabia's busiest port during the first half of the 19th century.<sup>101</sup> Its status as a trading hub made it an attractive target for external forces who wished to dislodge Al Khalifa from Bahrain or (more frequently) to grab a share of its wealth. Periodic raids on Bahraini ports and pearl ships were common. Strong-arm techniques were also frequently employed: Gulf tribal powers would demand that Al Khalifa rulers accept dependency status and provide payment for protection from other Gulf forces.<sup>102</sup>



© Kuwaitsoccer / Wikipedia.org  
Suit used to dive for pearls

The participants in these recurring intrigues and petty wars were several. From the Arabian interior came the Wahhabis, an informal term applied to the followers of the teachings of Muslim scholar Muhammad bin Abd Al Wahhab. Al Wahhab called for a return to the Islamic principles of the first three generations of Muslims, and found an opportune political/military ally in local Arab emir Muhammad bin Saud, the founder of present-day Saudi Arabia's ruling House of Saud.<sup>103</sup> Pressure from the Wahhabis in 1796 forced the remaining Al Khalifa leaders in Az Zubarah to relocate to Bahrain, although Al Khalifa maintained their territorial claim on the Qatar Peninsula.<sup>104, 105</sup> Once established in Bahrain, Al Khalifa split into a joint leadership arrangement, with Sheikh Ahmad bin Muhammad's sons Sheikh Salman bin Ahmad and Sheikh

<sup>98</sup> Fuad I. Khuri, "Chapter 2: The Scramble," in *Tribe and State in Bahrain: The Transformation of Social and Political Authority in an Arab State* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 25.

<sup>99</sup> Jon Mandaville, "Rahmah of the Gulf," *Saudi Aramco World*, May/June 1975, <http://www.saudiaramcoworld.com/issue/197503/rahmah.of.the.gulf.htm>

<sup>100</sup> James Onley, "The Politics of Protection in the Gulf: The Arab Rulers and the British Resident in the Nineteenth Century," *New Arabian Studies* 6 (2004): 37, [http://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/iaais/downloads/The\\_Politics\\_of\\_Protection\\_2004.pdf](http://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/iaais/downloads/The_Politics_of_Protection_2004.pdf)

<sup>101</sup> James Onley, "The Politics of Protection in the Gulf: The Arab Rulers and the British Resident in the Nineteenth Century," *New Arabian Studies* 6 (2004): 34.

<sup>102</sup> James Onley, "The Politics of Protection in the Gulf: The Arab Rulers and the British Resident in the Nineteenth Century," *New Arabian Studies* 6 (2004): 42–43.

<sup>103</sup> William Smyth, "Chapter 1: Historical Setting: The Al-Saud and Wahhabi Islam, 1500–1818," in *Saudi Arabia: A Country Study* (Washington, DC: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1993), 14–15.

<sup>104</sup> Fuad I. Khuri, "Chapter 2: The Scramble," in *Tribe and State in Bahrain: The Transformation of Social and Political Authority in an Arab State* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 26.

<sup>105</sup> Alan de Lacy Rush, ed., "Introduction," in *Ruling Families of Arabia—Bahrain: The Ruling Family of Al-Khalifah* (Cambridge, UK: Archive Editions, 1991), 4:xvi

Abdullah bin Ahmad taking the role of *hakim* on the islands of Bahrain and Muharraq, respectively.<sup>106</sup>

Other parties in the tussles for Gulf primacy included the Imam of Omani (in Muscat) and the Qawasim, the tribal group located along the northeastern coast of the modern United Arab Emirates. By the mid-1830s, during a period of economic decline in Bahrain, the Persians and Egyptians joined the fray, demanding tribute from the weakened Al Khalifa leadership.<sup>107</sup> To counter these numerous threats, Bahrain's rulers frequently acquiesced temporarily to one group's demands while arranging for defensive assistance from a rival group.<sup>108</sup> For example, the Omani forces and the Wahhabis alternated for decades as Al Khalifa threats and paid protectors of Al Khalifa rule. In the middle of this chaotic state of affairs was British East India, which had officially become the primary policing force in the Gulf region after the 1820 anti-piracy General Treaty of Peace. But in practice, the British East Indian naval forces in the early 19th century generally stayed on the sidelines when Bahrain's disputes with its neighbors did not directly affect British shipping interests to and from India or involve outright acts of piracy.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Fuad I. Khuri, "Chapter 2: The Scramble," in *Tribe and State in Bahrain: The Transformation of Social and Political Authority in an Arab State* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 29–30.

<sup>107</sup> James Onley, "The Politics of Protection in the Gulf: The Arab Rulers and the British Resident in the Nineteenth Century," *New Arabian Studies* 6 (2004): 48, [http://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/iaais/downloads/The\\_Politics\\_of\\_Protection\\_2004.pdf](http://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/iaais/downloads/The_Politics_of_Protection_2004.pdf)

<sup>108</sup> James Onley, "The Politics of Protection in the Gulf: The Arab Rulers and the British Resident in the Nineteenth Century," *New Arabian Studies* 6 (2004): 44–48, [http://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/iaais/downloads/The\\_Politics\\_of\\_Protection\\_2004.pdf](http://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/iaais/downloads/The_Politics_of_Protection_2004.pdf)

<sup>109</sup> James Onley, "The Politics of Protection in the Gulf: The Arab Rulers and the British Resident in the Nineteenth Century," *New Arabian Studies* 6 (2004): 47, [http://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/iaais/downloads/The\\_Politics\\_of\\_Protection\\_2004.pdf](http://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/iaais/downloads/The_Politics_of_Protection_2004.pdf)

### *Al Khalifa Succession Battles*

Between 1842 and 1869, Al Khalifa factions represented by the descendants of the brothers Sheikh Salman and Sheikh Abdullah complicated matters by aligning with outside parties.<sup>110, 111</sup> This family power struggle cooled somewhat in 1861 after Bahraini *hakim* Sheikh Muhammad bin Khalifa (of the Salman branch), under British pressure, signed the Perpetual Maritime Truce. This agreement, which the tribal rulers of the present-day United Arab Emirates had already signed, pledged Al Khalifa to abstain from “prosecution of war, piracy, and slavery at sea” in return for British protection from attacks by sea.<sup>112</sup> With this agreement, Bahrain officially became a British Protectorate.



Bahrain’s entry into the Perpetual Maritime Truce did not end the family succession struggle. In 1869, Sheikh Muhammad bin Khalifa (who had fled into exile in 1868 after violating the treaty’s non-aggression terms by attacking mutinous tribal groups in Qatar) invaded Bahrain in an attempt to regain power. His brother Sheikh Ali bin Khalifa, who had replaced him as the *hakim*, was killed in the attack. Upon regaining control in Bahrain, Sheikh Muhammad bin Khalifa unwisely put his second cousin Sheikh Muhammad bin Abdullah, a member of the Abdullah branch of Al Khalifa, in charge of the army and was promptly overthrown by this kinsman.<sup>113</sup> But Muhammad bin Abdullah’s reign lasted only 2 months. In December 1869 British warships arrived in Bahrain and, with Al Khalifa approval, the British Resident replaced Sheikh Muhammad bin Abdullah with Sheikh Isa bin Ali Al Khalifa, son of the slain *hakim*. From that time on, members of the Abdullah branch of Al Khalifa have not been allowed to live in Bahrain.<sup>114</sup> The installation of Isa bin Ali as *hakim* ended the period of succession battles because he remained in power for over 50 years.<sup>115</sup>

<sup>110</sup> James Onley, “The Politics of Protection in the Gulf: The Arab Rulers and the British Resident in the Nineteenth Century,” *New Arabian Studies* 6 (2004): 49, [http://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/iaais/downloads/The\\_Politics\\_of\\_Protection\\_2004.pdf](http://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/iaais/downloads/The_Politics_of_Protection_2004.pdf)

<sup>111</sup> Fuad I. Khuri, “Chapter 2: The Scramble,” in *Tribe and State in Bahrain: The Transformation of Social and Political Authority in an Arab State* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 30–33.

<sup>112</sup> Pirouz Mojtahed-Zadeh, “Chapter 5: Emergence and Evolution of Territorial States in Qatar and Bahrain,” in *Security and Territoriality in the Persian Gulf: A Maritime Political Geography* (London: Curzon Press, 1999), 125.

<sup>113</sup> David F. Winkler, “Chapter 1: Background to a Relationship,” in *Amirs, Admirals & Desert Sailors: Bahrain, The U.S. Navy, and The Arabian Gulf* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2007), 13.

<sup>114</sup> Fuad I. Khuri, “Chapter 2: The Scramble,” in *Tribe and State in Bahrain: The Transformation of Social and Political Authority in an Arab State* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 33.

<sup>115</sup> David F. Winkler, “Ch. 1. Background to a Relationship,” in *Amirs, Admirals & Desert Sailors: Bahrain, The U.S. Navy, and The Arabian Gulf* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2007), 13.

### *British Dominance*

During the 1870s, the Ottoman Empire became more active in the Arabian Peninsula and put forth claims on much of the peninsula's eastern coast. On the Qatar Peninsula, the clan of Al Thani, under the leadership of Sheikh Qasim bin Muhammad, accepted tributary status to the Ottomans, thus severing the Qatari tribes' last remaining ties with Al Khalifa on Bahrain. (Bahrain pressed its claim to authority over Az Zubarah in northwestern Qatar until 2001, when the International Court of Justice ruled in Qatar's favor.<sup>116</sup>)



Courtesy of Wikipedia  
Peace Palace, seat of the ICJ

Bahrain solidified its protectorate status with Britain by signing two additional treaties in 1880 and 1892, which collectively gave the British Government all powers over Bahrain's foreign relations and defense. Both Britain and Isa bin Ali were concerned about Ottoman designs on Bahrain, so the new treaties were crafted to ensure that Bahrain remained locked within the British sphere of influence.<sup>117</sup> Over time Britain took an increasing role not only in Bahrain's external matters but in its internal affairs. In 1923 the British Political Resident in Bahrain forced aging Sheikh Isa bin Ali to hand over power to his son Sheikh Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa (although Isa bin Ali formally held his title of *hakim* until his death in 1932).<sup>118</sup> Three years after taking power, Sheikh Hamad appointed Charles Belgrave, a junior officer in the British Colonial Office, as his Personal Advisor. Belgrave continued in that position for a little over three decades, assisting Al Khalifa leadership in the establishment and administration of the modern Bahrain state. Over that time he became a symbol of British colonial interests in the Gulf, and thus a lightning rod for anti-colonial demonstrations in the mid-1950s.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Barbara Kwiatkowska, "The Qatar v. Bahrain Maritime Delimitation and Territorial Question Case," International Boundaries Research Unit, Durham University, 2003, 14.

<sup>117</sup> Richard F. Nyrop et al., "Chapter 2 : Historical Setting," in *Area Handbook for the Persian Gulf States* (Rockville, MD: Wildside Press, 2008), 27.

<sup>118</sup> Royalark.net, "The Al-Khalifa Dynasty: Genealogy," n.d.,

<sup>119</sup> Fred H. Lawson, "Charles Belgrave," in *Gale Encyclopedia of the Mideast and North Africa*, 2004.

### *Discovery of Oil*

Bahrain's first oil well, at Jabal Dukhan near the center of Bahrain Island, was sunk in October 1931 by the Bahrain Petroleum Company (BAPCO), a subsidiary of the Standard Oil Company of California (SOCAL). By June 1932 more than 9,000 barrels of oil were being produced.<sup>120</sup> The oil discovery was the first in the Gulf region, and it came at a particularly opportune time. A decline in spending because of the worldwide Depression and the introduction of less expensive cultured pearls from Japan were about to destroy the Gulf's pearling economy.<sup>121</sup> Shortly after full-scale oil production began in Bahrain, the British established their main naval base in the Gulf region at Jufair, a suburb of Manama. Today this base is operated by the U.S. Navy as the Naval Support Activities Bahrain and is home to the U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet.



© Chris Price  
Oil discovery plaque

<sup>120</sup> Rosemarie Said Zahlan, "Chapter 4: Political Developments in Bahrain," in *The Making of the Modern Gulf States* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 51.

<sup>121</sup> Julia Stuart, "The Pearl Fishers: The Waters Surrounding the Island of Bahrain Harbour Untold Hidden Wealth," *Independent* (UK), 16 January 2010.

### *Social Unrest*

Bahrain's shift away from pearling to an oil-based economy caused many jolts to the nation's traditional social structure. Before the oil boom, Bahrain (like most Gulf sheikdoms) had been a society in which the ruler remained accessible to his people. The *hakim* was both an arbiter in disputes and a provider of generous assistance to his subjects, for which he received taxes and loyalty in return.<sup>122</sup> As Bahrain developed modern governmental structures, the new administrative departments and civil-law courts increasingly created a gap between the ruler and the ruled.<sup>123</sup> By 1938, a reform movement had taken hold in Bahrain, as well as Kuwait and Dubai. Among the numerous issues addressed by protesters were calls to reform the educational system so that graduates would be better trained to take jobs in the government or the oil industry—two economic sectors dominated by the hiring of foreign nationals.<sup>124</sup> Many of these foreign nationals were from India, and the discrepancy between their salaries and those of Bahrainis was another grievance that sparked demonstrations and protest strikes.<sup>125, 126</sup>



Courtesy of Wikipedia  
National Union Committee

The 1938 protests eventually died out as the government took a carrot-and-stick approach to the unrest, implementing a limited set of governmental concessions to protester demands while arresting and deporting several of the demonstration leaders.<sup>127, 128</sup> Additional protests flared over the next several decades, most notably in the mid-1950s. During that time, what began as sectarian riots between Sunnis and Shi'a surprisingly coalesced into a movement of both groups demanding representative government and a lesser role for Britain in Bahrain's affairs. Sheikh Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, who had assumed power upon the death of his father, Sheikh Hamad, in 1942, refused to budge from his opposition to a legislative assembly but finally agreed to recognize the protest leaders' organization, which was renamed the National Union Committee (NUC). But in November 1956, the NUC was outlawed and several leaders were

<sup>122</sup> James Onley, "The Politics of Protection in the Gulf: The Arab Rulers and the British Resident in the Nineteenth Century," *New Arabian Studies* 6 (2004): 39–40.

<sup>123</sup> Rosemarie Said Zahlan, "Chapter 4: Political Developments in Bahrain," in *The Making of the Modern Gulf States* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 52.

<sup>124</sup> Rosemarie Said Zahlan, "Chapter 4: Political Developments in Bahrain," in *The Making of the Modern Gulf States* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 52.

<sup>125</sup> Fuad I. Khuri, "Chapter 9: Organized Protests and Rebellions," in *Tribe and State in Bahrain: The Transformation of Social and Political Authority in an Arab State* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 197.

<sup>126</sup> Centre for Development Studies, "Pre-Departure Training Manual for Intending Emigrants: Bahrain," n.d., 21.

<sup>127</sup> Fuad I. Khuri, "Chapter 9: Organized Protests and Rebellions," in *Tribe and State in Bahrain: The Transformation of Social and Political Authority in an Arab State* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 198.

<sup>128</sup> Rosemarie Said Zahlan, "Chapter 4: Political Developments in Bahrain," in *The Making of the Modern Gulf States* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 52.

arrested and eventually imprisoned in the wake of street protests sparked by the Suez War in Egypt.<sup>129, 130</sup>

### *Independence*

In January 1968, the British Government announced its intention to withdraw militarily and politically from the Persian Gulf within the following 3 years. All the Gulf sheikhdoms, including Bahrain, immediately were forced to face a future without British protection. In Bahrain's case, the concern was even greater because Iran had renewed territorial claims to Bahrain dating back to the pre-Al Khalifa era. The Shah of Iran backed away from these claims after a UN-sponsored survey showed that Bahrainis preferred independence over becoming part of Iran.<sup>131</sup> For a while, the Gulf sheikhdoms negotiated a political alliance involving all members. Eventually, disputes over who should play the leading role in the federation led to a smaller alliance known today as the United Arab Emirates. Qatar and Bahrain, in turn, chose to be independent states.



Courtesy of Wikipedia  
Bahrain Coat of Arms

Bahrain's independence came on 15 August 1971, the same day when Sheikh Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa, ruler of Bahrain since 1961, took the title "Emir of Bahrain and Its Dependencies."<sup>132</sup> The nation's first constitution came into existence in 1973, and in December of that year Bahrain's voters (all male) elected the nation's first National Assembly. But within 2 years, policy disagreements between the Assembly's political blocs and the government (whose Emir-appointed ministers were automatically members of the Assembly) caused the Emir to dissolve the Assembly.<sup>133</sup> In particular, the State Security Law of 1974, issued by the Emir as a means to arrest and imprison any persons considered threats to national security, was viewed by many Assembly members as usurping their authority. There was also much disagreement concerning the Emir's decision to lease the former British naval base in Jufair to the U.S.<sup>134</sup> Although the constitution called for new elections to be held once the National Assembly was dissolved, Bahrain did not have any further parliamentary elections until October 2002.<sup>135</sup>

<sup>129</sup> Rosemarie Said Zahlan, "Chapter 4: Political Developments in Bahrain," in *The Making of the Modern Gulf States* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 57–58.

<sup>130</sup> Fuad I. Khuri, "Chapter 9: Organized Protests and Rebellions," in *Tribe and State in Bahrain: The Transformation of Social and Political Authority in an Arab State* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 212–214.

<sup>131</sup> Kenneth Katzman, "Bahrain: Reform, Security, and U.S. Policy," Congressional Research Service, 13 August 2012, 1.

<sup>132</sup> Ben Cahoon, "Bahrain," WorldStatesman.org, n.d.,

<sup>133</sup> Eric Hooglund, "Chapter 3: Bahrain: Government and Politics: The Constitutional Experiment," in *Persian Gulf States: Country Studies* (Washington, DC: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1992).

<sup>134</sup> Rosemarie Said Zahlan, "Chapter 4: Political Developments in Bahrain," in *The Making of the Modern Gulf States* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 52.

<sup>135</sup> Somini Sengupta, "Bahrain Says 52% Vote Turnout Meets Democratic Goals," *New York Times*, 25 October 2002.

### *Security Concerns*

The Iranian Revolution in 1979 and the creation of the Islamic Republic of Iran brought new threats to Bahrain's Al Khalifa leadership. Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khomeini preached the export of the Iranian Islamic revolution throughout the Middle East, and Bahrain found itself vulnerable to Iranian infiltration among dissident Shi'a within its borders. In March 1981, Bahrain and five Gulf states (Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Oman, and Kuwait) became founding members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), an organization that arose initially over security concerns posed by Iran and Iraq.<sup>136</sup> In December 1981, numerous individuals were arrested (ultimately resulting in 73 convictions) over a plot to overthrow the Bahraini Government.<sup>137</sup> The Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain, an Iran-hosted organization, was ultimately tied to the coup attempt by the Bahraini government.<sup>138</sup>



© Bahrain Mirror / Wikipedia.org  
Sheikh Ali Salman

In December 1994, the Bahraini Government arrested (and later deported) Shi'a cleric Sheikh Ali Salman for his role in demonstrations criticizing Al Khalifa and calling for the restoration of the National Assembly. For much of the remainder of the decade, Bahrain suffered from political unrest that became more sectarian (Shi'a) in its focus.<sup>139</sup> Violence crested in 1996, when several Bahraini hotels and restaurants were the sites of deadly bombings.<sup>140</sup> In June 1996 Bahraini officials announced that they had arrested 44 individuals in another coup plot in which Bahrainis were allegedly trained by the Iranian-supported group Hezbollah.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Neil Partrick, "The GCC: Gulf State Integration or Leadership Cooperation?" (research paper, Kuwait Programme on Development, Government, and Globalisation in the Gulf States, no. 19, November 2011), 5–6,

<sup>137</sup> *New York Times*, "Around the World; 73 Convicted in Bahrain of Trying to Stage Coup," 23 May 1982,

<sup>138</sup> Semira N. Nikou, "Iran Warns Gulf on Bahrain," *The Iran Primer*, ed. Robin Wright, United States Institute of Peace, 24 March 2011.

<sup>139</sup> Kenneth Katzman, "Bahrain: Key Issues for U.S. Policy," Congressional Research Service, 24 March 2005, 2.

<sup>140</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Background Note: Bahrain," 13 January 2012.

<sup>141</sup> Sean Anderson and Stephen Sloan, eds., "Hezbollah," in *Historical Dictionary of Terrorism* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2009), 255.

## Recent History

### *Reforms and a New Constitution*

Sheikh Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa died suddenly in 1999 and was succeeded by his eldest son, Sheikh Hamad II bin Isa Al Khalifa. Unlike his father, Sheikh Hamad was amenable to opening Bahrain's political process and instituting some human rights reforms. In 2000, the new Emir appointed non-Muslims and women for the first time to the Consultative Council, a political body established in 1992. Early the next year, he announced a general amnesty for numerous dissidents and political activists previously exiled or jailed, including Sheikh Ali Salman.<sup>142</sup> Shortly thereafter, Emir Hamad put forth a new constitution, which included a bicameral legislature comprising the government-appointed Consultative (*Shura*) Council and the directly elected Council of Representatives, with both bodies consisting of 40 members. The constitution also established Bahrain as a constitutional monarchy, with the Emir taking the title of King.<sup>143</sup> The new constitution emerged from a royal plan for political reform known as the National Action Charter, which was ratified overwhelmingly in a national referendum in 2001.<sup>144</sup>



© Chief MCS Julian Carroll  
Hamad Bin Isa Al-Khalifa

The first elections for the Council of Representatives were held in October 2002. Many Shi'a political groups boycotted the elections because of their concern that the government-appointed Consultative Council would have a *de facto* veto and could effectively block any legislation produced by the Council of Representatives. Four years later, the largest Shi'a political bloc, *Al Wefaq*, participated in the elections and won 17 of 40 seats amid charges that the government gerrymandered election districts to favor Sunni candidates.

<sup>142</sup> Reuters, "Exiled Bahrain Opposition Leader Returns," *Gulf News*, 21 March 2001.

<sup>143</sup> BBC News, "Bahrain Profile," 3 October 2012.

<sup>144</sup> Amnesty International, "Bahrain: Promising Human Rights Reform Must Continue," 13 March 2001.

### *The Arab Spring and Sectarian Unrest*

Shi'a unrest escalated over the next few years. In the run-up to the 2010 Council of Representative elections, 23 Shi'a opposition leaders were arrested on charges of conspiring to overthrow the government. Once again, all but one Shi'a political society, *Al Wefaq*, led by Sheikh Ali Salman, bowed out of the elections.<sup>145</sup> Despite calls for Shi'a voters to boycott the election, the voter turnout was 67% and *Al Wefaq* picked up 18 seats, a slight increase over 2010.<sup>146</sup>

Bahrain came into the world limelight during the so-called Arab Spring uprisings that began in Tunisia in late 2010. In Bahrain, mostly Shi'a protesters converged during February 2011 on the Pearl Roundabout, a traffic circle near central Manama featuring a large-scale monument commemorating Bahrain's pearling past.<sup>147</sup> Initially, the protesters' demands were for added powers for the Council of Representatives, greater fairness in setting up electoral districts, and increased economic opportunities. Some protesters also called for the ouster of long-time Prime Minister Sheikh Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa, who was generally viewed as a hardliner and less supportive of reform than his nephew, the king.<sup>148</sup> After several days, security forces moved against the gathered demonstrators, using rubber bullets and tear gas to clear the Roundabout, which initiated a walkout of all *Al Wefaq* deputies in the Council of Representatives.

The government eventually pulled their forces back, with the result that increasing numbers of protesters returned to the Pearl Roundabout. Negotiations between the government and protest leaders failed to break the impasse, because the Shi'a opposition split between hardline and moderate factions with differing ideas. As the protests escalated, many feared that Bahrain would devolve into large-scale Sunni-Shi'a conflict. In March 2011, King Hamad instituted a 3-month state of emergency and requested assistance from GCC security forces (mostly from Saudi Arabia). Protesters were cleared out of the Pearl Roundabout, and the monument, a symbol of the protests, was demolished.<sup>149</sup>



© Step / flickr.com  
Pearl Roundabout protest

<sup>145</sup> Bahrain does not officially have political parties. In practice, political factions band together as “political societies” to contest elections.

<sup>146</sup> Kenneth Katzman, “Bahrain: Reform, Security, and U.S. Policy,” Congressional Research Service, 13 August 2012, 5–6.

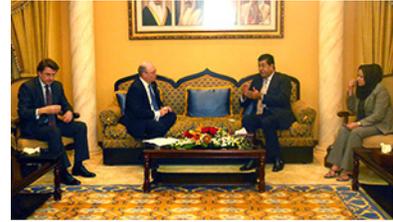
<sup>147</sup> Though most protesters in the unrest since 2011 have been Shi'a, many commentators have noted that Sunnis have joined the protests, and that some Shi'a are government supporters and opposed to the demonstrations. See Souad Mekhennet, “Bahrain Women Take Pride in Vital Protest Role,” *New York Times*, 20 December 2011.

<sup>148</sup> Mark Landler, “Cultivating a Prince to Coax an Ally to Change,” *New York Times*, 9 June 2011.

<sup>149</sup> Kenneth Katzman, “Bahrain: Reform, Security, and U.S. Policy,” Congressional Research Service, 13 August 2012, 8.

### *Aftermath of the Arab Spring Demonstrations*

In late June 2011, King Hamad authorized the creation of a Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI) to investigate and report on the events of the main period of unrest (February–March 2011). The BICI report, released in November 2011, found the government guilty of using excessive force—including torture—against protesters, and found no evidence of collaboration between the protesters and Iranian agencies.<sup>150</sup> The report also faulted opposition leaders for failing to enter a dialogue on government reform proposals and criticized protesters for attacking Asian guest workers.<sup>151</sup>



© Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
BICI Follow-Up Committee

Even before the BICI report was released, a “National Dialogue” was held in the summer of 2011. With several Shi’a opposition figures either in detention or boycotting the talks, the dialogue’s recommendations lacked a broad consensus, but they addressed at least some demands of the opposition to increase the powers of the Council of Representatives. These recommendations, as well as 18 of 26 from the BICI report, have been implemented by the Bahraini government.<sup>152</sup> Yet the government’s efforts were viewed as insufficient by many of the protesters. Anti-government demonstrations continued unabated after the state of emergency was lifted.<sup>153</sup> By September 2012, over 50 protesters had been killed by Bahraini security forces since the beginning of the unrest in February 2011.<sup>154</sup>

<sup>150</sup> Kenneth Katzman, “Bahrain: Reform, Security, and U.S. Policy,” Congressional Research Service, 13 August 2012, 8.

<sup>151</sup> Souad Mekhennet, “In Bahrain, Worries Grow of Violent Shiite-Sunni Confrontation,” *New York Times*, 25 January 2012.

<sup>152</sup> Kenneth Katzman, “Bahrain: Reform, Security, and U.S. Policy,” Congressional Research Service, 11–13 August 2012, 8.

<sup>153</sup> Matthew Cassel, “48 Hours in Sanabis,” *Al Jazeera*, 28 September 2011,

<sup>154</sup> Associated Press, “Bahrain Faces Riots after Boy Dies in Protest,” *New York Times*, 29 September 2012.

## Chapter 2 Assessment

1. Many archaeologists believe that Bahrain was the center of the pre-historic Saffavid civilization.

**FALSE**

Archeologists believe that northern Bahrain was the center of the Dilmun civilization. Bahrain was much later part of the Saffavid Empire during the 17th and 18th centuries C.E.

2. Portugal was the first European nation to enter the Persian Gulf and take control of part of Bahrain.

**TRUE**

The first Western ships to enter the Gulf region were those of Portugal, which conquered the main island of Bahrain in 1521.

3. Al Khalifa internal struggles for power did not fully end until 1869, when Sheikh Isa bin Ali Al Khalifa became the new *hakim*.

**TRUE**

In December 1869 British warships arrived in Bahrain and, with Al Khalifa approval, the British Resident replaced Sheikh Muhammad bin Abdullah with Sheikh Isa bin Ali Al Khalifa. The installation of Isa bin Ali as *hakim* ended the period of succession battles because he remained in power for over 50 years.

4. Bahrain's shift to an economy dominated by oil production caused several jarring social changes, including less access to the *hakim* by his people.

**TRUE**

Bahrain's shift to an oil-based economy caused many jolts to the nation's traditional social structure. Before the oil boom, Bahrain had been a society in which the ruler remained accessible to his people. As Bahrain developed modern governmental structures, the new administrative departments and civil-law courts increasingly created a gap between the ruler and the ruled.

5. Bahrain became a founding member of the Organization of Petroleum States (OPEC) partly because of security concerns with other Gulf states.

**FALSE**

In March 1981, Bahrain and five Gulf states (Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Oman, and Kuwait) became founding members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), an organization that arose initially over security concerns posed by Iran and Iraq.

## CHAPTER 3: ECONOMY

### Introduction

Bahrain was not only the first Persian Gulf nation to have its economy completely reconfigured by the infusion of oil revenues, but also the first to face an economic future in which oil and gas production would no longer drive the economy. Consequently, economic diversification into areas such as financial services and manufacturing has been a hallmark of economic planning in the kingdom for several decades.

Government programs oriented toward privatization have kept Bahrain's public sector employment low compared to its Gulf neighbors.<sup>155</sup> Nonetheless, government spending increased annually from 2003 to 2008 by an average of 12.5% as rising oil prices and an expanding economy generated budgetary surpluses. The collapse of the oil market in 2008 as a result of the worldwide recession spawned deficits that increased even as oil prices began to rebound.<sup>156</sup> In part, the growing deficits in 2011 and 2012 were fostered by political unrest in Bahrain, which caused the government to increase its budget expenditures to help address economic and social concerns.<sup>157</sup>



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<sup>155</sup> Martin Baldwin-Edwards, "Labour Immigration and Labour Markets in the GCC Countries: National Patterns and Trends," March 2011, 17, <http://www2.lse.ac.uk/government/research/resgroups/kuwait/documents/Baldwin-Edwards,%20Martin.pdf>

<sup>156</sup> Bahrain Economic Development Board, "Bahrain Economic Quarterly: Fourth Quarter 2011, 31 May 2012, 18–19, <http://www.bahrainedb.com/uploadedFiles/Bahraincom/BahrainForBusiness/BEQ%20Q4%202011-Q1%202012%20-%20May%2031%202012.pdf>

<sup>157</sup> Reuters, "Bahrain Gov't Plans 6% Cut in Spending in 2013," ArabianBusiness.com, 7 November 2012, <http://www.arabianbusiness.com/bahrain-gov-t-plans-6-cut-in-spending-in-2013-478867.html>

## Agriculture

### Crops

Bahrain's crop production is limited and confined to the northern and western parts of Bahrain Island, where groundwater can be used for irrigation. Soil salinity is also a problem, resulting in less than 3% of Bahrain's land being arable (i.e., used for cultivated crops). Another 5.6% of Bahrain's land is devoted to permanent crops (mostly date palms and citrus trees).<sup>158</sup> Only about 0.5% of Bahrain's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) comes from agriculture, and only 1% of the population is employed in this sector.<sup>159</sup> Besides dates and other fruits (e.g., citrus, bananas, mangoes, pomegranates), vegetables are the main food product grown.<sup>160</sup> All of Bahrain's grain needs (mostly rice and wheat) must be satisfied through imports.<sup>162</sup>



© Graphics.Plus.Int / flickr.com  
Ripening dates

### Fisheries

Fishing and pearling were, until the discovery of oil, the lynchpins of Bahrain's economic production. Today, fishing boats still operate from the nation's harbors, but the contribution of their catch to Bahrain's economy is relatively small.<sup>163</sup> Shrimp has traditionally been the most important fishery species in Bahrain. Hammour (grouper) has long been a popular part of Bahraini cuisine, but overfishing of local waters has depleted the local stock and thereby raised the price to the point that many homes and restaurants are cutting back or looking for alternatives.<sup>164</sup>



© Philippe Leroyer  
Catch of the day

<sup>158</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "Bahrain: Geography," in *The World Factbook*, 4 October 2012,

<sup>159</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "Bahrain: Economy," in *The World Factbook*, 4 October 2012, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ba.html>

<sup>160</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Bahrain: Agriculture and Fishing," 2012.

<sup>161</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization, FAOSTAT, "Top Production—Bahrain—2010," 2012.

<sup>162</sup> International Trade Centre, "Trade Performance HS: Imports of Bahrain—10 Cereals (2010, in USD Thousands)," 2012.

<sup>163</sup> Gary Morgan, Food and Agriculture Organization, "Country Review: Bahrain," September 2004.

<sup>164</sup> Alicia de Haldevang, "In Bahrain Overfishing Blamed for Shortage," Regional Aquaculture Information System, 16 October 2010.

### *Livestock*

The Bahraini government has encouraged cattle raising and chicken farming, and as a result the nation does not need to import as much dairy and meat products.<sup>165</sup> Cow milk, eggs, beef, and chicken meat are among the top food production items in Bahrain.<sup>166</sup> The nation is also a net exporter of cheese since the opening of the Middle East's largest cheese plant by Kraft Foods in 2008.<sup>167, 168</sup>

### **Industry and Manufacturing**

The industrial sector contributes nearly 64% of Bahrain's GDP and employs nearly 80% of its workforce.<sup>169</sup> Heavy industry tied to petroleum refining, petrochemicals, and aluminum smelting and fabrication form the backbone of this crucial economic sector. But the government has also emphasized a diversification strategy in industrial and manufacturing development that has resulted in growth in disparate segments such as steel production, shipbuilding and repair, fiberglass, textiles, and food processing.<sup>170</sup> Many of the new manufacturing facilities are located in Salman Industrial City, a sprawling, multipart industrial park located adjacent to Khalifa bin Salman Port on Muharraq Island.



© Harold Heindell Tejada  
Company headquarters

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<sup>165</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Bahrain: Agriculture and Fishing," 2012.

<sup>166</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization, FAOSTAT, "Top Production—Bahrain—2010," 2012.

<sup>167</sup> Shiraz Hasan, "Kraft Sets Up \$40 Million Plant in Bahrain," *Arab News*, 16 April 2008.

<sup>168</sup> International Trade Centre, "Trade Performance HS: Exports of Bahrain—04 Dairy Products, Eggs, Honey, Edible Animal Product Nes (2010, in USD Thousands)," 2012.

<sup>169</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "Bahrain: Economy," in *The World Factbook*, 4 October 2012.

<sup>170</sup> Oxford Business Group, "The Report: Bahrain 2011," 146.

## Energy Resources

Bahrain has been producing crude oil since the 1930s. Almost all oil production and refining operations in Bahrain are carried out by the government-owned Bahrain Petroleum Company (BAPCO), which is overseen by the National Oil and Gas Authority of Bahrain. BAPCO's only onshore oil field is at Awali, in the center of Bahrain Island, which was the first commercial oil deposit in the Gulf region to begin production.



© Ryan Lackey  
Bahrainian oil well

Awali's crude oil output peaked several decades ago, and today this field only supplies 17 to 18% of Bahrain's crude oil. The remainder comes from Bahrain's half of the offshore Abu Sa'afa field, whose crude oil production is jointly shared with Saudi Arabia. In practice, Saudi Arabia administers the territorial waters and fully controls the production at Abu Sa'afa, and simply transfers revenue to Bahrain from sales of the Abu Sa'afa oil, rather than the oil itself.<sup>171, 172, 173</sup> All the Awali crude oil, plus a large amount of supplemental oil that Bahrain purchases from Saudi Arabia and receives via pipeline, is processed at Bahrain's refinery at Sitra.<sup>174, 175</sup> Unlike other Gulf countries, Bahrain does not export any crude oil, only refined petroleum products. In 2009, BAPCO and the U.S. oil company Occidental Petroleum partnered to form Tatweer Petroleum, which will use state-of-the-art enhanced oil recovery techniques to increase oil and gas production at Awali.<sup>176</sup>

Bahrain also has modest reserves of natural gas, which are managed by the government-controlled Bahrain National Gas Company (BANAGAS). Most of Bahrain's natural gas production is either used domestically for industrial and public utility power generation or re-injected into oil wells to increase declining pressure levels. A lesser amount is used as the feedstock for Bahrain's petrochemical industry. Aluminium Bahrain, the nation's primary aluminum company, uses 25% of Bahrain's natural gas in its operations.<sup>177</sup> Because of the importance of natural gas to Bahrain's industrial sectors, a major factor in sustaining economic growth in Bahrain is the acquisition of new natural gas supplies.<sup>178</sup>

<sup>171</sup> Abdelghani Henni, "Bahrain's Capacity Push," *ArabianOilandGas.com*, 8 March 2011.

<sup>172</sup> U.S. Navy Judge Advocate General's Corps, "DoD 2005.1-M. Saudi Arabia," 535–536.

<sup>173</sup> Joules Burn, "The Saudi Arabian Protectorate of Bahrain," *The Oil Drum*, 27 June 2011,

<sup>174</sup> Joules Burn, "The Saudi Arabian Protectorate of Bahrain," *The Oil Drum*, 27 June 2011,

<sup>175</sup> National Oil and Gas Authority, Bahrain, "Bahrain Petroleum Company," 2010.

<sup>176</sup> Tatweer Petroleum, "Bahrain Oil Field," n.d.,

<sup>177</sup> National Oil and Gas Authority, Bahrain, "Annual Report 2008," 13–14.

<sup>178</sup> QFinance.com, "Bahrain—Economy," 2012.

## Natural Resources

Apart from oil and gas, Bahrain has quite limited national resources. Yet several Bahraini industrial firms import raw mineral materials for energy-intensive production processes. Foremost among these is the aluminum industry. Aluminium Bahrain (Alba) produces numerous aluminum products from imported alumina at its large smelting complex near the BAPCO refinery. The Alba plant generates roughly 12% of Bahrain's GDP and employs 3,000 workers.<sup>179</sup> Several downstream aluminum industries in Bahrain use Alba's output to produce specialized products such as aluminum foil and electric cable.<sup>180</sup>

Bahraini industries also produce steel and cement from imported iron ore and clinker materials, respectively. But the domestic production of these construction materials is far outstripped by demand, so Bahrain must augment its needs through imports.<sup>181, 182, 183</sup> A petrochemical plant operated by the Gulf Petrochemical Industries Company (GPIC) produces ammonia, urea, and methanol from some of Bahrain's natural gas output.



© Allan Donque  
Steel crane

<sup>179</sup> Mowafa Taib, "The Mineral Industry of Bahrain," in *2010 Minerals Yearbook*, U.S. Geological Survey, U. S. Department of the Interior, November 2011,

<sup>180</sup> Mowafa Taib, "The Mineral Industry of Bahrain," in *2010 Minerals Yearbook*, U.S. Geological Survey, U. S. Department of the Interior, November 2011,

<sup>181</sup> International Trade Centre, "Trade Performance HS: Imports of Bahrain—25 Salt, Sulphur, Earth, Stone, Plaster, Lime and Cement (2010, in USD Thousands)," 2012, [http://legacy.intracen.org/appli1/TradeCom/TP\\_IP\\_CI\\_HS4.aspx?IN=25&RP=048&YR=2010&IL=25%20%20Salt,%20sulphur,%20earth,%20stone,%20plaster,%20lime%20and%20cement&TY=I](http://legacy.intracen.org/appli1/TradeCom/TP_IP_CI_HS4.aspx?IN=25&RP=048&YR=2010&IL=25%20%20Salt,%20sulphur,%20earth,%20stone,%20plaster,%20lime%20and%20cement&TY=I)

<sup>182</sup> International Trade Centre, "Trade Performance HS: Imports of Bahrain—72 Iron and Steel (2010, in USD Thousands)," 2012

<sup>183</sup> Blom Invest Bank, "Cement Report in the MENA Region," December 2010, 30–32, <http://www.scribd.com/doc/49759143/24/Production-%C2%A0Consumption-%C2%A0Capacity>

## Trade

Bahrain is a rare country in that its leading import and export items are petroleum products.<sup>184</sup> It imports large amounts of crude oil from Saudi Arabia, which it then refines into gasoline and other oil products at the BAPCO refinery and ships to world destinations. High oil prices over recent years, which raised Bahrain's payments from Saudi Arabia for the Abu Sa'afa crude oil and its export revenues from refined oil products, have helped maintain Bahrain's position as a net exporter (i.e., a positive balance on goods traded).<sup>185</sup> Besides petroleum products, Bahrain exports significant amounts of aluminum materials. Oil and aluminum products produced nearly 80% of Bahrain's export revenues from goods in 2009, the last year that complete and comprehensive trade data are available.<sup>186</sup> Among the other higher revenue exports originating from Bahrain are an eclectic group of items that includes iron ore pellets, air conditioners, cheese, fertilizers, and textiles/clothing.<sup>187</sup>



© Alba4world / wikipedia.org  
Aluminum products awaiting export

Beyond imported raw goods such as crude oil and iron ore that are used for industrial refinement facilities, a high percentage of Bahrain's consumer and capital goods are imported, including automotive vehicles, machinery, electrical equipment, pharmaceuticals, and computers.<sup>188</sup> Saudi Arabia, the source of the crude oil imports, is Bahrain's largest trade partner. Other important trading partners are Japan, India, United States, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, South Korea, and Australia (the source of Bahrain's alumina imports).<sup>189</sup>

<sup>184</sup> International Trade Centre, "Trade Performance HS: Exports and Imports of Bahrain (2010, in USD Thousands)," 2012.

<sup>185</sup> Financial Stability Directorate, Central Bank of Bahrain, "Economic Report 2010," n.d., 62.

<sup>186</sup> International Trade Centre, "Trade Performance HS: Exports and Imports of Bahrain (2010, in USD Thousands)," 2012.

<sup>187</sup> International Trade Centre, "Trade Performance HS: Exports and Imports of Bahrain (2010, in USD Thousands)," 2012.

<sup>188</sup> United Nations Statistics Division, "Trade Profile: Bahrain," n.d.

<sup>189</sup> The Economic Complexity Observatory, "Learn More About: Trade in Bahrain," Macro Connections MIT and Center for International Development at Harvard University, 2012.

## Tourism

Travel and tourism (T&T) spending, including that for domestic business travel, accounted directly for about 5.6% of Bahrain’s GDP in 2011, down from the peak year of 2004 when it was over 9%.<sup>190</sup> Despite the decline, the T&T sector remains important to Bahrain’s economy and, among Gulf nations, only the United Arab Emirates has a greater percentage of GDP supplied by T&T.<sup>191</sup> The unrest in Bahrain in 2011 contributed to a relatively sharp drop in the T&T percentage of GDP from the prior year.<sup>192</sup> It is estimated that nearly 6% of the workforce in Bahrain have jobs directly supported by tourism activity.<sup>193</sup>



© John Connell  
Tourist resort

Traditionally, Bahrain has attracted many visitors from other Gulf nations, particularly Saudi Arabia, because of the island nation’s breadth of entertainment options compared to religiously stricter Arab nations. Movie theaters, water parks, bars, discos, and restaurants and shopping malls not segregated by gender are among the attractions.<sup>194</sup> A causeway linking Bahrain Island with the Saudi Arabian coast facilitates weekend vacation getaways from the Arabian Peninsula.<sup>195</sup> Increasingly, high-profile sporting events also lure visitors to Bahrain. The biggest of these—the Formula One Bahrain Grand Prix—was canceled in Spring 2011 because of the demonstrations but was held the following year, a decision that generated great controversy.<sup>196</sup>

<sup>190</sup> World Travel & Tourism Council, “Travel & Tourism Economic Impact 2012: Bahrain,” 2012, 4,

<sup>191</sup> World Travel & Tourism Council, “Travel & Tourism Economic Impact 2012: Bahrain,” 2012, 8, [http://www.wttc.org/site\\_media/uploads/downloads/bahrain2012.pdf](http://www.wttc.org/site_media/uploads/downloads/bahrain2012.pdf)

<sup>192</sup> World Travel & Tourism Council, “Travel & Tourism Economic Impact 2012: Bahrain,” 2012, 3, [http://www.wttc.org/site\\_media/uploads/downloads/bahrain2012.pdf](http://www.wttc.org/site_media/uploads/downloads/bahrain2012.pdf)

<sup>193</sup> World Travel & Tourism Council, “Travel & Tourism Economic Impact 2012: Bahrain,” 2012, 4.

<sup>194</sup> Yaroslav Trofimov, “Upon Sober Reflection, Bahrain Reconsiders the Wages of Sin,” 9 June 2009.

<sup>195</sup> *Saudi Gazette*, “Bahrain Hotel Sector Recovering as Saudi Tourists Return: CBRE,” 13 July 2011

<sup>196</sup> Jerome Taylor and David Tremayne, “Rage Against the Formula One Machine,” *Independent* (UK), 21 April 2012.

## Banking, Finance, and Currency

As part of the government's plan to diversify the nation's economy, Bahrain in 1975 instituted a policy of allowing offshore banking units (ABUs) to license themselves in Bahrain. Within 3 years, 48 international banks had licensed ABU branches operating in Bahrain.<sup>197</sup> Virtually overnight, Bahrain became the financial center of the Persian Gulf region. Today, Bahrain is home to 411 financial institutions (including 29 retail banks and 75 wholesale banks) that employ nearly 15,000 people.<sup>198</sup> Of these banks, a little less than one-quarter are *shari'a*-compliant, or Islamic, which provide banking services that do not involve the payment of interest.<sup>199</sup> The financial sector provides about 25% of Bahrain's GDP.<sup>200</sup>



© Satish Krishnamurphy  
Bahraini dinar

Bahrain also has numerous insurance companies and investment services organizations. Many of these financial institutions, including the banks, are listed on the Bahrain Stock Exchange (BSE), and their shares are among the most frequently traded of the 50 or so companies listed.<sup>201</sup> In terms of market capitalization (value of total shares), the largest companies on the BSE are Aluminum Bahrain and Ahli United Bank, which represent over one-third of the Exchange's market capitalization.<sup>202</sup> The Bahrain Stock Exchange is owned by the Government of Bahrain and lists Bahraini and foreign companies.<sup>203</sup>

Bahrain's national currency is the Bahraini dinar (symbol BD or BHD), which is divided into 1,000 fils. The dinar's exchange rate is pegged to the U.S. dollar. Since 2001, this rate has officially been USD 1 = BHR 0.376 or BHR 1 = USD 2.66.<sup>204</sup> Neighboring Saudi Arabia's currency, the Saudi riyal (SAR), is also pegged to the U.S. dollar, so the exchange rate between the two Gulf states' currencies is a steady (and convenient) BHR 1 = SAR 10.<sup>205</sup>

<sup>197</sup> A. S. Gerakis and O. Roncesvalles, "Bahrain's Offshore Banking Center," *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 31, no. 2 (1983): 271.

<sup>198</sup> Central Bank of Bahrain, "Financial Sector: Fact Sheet," August 2012, [http://www.cbb.gov.bh/page-p-financial\\_sector\\_fact\\_sheet.htm](http://www.cbb.gov.bh/page-p-financial_sector_fact_sheet.htm)

<sup>199</sup> Financial Stability Directorate, Central Bank of Bahrain, "Economic Report 2010," n.d., 34.

<sup>200</sup> Financial Stability Directorate, Central Bank of Bahrain, "Economic Report 2010," n.d., 34, <http://www.cbb.gov.bh/assets/E%20R/Economic%20Report%202010-%20ENGLISH%20FINAL.pdf>

<sup>201</sup> Financial Stability Directorate, Central Bank of Bahrain, "Economic Report 2010," n.d., 73–76, <http://www.cbb.gov.bh/assets/E%20R/Economic%20Report%202010-%20ENGLISH%20FINAL.pdf>

<sup>202</sup> Financial Stability Directorate, Central Bank of Bahrain, "Economic Report 2010," n.d., 71.

<sup>203</sup> Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "2012 Investment Climate Statement—Bahrain," June 2012.

<sup>204</sup> MENAReport.com, "Bahraini Dinar Officially Pegged to the US Dollar," *Al Bawaba*, 26 December 2001.

<sup>205</sup> CoinMill.com, "Bahraini Dinar (BHD) and Saudi Arabian Riyal (SAR) Currency Exchange Rate Conversion Calculator," 9 November 2012, [http://coinmill.com/BHD\\_SAR.html](http://coinmill.com/BHD_SAR.html)

## Investment

Bahrain has encouraged foreign direct investment (FDI) in its economy, believing that FDI aids in increasing overall economic output and employment, and assists in diversifying an economy that can count on oil revenues for only a few more decades.<sup>206</sup>

Many of the foreign companies that have located manufacturing and services facilities in Bahrain operate in the Bahrain International Investment Park (BIIP), part of the large Salman Industrial City complex.<sup>207</sup>



© Ahedmustafa / flickr.com  
Modern shopping center

Privatization of Bahrain's numerous government-owned companies has been a focus of the current government. Most of the government-owned business assets were placed in the Bahrain Mumtalakat Holding Company in 2006, and one of the official objectives was to reduce the government ownership share of all Mumtalakat investments to less than 50%.<sup>208</sup> By the end of 2011, most of Mumtalakat's more than 35 companies were no longer primarily government-owned.<sup>209, 210</sup> Among the exceptions were the national air carrier, Gulf Air, and Aluminum Bahrain.<sup>211, 212</sup>

A large percentage of the outside investment in Bahraini businesses comes from other Gulf nations, such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates. Many of these business enterprises are joint ventures with Bahraini business interests, both government-owned and private.<sup>213</sup> Bahrain is rated as a nation with a good investment climate, although corruption in contract bidding is sometimes a problem.<sup>214, 215</sup> Bahrain's success in attracting foreign

<sup>206</sup> Lobna Ali Al-Khalifa, "Foreign Direct Investment in Bahrain," 2007, 13–14.

<sup>207</sup> The Gulf Online, "Special Report: The Future of Industry," March 2012, <http://www.thegulfonline.com/Print.aspx?ArtID=4385>

<sup>208</sup> Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "2012 Investment Climate Statement—Bahrain," June 2012.

<sup>209</sup> Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "2012 Investment Climate Statement—Bahrain," June 2012,

<sup>210</sup> Bahrain Mumtalakat Holding Company, "Investment Philosophy: Portfolio," 2012, <http://www.bmhc.bh/en/17/portfolio.aspx>

<sup>211</sup> Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "2012 Investment Climate Statement—Bahrain," June 2012, <http://www.state.gov/e/eb/rls/othr/ics/2012/191105.htm>

<sup>212</sup> Wael Mahdi, "Bahrain's Mutalakat Full-Year Loss Widens on Impairments," Bloomberg.com, 8 July 2012.

<sup>213</sup> Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "2012 Investment Climate Statement—Bahrain," June 2012, 1–2, <http://www.state.gov/e/eb/rls/othr/ics/2012/191105.htm>

<sup>214</sup> Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "2012 Investment Climate Statement—Bahrain," June 2012, 1–2, <http://www.state.gov/e/eb/rls/othr/ics/2012/191105.htm>

<sup>215</sup> Heritage Foundation, "2012 Index of Economic Freedom: Bahrain," 2012, <http://www.heritage.org/index/country/bahrain>

investment is reflected by its high ratio of total FDI to GDP (2:3 in 2010), which is more than double the world average and the highest by far in the Gulf region.<sup>216, 217</sup>

## Transportation

Bahrain, a small island nation, has traditionally depended on sea and air travel as its transportation links to the outside world. This changed significantly in 1986 with the opening of the 25-km (16-mi) King Fahd Causeway spanning the Gulf of Bahrain, linking Bahrain Island with the Saudi Arabian coast. The busy four-lane highway now handles 45,000 to 60,000 vehicles per day. A 42-km (26-mi) causeway connecting Bahrain to Qatar has long been planned, but its construction start has been delayed numerous times.<sup>218</sup>



© Mohamed Ghuloom  
Linking Bahrain & Saudi Arabia

Besides providing a road link for visitors to Bahrain, the King Fahd Causeway is an important conduit for goods moving to and from Saudi Arabia. More than 1,200 freight-hauling trucks travel daily on this vital transport corridor that was designed for only 150 trucks per day, which sometimes leads to long delays on the Bahraini side where parking is limited.<sup>219, 220</sup> Plans are in place to expand the customs station on a man-made island in the center of the causeway to ease the congestion.<sup>221</sup> In addition, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia have signed an agreement to construct a railway paralleling the King Fahd Causeway, increasing the ability to transport heavy cargo between the two nations.<sup>222</sup>

<sup>216</sup> Bahrain Economic Development Board, “UNCTAD World Investment Report 2011,” n.d., <http://www.bahrainedb.com/world-investment-report-2011.aspx>

<sup>217</sup> United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), “Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) Overview, Selected Years,” 2012, [http://unctad.org/sections/dite\\_dir/docs/wir11\\_fs\\_bh\\_en.pdf](http://unctad.org/sections/dite_dir/docs/wir11_fs_bh_en.pdf)

<sup>218</sup> Oxford Business Group, “Bahrain: Tracks to the Future,” 26 April 2012.

<sup>219</sup> Roadtraffic-technology.com, “King Fahd Causeway, Bahrain,” n.d.

<sup>220</sup> Mahmood Rafique, “Bahrain Strengthens Its Transport Sector,” *24X7 News*, 26 May 2012.

<sup>221</sup> Roadtraffic-technology.com, “King Fahd Causeway, Bahrain,” n.d.

<sup>222</sup> Oxford Business Group, “Bahrain: Tracks to the Future,” 26 April 2012.

Passengers and cargo arriving in Bahrain via air go through Bahrain International Airport (BIA) on Muharraq Island. Approximately 7.8 million passengers traveled through BIA in 2011, a 12% decline from 2010 that was attributed to the effects of the Arab Spring revolts on businesses in Bahrain and other nations in the region.<sup>223</sup> Cargo traffic declined by a similar percentage in 2011.<sup>224</sup> Gulf Air, the primary flag carrier of Bahrain, handled nearly two-thirds of BIA's passenger traffic. Much smaller Bahrain Air, Bahrain's only other commercial airline, carried another 7% of the passenger load.<sup>225</sup> Both airlines have struggled to achieve profitability in recent years, and government-owned Gulf Air has survived only through periodic cash infusions approved by the legislature.<sup>226, 227</sup>

Since its opening in 2009, Khalifa bin Salman Port in Salman Industrial City has been Bahrain's primary shipping hub, replacing Mina Salman. The latter port, near the Naval Support Activity (NSA) Bahrain base, is now used for construction materials imports.<sup>228</sup>

### Standard of Living

By world standards, Bahrain's citizens do not suffer from extreme poverty. According to the United Nations Development Programme, the nation is ranked as a Very Highly Developed country.<sup>229</sup> Income disparity is high relative to many developed countries, although not nearly as high as in lesser developed countries. Using the Gini Index, a measure that quantifies the degree of income disparity in a country, Bahrain has a greater amount of income disparity than Japan but less than the United States.<sup>230</sup> But among the poorest Bahraini citizens, the disparity is greater. Roughly 22% of Bahraini households earn an income below BD 463 (USD 1,228) per month, a level that marks relative poverty (i.e., an income level less than half the median national income).<sup>231</sup> This percentage is high compared with other developed countries, including the U.S.



© MaMa BB / flickr.com  
Poor villager

<sup>223</sup> Civil Aviation Affairs, Kingdom of Bahrain, "Annual Statistics Report 2011," 2012, 1.

<sup>224</sup> Civil Aviation Affairs, Kingdom of Bahrain, "Annual Statistics Report 2011," 2012, 8.

<sup>225</sup> Civil Aviation Affairs, Kingdom of Bahrain, "Annual Statistics Report 2011," 2012, 2.

<sup>226</sup> AMEInfo.com, "Not All Gulf Carriers Have Rosy Outlook," 10 April 2012.

<sup>227</sup> *Al Bawaba*, "Gulf Air Still Cleared For Take-Off as Losses Mount Up," 9 October 2012.

<sup>228</sup> Mohammed al-Jayousi, "Bahrain Dedicates New Terminal to Building Materials," *Al-Shorfa*, 2 March 2012.

<sup>229</sup> United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 2011*, "Table 1—Human Development Index and Its Components," 2012, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr2011/download/>

<sup>230</sup> Bahrain Economic Development Board, "Bahrain Economic Quarterly: Third Quarter 2011," 20 December 2011, 17, <http://www.bahrainedb.com/uploadedFiles/Bahraincom/BahrainForBusiness/BEQ%20Q3%202011%20%2820%2012%202011%29.pdf>

<sup>231</sup> Bahrain Economic Development Board, "Bahrain Economic Quarterly: Third Quarter 2011," 20 December 2011, 14.

But Bahrain's subsidies on food, fuel, and utilities are not factored into this measurement, nor are transfers of government revenues to social programs such as education and health.<sup>232</sup>

Unemployment is often pointed to as Bahrain's top domestic economic issue, although unemployment figures vary widely from source to source, ranging from under 5% to 15–20%.<sup>233, 234, 235</sup> Bahrain's employment situation is complicated by the nation's high percentage of foreign workers. From 1975 to 2008, the percentage of foreign workers in Bahrain nearly doubled from just under 40% to nearly 77%.<sup>236</sup> (Note that this trend is even more prevalent in other countries of the Gulf region.) More than one-third of Bahraini nationals work in the public sector, where the working conditions, wages, and benefits are often viewed as preferable to those in much of the private sector.<sup>237</sup> Wages in general are lower in the private sector than the public sector, in part because many "guest worker" positions are in construction and other private service-sector positions in which low cost is more important to employers than the level of technical skills.<sup>238</sup> One of Bahrain's upcoming challenges will be to grow the number of private-sector jobs needed for its growing number of young workers and women entering the workforce.<sup>239</sup>

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<sup>232</sup> Bahrain Economic Development Board, "Bahrain Economic Quarterly: Third Quarter 2011," 20 December 2011, 17.

<sup>233</sup> Martin Baldwin-Edwards, "Labour Immigration and Labour Markets in the GCC Countries: National Patterns and Trends," March 2011, 19.

<sup>234</sup> Elizabeth Broomhall, "Bahrain and Oman Have Highest Gulf Unemployment Rates," *ArabianBusiness.com*, 7 July 2011.

<sup>235</sup> Bahrain Economic Development Board, "Bahrain Economic Quarterly: Fourth Quarter 2011," 31 May 2012, 63.

<sup>236</sup> Martin Baldwin-Edwards, "Labour Immigration and Labour Markets in the GCC Countries: National Patterns and Trends," March 2011, 9.

<sup>237</sup> Martin Baldwin-Edwards, "Labour Immigration and Labour Markets in the GCC Countries: National Patterns and Trends," March 2011, 14–15.  
<http://www2.lse.ac.uk/government/research/resgroups/kuwait/documents/Baldwin-Edwards,%20Martin.pdf>

<sup>238</sup> Martin Baldwin-Edwards, "Labour Immigration and Labour Markets in the GCC Countries: National Patterns and Trends," March 2011, 24.

<sup>239</sup> Bahrain Economic Development Board, "4% Growth in Economy and Bahraini Workforce," *Tanmiya*, December 2010, <http://www.bahrainedb.com/enewsletter/en/default.asp?action=article&id=70>

## Organizations

Bahrain is a member of most international economic organizations, including the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization.<sup>240</sup> The most important regional economic organization for Bahrain is the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), which includes Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. All these nations have economies that are similar in many respects, including a traditional reliance on hydrocarbons as an economic base, an increasing emphasis on economic diversification beyond hydrocarbons, large populations of foreign workers, and an openness to free-trade policies.<sup>241</sup>



© International Monetary Fund  
Bahrain Finance Minister

In recent years, the GCC has implemented several measures for greater regional economic integration. Among them are a Customs Union Agreement signed in 2003, which eliminated tariffs on trade between GCC members involving goods of local origin. Financial and business integration has also improved, especially since the establishment of a GCC Common Market in 2008. As a result, a large amount of external investments made by GCC companies and governments are now directed toward other GCC member states.<sup>242</sup> Infrastructure interconnections, such as electricity grids, road networks, and air transport routing, have also improved over time.<sup>243</sup> Since the early 1980s, the GCC has also set a goal of implementing a uniform monetary currency for its member states, but such a monetary union has been long delayed. Two GCC members—Oman and the United Arab Emirates—have already announced their pullout from the GCC monetary union project.<sup>244</sup>

<sup>240</sup> Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State, “U.S. Relations With Bahrain, 28 August 2012.

<sup>241</sup> World Bank, “Economic Integration in the GCC,” October 2010, 2–4.

<sup>242</sup> World Bank, “Economic Integration in the GCC,” October 2010, 13, 24, <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTMENA/Resources/GCCStudyweb.pdf>

<sup>243</sup> World Bank, “Economic Integration in the GCC,” October 2010, 15–16, <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTMENA/Resources/GCCStudyweb.pdf>

<sup>244</sup> Reuters, “Gulf Arabs Shouldn’t Delay Single Currency: Qatar Bank Official,” *Al Arabiya*, 27 July 2012, <http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/07/27/228669.html>

### Chapter 3 Assessment

1. Bahrain's agricultural production is limited, and all of its grain must be imported.

**TRUE**

Bahrain's crop production is limited and confined to the northern and western parts of Bahrain Island. All of Bahrain's grain needs (mostly rice and wheat) must be satisfied through imports.

2. Virtually all of Bahrain's industrial output comes from the petroleum sector.

**FALSE**

The Bahraini government has emphasized a diversification strategy in industrial and manufacturing development that has resulted in growth in disparate segments such as steel production, shipbuilding and repair, fiberglass, textiles, and food processing.

3. Despite having few natural resources besides oil and gas, Bahrain has several heavy industries involved in producing materials from raw and semi-processed minerals exported from elsewhere.

**TRUE**

Apart from oil and gas, Bahrain has limited national resources. Yet several Bahraini industrial firms import raw mineral materials for energy-intensive production processes. Foremost among these is the aluminum industry.

4. Bahrain's leading exports and leading imports are both in the petroleum products category.

**TRUE**

Bahrain is a rare country in that its leading import and export items are petroleum products. It imports large amounts of crude oil from Saudi Arabia, which it then refines into gasoline and other oil products at the BAPCO refinery in Bahrain and ships to world destinations.

5. All of Bahrain's most important trading partners are European nations.

**FALSE**

Saudi Arabia, the source of the crude oil imports, is Bahrain's largest trade partner. Other important trading partners of Bahrain are Japan, India, United States, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, South Korea, and Australia (the source of Bahrain's alumina imports).

## CHAPTER 4: SOCIETY

### Introduction

For a small island country, Bahrain is a remarkably diverse place. Various dualities are evident in the nation's social fabric, among them natives/foreigners, Sunni/Shi'ite, tribal/non-tribal, Arab/Persian, and rich/poor.<sup>245</sup> At one time, rural/urban could have been added to this list, but Bahrain's steady urban expansion has engulfed many of Bahrain's rural villages and essentially rendered them as suburbs of the ever-growing Manama/Muharraq metropolis. Though traditionally a conservative society, Bahrain has developed a reputation for tolerance that some feel is threatened by the social divides that have been heightened during the current period of political unrest.<sup>246</sup>



© Hussain Isa-Alderazi  
Men drinking tea

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<sup>245</sup> Leila Vignal, review of *Histories of City and State in the Persian Gulf: Manama Since 1800*, by Nelida Fuccaro, Institute of Historical Research, University of London, March 2010.

<sup>246</sup> John Ridley, "Letter From Bahrain—Moving Forward as a Nation," *Your Middle East*, 22 September 2012.

## Ethnic and Linguistic Groups

Bahrain is a nation with two populations: Bahraini and non-Bahraini. The native Bahrain population is actually a minority, with only 46% of residents holding citizenship.<sup>247</sup> The majority non-Bahraini population overwhelmingly consists of guest workers and their family members. Although no official demographic data exist on the nationalities of the non-Bahraini population, by various sources it is estimated that 150,000 to 350,000 Indians, 74,000 Bangladeshi, 65,000 Pakistanis, 31,000 Filipinos, and 30,000 Nepalese live in Bahrain.<sup>248, 249, 250, 251, 252</sup>



Courtesy of Wikipedia  
Bahraini man

Most of Bahrain's non-foreign citizens are ethnic Arabs who speak Arabic. But within this group, there is a religious and historical divide that reflects the tensions that have led to unrest in Bahrain. Most of Bahrain's Shi'a Muslims view themselves as Baharna (singular: Bahraini), who trace their roots to the eastern Arabian tribes who inhabited Bahrain and the adjacent areas of the Arabian mainland prior to the introduction of Islam. Their ancestors embraced Shi'a Islam shortly after the Islamic rift between the Shi'ites and Sunnis began. Later, they became associated with the Qarmatians, a radical Ismaili Shi'a sect that originally arose in modern Iraq.<sup>253, 254</sup> Another Shi'a group in Bahrain, the 'Ajam, migrated to Bahrain from Persia and have largely remained separate from the Baharna. They have mostly stayed on the sidelines during the recent political unrest in Bahrain.<sup>255</sup>

The Sunni groups in Bahrain include the Najdi, who are originally from a region known as al-Najd in central Arabia. The non-tribal Najdi came to Bahrain at the same time that Al Khalifa and other Sunni tribal groups that supported them arrived in Bahrain. Another Sunni Arab group is the Huwala, who traditionally have been merchants and traders. Over the centuries they have migrated from the Arabian side of the Persian Gulf to Persia and back again as the political tides have turned.<sup>256</sup>

<sup>247</sup> Kingdom of Bahrain, Census 2010, "Census Results," 2010.

<sup>248</sup> P.T. Thufail, "Indians in Bahrain Fear Instability Will Cost Them Their Jobs," *Tehelka*, 22 February 2011.

<sup>249</sup> *República* (Nepal), "Bahrain Unrest Hits Nepali Workers Too," 18 February 2011

<sup>250</sup> Nabeel Rajab, "Bangladeshi Workers and Bahrain, An Analysis From Two Angles: Business and Human Rights," Bahrain Center for Human Rights, n.d.

<sup>251</sup> Jerry E. Esplanada, "Bahrain PM Assures PH of Filipinos' Safety," *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 20 March 2011

<sup>252</sup> Alex Delmar-Morgan, "Bahrain's Foreign Police Add to Tensions," *Wall Street Journal*, 25 March 2011

<sup>253</sup> Juan Cole, "Chapter 3: Rival Empires of Trade and Shi'ism in Eastern Arabia," in *Sacred Space and Holy War: The Politics, Culture and History of Shi'ite Islam* (London: I. B. Taurus, 2005), 32–33.

<sup>254</sup> Laurence Louër, "Chapter 1: Imposed States," in *Transnational Shia Politics: Religious and Political Networks in the Gulf* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 13.

<sup>255</sup> Graham E. Fuller and Rend Rahim Francke, "Chapter 6: The Shi'a of Bahrain," in *The Arab Shi'a: The Forgotten Muslims* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 120–121.

<sup>256</sup> Rosemarie Said Zahlan, "Chapter 4: Political Development in Bahrain," in *The Making of the Modern Gulf States* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 47.

## Religion

The vast majority of Bahrain's citizens are Muslims, and Islam is the state religion. Personal law for Bahraini Muslims is governed under *shari'a*, or Islamic law. But these laws may differ between the Sunni and Shi'a courts.<sup>257</sup> Though no official information is available regarding the percentages of the nation's Shi'ite Muslims and Sunni Muslims, nearly all sources estimate the Shi'a to be the majority sect. These estimates usually place the Shi'ite somewhere between 65% and 75% of the Bahraini population.<sup>258</sup> Lesser but still significant percentages of the people in Bahrain are adherents of Christianity or Hinduism, but virtually all these residents are non-Bahraini nationals who are temporarily in the country on work contracts.<sup>259</sup>



© Fuad Al Ansaru  
Mosque & modern office tower

The ruling Al Khalifa tribe is Sunni Muslim, as are most of the members of Bahrain's police and military forces.<sup>260</sup> Traditionally, Bahrain's Shi'ite population has lived on Bahrain Island in small villages, many of which are either incorporated into or suburbs of Manama. Traditionally, the communal gathering spots in the Shi'a villages and neighborhoods have been *matams*, which are congregational halls used for religious celebrations and ceremonies unique to the Shi'a, such as Ashura.<sup>261</sup>

Bahrain is more religiously tolerant than its immediate neighbors (i.e., Saudi Arabia, Qatar) on the Arabian Peninsula. Although the nation's constitution does not explicitly guarantee freedom of religion, it does allow for freedom of worship.<sup>262</sup> Thousands of Shi'a citizens from other Gulf nations come to Bahrain each year to participate in the Ashura religious commemorations, which are not allowed to be publically celebrated in their countries.<sup>263</sup>

<sup>257</sup> Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, U.S. Department of State, "Bahrain," in *International Religious Freedom Report for 2011*, 30 July 2012, <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>

<sup>258</sup> Marina Ottaway, "Bahrain: Between the United States and Saudi Arabia," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 4 April 2011, <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/2011/04/04/bahrain-between-united-states-and-saudi-arabia/t8>

<sup>259</sup> Tore Kjeilen, LookLex Encyclopedia, "Bahrain: Religions," n.d.

<sup>260</sup> Justin Gengler, "Bahrain's Sunni Awakening," Middle East Research and Information Project, 17 January 2012, <http://www.merip.org/mero/mero011712>

<sup>261</sup> Geographic Services, Inc., "Informal Networks & Human Geography: The Bahraini Matam," 14 December 2011, <http://www.geographic-services.net/news/pov/informal-networks-and-human-geography-the-bahraini-matam/>

<sup>262</sup> Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, U.S. Department of State, "Bahrain," in *International Religious Freedom Report for 2011*, 30 July 2012

<sup>263</sup> Matthew Cassel, "Ashura in Bahrain: Commemorating Hussein," (blog), *Al-Akhbar* (Bahrain), n.d.

But the unrest beginning in 2011, which ultimately led to several months of martial law, deepened lingering tensions between Bahrain's Sunnis and Shi'ites. According to an independent follow-up inquiry released later in 2011, the government destroyed 28 Shi'a mosques during the period of martial law and also arrested several Shi'a clerics who were associated with the protests.<sup>264</sup> The perception of many Shi'a that they have been unfairly treated politically and economically by the Al Khalifa government remains a key division between the nation's two Muslim sects.<sup>265</sup>

## Cuisine

Many of Bahrain's popular food dishes are typical Arab food items, including *falafel* (fried chickpea balls served in *khubz*, or pita bread) and *shawarma* (shavings of spit-grilled lamb or chicken served in *khubz*). Fish from the Persian Gulf is also an important part of the local diet, including *hammour* (grouper), *safi* (rabbit fish), *chanad* (mackerel), and shrimp, although overfishing is rapidly reducing the numbers of some of the most popular types of fish.<sup>266, 267, 268</sup>



© Bob Peters  
Lamb dish with dates

*Mahmoos* is perhaps the most well-known Bahraini dish, although several variants are popular throughout the Gulf region. It features chicken and rice (fish can be substituted for the chicken) that is flavored with numerous spices, including turmeric, cumin, cinnamon, cardamom, coriander, and garlic cloves.<sup>269, 270</sup> Other popular dishes include *muhammar*, which is a sweet rice that is sprinkled with sugared dates and often served with fish; and *qoozi*, a grilled lamb specialty featuring eggs, rice, numerous spices, and rice.<sup>271, 272</sup> A favorite snack food or appetizer is *sambousa*, a fried pastry filled with meat, cheese, vegetables, sugar, or nuts.<sup>273</sup>

<sup>264</sup> Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, U.S. Department of State, "Bahrain," in *International Religious Freedom Report for 2011*, 30 July 2012, <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>

<sup>265</sup> Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, U.S. Department of State, "Bahrain," in *International Religious Freedom Report for 2011*, 30 July 2012, <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>

<sup>266</sup> AlloExpat.com, "Bahrain Cuisine," 2012

<sup>267</sup> Iman Sherif, "Conservationists Launch Drive against Overfishing in Gulf," *Gulf News* (United Arab Emirates), 26 February 2012

<sup>268</sup> Mohammed al-Jayousi, "Shrimp Return to Bahrain Markets after Seasonal Ban," *Al-Shorfa* (USCENTCOM), 23 July 2012

<sup>269</sup> AlloExpat.com, "Bahrain Cuisine," 2012

<sup>270</sup> Um Safia, "Traditional Bahraini Chicken Machboos/Machbous," 18 May 2008

<sup>271</sup> Um Safia, "Traditional Bahraini Muhammar—Sweet Rice Dish," 18 May 2008

<sup>272</sup> Canadian 360, "Bahrain Travel Highlights," n.d.

<sup>273</sup> World Travel Guide, "Food and Drink in Bahrain," n.d.

Coffee, or *gahwa*, is the national drink in Bahrain, and numerous coffee houses can be found all around the island. Some cafes include *shisha* (hookah) pipes, in which tobacco smoke is drawn through water. Traditionally, Bahraini coffee is flavored with rosewater, saffron, and cardamom and served in small, handleless cups known as *finjans*.<sup>274, 275, 276</sup> Dates and sweets are served with the coffee; the coffee itself is never sweetened with sugar.<sup>277</sup>

### Traditional Clothing

Many Bahraini citizens today wear Western clothing, including some Bahraini women who are not under an enforced dress code like that in Saudi Arabia. Bahraini women often are seen wearing an *abaya* or *daffah*, which is a loose-fitting black gown. Women wearing the *abaya* will generally also separately wear a black *hijab* to cover the head. For men, an ankle-length, long-sleeved cotton garment known as the *thobe* is commonly worn. During summer a white *thobe* is standard, but darker shades, sometimes made from heavier material, are not uncommon during the winter months. Bahraini men often wear a white or white-and-red checked scarf known as a *ghutra* over their heads. The *ghutra* lies upon a crocheted skull cap and is held in place by a black, double-looped cord known as an *agal*. The *bisht*, a robe that is usually black or gold, is sometimes worn over the *thobe*, especially by Bahraini men who hold a prominent position.<sup>278</sup>



© openDemocracy / flickr.com  
Arab men

<sup>274</sup> Ghada Alansari, “The Café Culture,” n.d.

<sup>275</sup> AlloExpat.com, “Bahrain Cuisine,” 2012

<sup>276</sup> Asma Salman, “What’s Brewing in Bahrain,” *Gulf Weekly* (Bahrain), 20–26 June 2007,

<sup>277</sup> Asma Salman, “What’s Brewing in Bahrain,” *Gulf Weekly* (Bahrain), 20–26 June 2007,

<sup>278</sup> LiveWorkExplore.com, “Bahrain: National Dress,” n.d.

## Gender Issues

Although Bahraini women's rights have increased since 1999, gender-based discrimination continues to exist in some areas. In 2009, Bahrain adopted its first Personal Status Law, which introduced regulations protecting women's rights in family law issues such as marriage, divorce, child custody, and inheritance. Prior to the 2009 law, formally known as the Family Provision Act, these issues were adjudicated in shari'a courts by Islamic jurists that often had little legal training and were prone to arbitrary rulings based on their own interpretations of Islamic law. But the Personal Status Law applies only to Sunni shari'a courts, because Shi'a clerics and lawmakers blocked its implementation in Jaafari (i.e., Shi'a) courts.<sup>279</sup> Under this law, women are granted the right to marry only with their consent and the right to negotiate terms and conditions in prenuptial agreements. They also have greater latitude to file for divorce and receive alimony if granted custody of children. Unlike the situation for men, women must still provide legal grounds (e.g., family abandonment, spousal drug addiction) to initiate divorce proceedings.<sup>280</sup>



© Jurgen Proschinger  
Mothers with children

Since 2001, the Supreme Council of Women (SCW) has taken a lead role in Bahrain in promoting issues around an increased role for women within Bahraini society. The SCW's head is Queen Sabika bint Ibrahim al-Khalifa, the king's first wife and mother of the crown prince. The SCW has worked closely with Tamkeen, a government agency created to support the development of Bahrain's private sector and raise the participation level of Bahraini citizens within this sector. Job training and entrepreneurial funding programs have been important elements of Tamkeen's numerous initiatives. One goal set by Tamkeen and SCW is to increase the number of Bahraini women working in traditionally male-dominated professions.<sup>281</sup>

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<sup>279</sup> Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, U.S. Department of State, "Bahrain," in *International Religious Freedom Report for 2011*, 30 July 2012

<sup>280</sup> Magdalena Karolak, "Bahrain Women in the 21st Century: Disputed Legacy of the Unfinished Revolution," *Journal of International Women's Studies* 13 (October 2012): 8.

<sup>281</sup> Magdalena Karolak, "Bahrain Women in the 21st Century: Disputed Legacy of the Unfinished Revolution," *Journal of International Women's Studies* 13 (October 2012): 7.  
[http://www.bridgew.edu/soas/jiws/Vol13\\_no5/article3.pdf](http://www.bridgew.edu/soas/jiws/Vol13_no5/article3.pdf)

## Arts

### Pottery

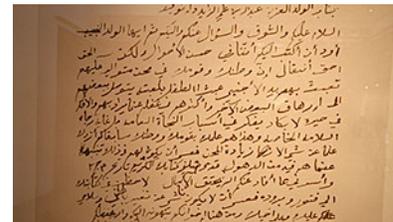
Bahrain's oldest crafts may be seen at the Bahrain National Museum, where clay funerary jars dating back to the Dilmun era are on display.<sup>282</sup> This tradition of ceramic arts has continued, although the number of practitioners has steadily declined over recent decades. To help revive tourism interest in this indigenous art form, Bahrain's Ministry of Culture has begun to promote the island's remaining traditional pottery workshops, most of which are in the village of A'ali near the sprawling ancient burial grounds.<sup>283</sup>



© Ahmed Rabea  
Potter at work

### Poetry

Bahrain's classical literary tradition, like the rest of the Arab world, is poetry. Among the better known Bahraini poets is Ibrahim al-Arrayedh (1908–2002), who published his first poetry collection in 1931. His first work came out merely 4 years after beginning his studies in Arabic, after having spent most of his early life in India.<sup>284, 285</sup> He is credited with ushering in a more classical romantic style to Bahraini poetry that focused more on inner, emotional themes.<sup>286</sup>



© Ewan McIntosh  
Museum exhibit

Among contemporary Bahraini poets, Qassim Haddad (1948–) has published numerous collections since 1970 that have won him fame across the Arab world. Haddad was imprisoned for 5 years beginning in the 1960s for his participation in the Bahraini opposition movement, and much of his early poetry carried overtly political themes.<sup>287</sup> Over the ensuing decades, he has written in a number of styles, from free verse to prose poems, and numerous English translations of his poetry now exist. His poems are often dark and challenging, punctuated with hallucinatory verbal images that reflect the “anxiety of the absurdity and distortion in the modern world.”<sup>288, 289</sup>

<sup>282</sup> Irene Butler, “Kingdom of Bahrain,” n.d.

<sup>283</sup> Ministry of Culture, Kingdom of Bahrain, “A’ali Burial Mounds and Workshops,” 2012

<sup>284</sup> ShaikhEbrahimCenter.org, “Ibrahim Al Arrayed House of Poetry,” 2012

<sup>285</sup> UNESCO, “100th Anniversary of the Birth of Ebrahim al-Arrayed, Poet (1908–2002) (2008),” 2008

<sup>286</sup> Alawi Al-Hashmi, “Introduction,” in *Voices: An Annotated Anthology of Contemporary Bahraini Poetry*, ed. and trans. Hasan Marhamah (Bloomington, IN: Trafford Publishing, 2010), 8.

<sup>287</sup> International Literature Festival Berlin, “Qassim Haddad [Bahrain, Germany],” 2008.

<sup>288</sup> Rania Khallaf, “Qassem Haddad: The Penman of Manama,” *Al-Ahram Weekly* (Egypt), 18 May 2006,

<sup>289</sup> Bassam K. Frangieh, “Qassim Haddad: Resignation and Revolution,” *Banibal* 17 (Summer 2003)

### Music

One of Bahrain’s best-known musicians was Ali Bahar (1960–2011), an organ player/guitarist/singer who led the Bahraini band Al Ekhwa (“the Brothers”). Bahar and Al Ekhwa’s music blended traditional Arab and various Western musical styles and was popular for over two decades. The band performed several covers of reggae songs or utilized reggae rhythms in their own songs, so Bahar was sometimes referred to as “the Bob Marley of the Gulf.”<sup>290</sup> Bahar stood out for his singing, which emphasized his distinctly Bahraini dialect, and Al Ekhwa’s musical accompaniment often featured the electric guitar.<sup>291</sup>



© Bottomline / Wikipedia.org  
Playing an Oud

Another popular, and somewhat more traditional, Bahraini musical artist is Khaled al Sheikh (1958–), a *khaliji* performer. *Khaliji* is the traditional popular music of the Gulf region and features the *oud* (a pear-shaped fretless guitar, similar to a lute) and the *tabla* drum. Strings, synthesizers, and numerous other instruments are part of the mix in modern *khaliji* recordings. Al Shaikh is a talented oud player and singer/composer who has been regularly putting out new recordings for nearly three decades.<sup>292</sup>

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<sup>290</sup> Habib Toumi, “Bahraini Singer Ali Bahar, 50, dies,” *Gulf News* (United Arab Emirates), 3 July 2011, <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/bahrain/bahraini-singer-ali-bahar-50-dies-1.832124>

<sup>291</sup> “Biography: Alekhwa Band: Biography,,” no date, <http://www.yala.fm/en/artists/alekhwa-band-ed90f8d0b9b3e4e2fce5db3c937f9baf/biography>

<sup>292</sup> “Khaled Al Sheikh: Biography,,” no date, <http://www.yala.fm/en/artists/khaled-al-sheikh-3dc8b41513fb606e1163560bbd5ad108/biography>

## Sports and Recreation

Football (soccer) is the most popularly followed sport in Bahrain. Ten teams currently compete in the Bahraini Premier League, which has existed since 1957.<sup>293, 294</sup> The men's national team has never been to the World Cup, but narrowly missed qualifying in both 2006 and 2010 when it lost a play-in game for a spot in the competition.<sup>295, 296</sup> Bahrain also has a women's national football team, the first nation in the Gulf region to sponsor a team.<sup>297</sup>

Basketball is another popular team sport in Bahrain. The Bahrain Basketball Association is the nation's top league, with most of the team rosters filled by native Bahrainis and a few journeyman American players.<sup>298</sup> Cricket has a large following among Bahrain's large population of workers from South Asian countries such as India and Pakistan, with roughly 125 teams playing in numerous leagues.<sup>299</sup>

Horse sports—primarily racing and show jumping—are popular throughout the Arab world, including Bahrain. Both Arabian and thoroughbred horses are bred at several stud farms within the nation.<sup>300</sup> The Rashid Equestrian and Horse Racing Club runs regular racing from fall to spring at a racetrack adjacent to Sakhir Palace in Bahrain's southern desert region.<sup>301</sup> Also in this area of the island is the Bahrain International Circuit (BIC), a motorsport facility comprising a drag strip and several road track layouts. Each spring, the BIC hosts the Bahrain Grand Prix, a Formula One race that brings numerous foreign visitors to Bahrain. During the spring of 2011, the protests in Bahrain forced cancellation of that year's Bahrain Grand Prix. The annual race was resumed in 2012 despite organized opposition by human rights organizations.<sup>302</sup>

Bahrain has regularly participated in the Summer Olympic Games since the 1984 Games in Los Angeles. In recent Olympic competitions, the Bahraini teams have consisted mostly of middle- and long-distance runners who are naturalized Bahraini citizens, nearly all of whom have emigrated from Ethiopia, Kenya, or Morocco. Maryam Jamal, originally from Ethiopia, captured Bahrain's first medal when she finished third in the women's 1,500-meter race at the 2012 London Olympics.<sup>303</sup>



© WomenTalk Sports / flickr.com  
Women's soccer match

<sup>293</sup> Soccerway.org., "Bahrain: Premier League," 2012.

<sup>294</sup> Rsssf.com, "Bahrain—List of Champions," 2012.

<sup>295</sup> Rsssf.com, "World Cup 2006 Qualifying: Asia: CONCACAF/AFC Playoff," n.d.

<sup>296</sup> Rsssf.com, "World Cup 2006 Qualifying: Asia: AFC/OFC Playoff," n.d.

<sup>297</sup> Hamad Al-Azz, "Bahraini Girls' Football Team Qualifies for Junior Asia Cup," *Al Arabiya* (Saudi Arabia), 5 December 2012.

<sup>298</sup> Asia-Basket.com, "Premier League: Season 2011–2012," 2012.

<sup>299</sup> Asian Cricket Council, "Bahrain," 2011.

<sup>300</sup> GoWealthy.com, "Horse Racing in Bahrain," n.d.

<sup>301</sup> Rashid Equestrian and Horseracing Club, "Racing Fixtures and Information," 2011.

<sup>302</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Bahrain: Grand Prix Decision Ignores Abuses," 14 April 2012.

<sup>303</sup> Sports-Reference.com, "Bahrain at the 2012 London Summer Games," 2012.

## Chapter 4 Assessment

1. Bahrain's large percentage of foreign workers are primarily guest workers from Thailand and Laos.

**FALSE**

Although no official demographic data exist on the nationalities of the non-Bahraini population, by various sources it is estimated that 150,000 to 350,000 Indians, 74,000 Bangladeshi, 65,000 Pakistanis, 31,000 Filipinos, and 30,000 Nepalese live in Bahrain.

2. The majority of Bahrainis are Shi'a Muslims.

**TRUE**

No official information is available regarding the percentages of Shi'ite Muslims and Sunni Muslims, but nearly all sources estimate the Shi'a to be the majority sect. These estimates usually place the Shi'ite numbers somewhere between 65% and 75% of the Bahraini population.

3. Like its neighboring country Saudi Arabia, Bahrain requires that all women cover their head while out in public.

**FALSE**

Many Bahraini citizens today wear Western clothing, including some Bahraini women who are not under an enforced dress code like that in Saudi Arabia.

4. One of the best known Bahraini food dishes is mahmoos, which usually consists of chicken, rice, and numerous spices.

**TRUE**

*Mahmoos* is perhaps the most well-known Bahraini dish. It features chicken and rice (fish can be substituted for the chicken) that is flavored with numerous spices, including turmeric, cumin, cinnamon, cardamom, coriander, and garlic cloves.

5. The ruling tribe of Bahrain, Al Khalifa, are Shi'a Muslims, as are the majority of Bahrain's police and military forces.

**FALSE**

The ruling Al Khalifa tribe is Sunni Muslim, as are most of the members of Bahrain's police and military forces.

## CHAPTER 5: SECURITY

### Introduction

Bahrain's primary security concern today is the ongoing political unrest that began in February 2011. The current round of demonstrations began as a call for political and economic reform, but some protesters have hardened their positions and now demand the total abolition of Bahrain's monarchy. Behind the scenes, within the ruling Al Khalifa family, hardliners and reformers continue to vie for political control. The hardline faction, in general, believes that attempts at accommodation and reform will fail, and that the true goal of protest leaders is a Shi'a-dominated government aligned with Iran. Reformers are more open to addressing the economic and political concerns of the protesters. On the foreign front, three nations play outside roles in Bahrain's national security calculations, two of which are allies of the regime (Saudi Arabia and the United States) and one that is viewed as a destabilization threat (Iran).<sup>304</sup>



© Jurgen Proschinger  
Government building

### U.S.-Bahraini Relations

The United States and Bahrain have had close political and military relations since Bahrain achieved independence in 1971. A key element of the two nations' military ties is the naval presence of the United States in Bahrain since 1948. In 1971 the U.S. Government agreed to take over part of the British Royal Navy installation in the Juffair district of Manama after the British left. Today this expanded base, covering more than 40 ha (100 acres), is known as Naval Support Activity Bahrain, the home of the Navy's Fifth Fleet and U.S. Naval Forces, Central Command.<sup>305</sup>

<sup>304</sup> Frederic Wehrey, "The March of Bahrain's Hardliners," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 31 May 2012, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2012/05/31/march-of-bahrain-s-hardliners/b0zr>

<sup>305</sup> CNIC/Naval Support Activity Bahrain, "NSA Bahrain History," 2012,

Bahrain has provided assistance in several U.S.-led military campaigns over the last two decades. Bahrain's air bases played a significant role in the 1991 international coalition effort to liberate Kuwait, code-named Operation Desert Storm.<sup>306</sup> During the wars to oust Saddam Hussein in Iraq (Operation Iraqi Freedom) and the Taliban in Afghanistan (Operation Enduring Freedom), the U.S. flew combat missions from Shaikh Isa Air Base in Bahrain. In recognition of this continued assistance, President George W. Bush in 2002 designated Bahrain as a "major non-NATO ally." Under this designation, the Bahraini military may purchase any arms from the U.S. that would be available for sale to NATO allies.<sup>307</sup> In addition, Washington and Manama increased their economic ties in 2006 with the implementation of a bilateral free-trade agreement. Between 2005 and 2011, the total amount of trade between the two nations has more than doubled.<sup>308</sup>



© Bahrain Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Reception for US Ambassador

The unrest in Bahrain that began in 2011 has complicated U.S.-Bahrain relations to some extent.<sup>309</sup> The United States has criticized the Bahraini government's actions in dealing with the protests. The United States has also called for implementation of the recommendations put forth by the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry and the institution of other political reforms.<sup>310</sup> U.S. officials have noted that its public comments concerning the unrest in Bahrain have not significantly altered the degree of military and security cooperation between the two countries.<sup>311</sup> Some human rights organizations and Bahraini Shi'ites have criticized the United States for not taking a tougher stance against Bahrain's government, charging that U.S. security interests in the region have tempered its commitment to promote the human rights of the primarily Shi'ite protesters.<sup>312</sup>

<sup>306</sup> Kenneth Katzman, "Bahrain: Reform, Security, and U.S. Policy," Congressional Research Service, 6 November 2012, 24–25

<sup>307</sup> Kenneth Katzman, "Bahrain: Reform, Security, and U.S. Policy," Congressional Research Service, 6 November 2012, 22–23

<sup>308</sup> Kenneth Katzman, "Bahrain: Reform, Security, and U.S. Policy," Congressional Research Service, 6 November 2012, 34.

<sup>309</sup> Kenneth Katzman, "Bahrain: Reform, Security, and U.S. Policy," Congressional Research Service, 6 November 2012, 23.

<sup>310</sup> Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "U.S. Relations with Bahrain," 28 August 2012.

<sup>311</sup> Kenneth Katzman, "Bahrain: Reform, Security, and U.S. Policy," Congressional Research Service, 6 November 2012, 23.

<sup>312</sup> Kenneth Katzman, "Bahrain: Reform, Security, and U.S. Policy," Congressional Research Service, 6 November 2012, 17, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/95-1013.pdf>

## Relations with Neighboring Countries

### *Saudi Arabia*

Saudi Arabia, a fellow member of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), has long been a firm ally of Bahrain's ruling Al Khalifa dynasty. During the 2011 unrest, Saudi Arabia sent about 1,000 troops into Bahrain at the request of the Bahraini government.<sup>313</sup> Like Bahrain, Saudi Arabia is ruled by a Sunni royal family. Unlike Bahrain, Saudi Arabia is a Sunni majority country, although it has a significant Shi'a minority in its eastern Persian Gulf region near Bahrain. This region also contains a large percentage of Saudi Arabia's immense oil deposits.<sup>314</sup> Since March 2011, some Shi'ites in eastern Saudi Arabia have sporadically waged demonstrations to protest the Saudi military assistance to Bahrain as well as to demand greater political and religious freedoms.<sup>315</sup>



© Mohd Azli Abdul Malek  
Saudi customs checkpoint

Since December 2011, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain have signaled their intentions to establish a "union" between the two nations, although its exact nature remains unknown.<sup>316</sup> While Saudi Arabia has pushed for other Gulf nations to join such a union, so far only Bahrain has shown strong enthusiasm for the proposal.<sup>317</sup> The two nations are already linked physically via the King Fahd Causeway, which opened in 1986 and is used by more than 18 million people each year.<sup>318</sup> They also are economic partners through the jointly owned Abu Sa'afa oil field, which is presently Bahrain's major source of oil revenue.<sup>319</sup>

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<sup>313</sup> Martin Chulov, "Saudi Arabian Troops Enter Bahrain as Regime Asks for Help to Quell Uprising," *Guardian* (UK), 14 March 2011

<sup>314</sup> Martin W. Lewis, "Saudi-Iranian Tensions and Shia Islam in Saudi Arabia," *Geocurrents*, 14 October 2011.

<sup>315</sup> Palash Ghosh, "Shia Muslims Protest in Eastern Saudi Arabia," *International Business Times*, 16 April 2011.

<sup>316</sup> *Telegraph* (UK), "Gulf Considers Bahrain and Saudi Arabia Union," 14 May 2012,

<sup>317</sup> Andrew Hammond, "Analysis: Saudi Gulf Union Plan Stumbles as Wary Leaders Seek Detail," *Reuters*, 17 May 2012.

<sup>318</sup> Habib Toumi, "Clinic to be Opened on King Fahd Causeway," 27 June 2012.

<sup>319</sup> Shahira Salloum, "Bahrain: A Hot Potato Across the Persian Gulf," *Al-Akhbar* (Bahrain), 18 May 2012.

### *Qatar*

For many years, Bahrain's relations with Qatar, a fellow member of the GCC, were complicated by a long-standing boundary dispute. This disagreement had its roots in the Al Khalifa dynasty's beginnings on the Qatar Peninsula during the latter half of the 18th century. After Al Khalifa leaders moved to Bahrain in 1783, they continued to claim parts of western Qatar and nearby islands as their domain. The largest of these claims were the Hawar Islands, just offshore from west-central Qatar, and the former Al Khalifa base of Az Zubarah on the Qatar Peninsula. In 2001, the International Court of Justice issued a binding judgment that granted Bahrain sovereignty over the Hawar Islands and Qatar control of Az Zubarah.<sup>320</sup> This decision mostly ended the contentious boundary dispute between the two Gulf neighbors, although a dispute in 2010 over Bahrain-based fishermen found in Qatari territorial waters briefly escalated tensions.<sup>321</sup>



Courtesy of Wikipedia  
Emir of Qatar

In a more cooperative vein, Qatar and Bahrain have agreed to link themselves via a 40-km (25-mi) dual road/rail causeway. But construction of this ambitious project has been delayed several times since the agreement was signed in 2008 because of escalating costs.<sup>322, 323</sup> Qatar, which will share the costs of the bridge with Bahrain, would like to have the bridge open for traffic by 2022 at the latest, when Qatar will host the World Cup, one of the largest international sporting events.<sup>324</sup>

<sup>320</sup> “The Bahrain-Qatar Border Dispute: The World Court Decision, Part I,” *The Estimate* 13, no. 6 (23 March 2001).

<sup>321</sup> Reuters, “Saudi Arabia to Mediate in Bahrain-Qatar Row,” *Al Arabiya* (Saudi Arabia), 27 May 2010.

<sup>322</sup> Robert Hamilton, “Bahrain-Qatar Causeway Lined up for 2013,” *Al-Shorfa* (USCENTCOM), 25 August 2008.

<sup>323</sup> TradeArabia News Service, “Bahrain-Qatar Causeway Faces Major Delay,” 25 December 2012.

<sup>324</sup> TradeArabia News Service, “Bahrain-Qatar Causeway Faces Major Delay,” 25 December 2012.

## Iran

Bahrain's relations with Iran have been testy since 1981, when the Bahraini government announced that they had foiled a coup plot against the royal family. Seventy-three members of the Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain (IFLB) were arrested and subsequently imprisoned. The IFLB certainly drew inspiration from the Islamic revolution in Iran led by Ayatollah Khomeini, and the Bahraini government claimed that the IFLB received logistical and other forms of direct support from Tehran.<sup>325</sup> Charges of an Iranian hand in subsequent political uprisings in Bahrain, including the political unrest initiating in February 2011, have often been made by Bahraini government officials. Yet the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI) did not find a “discernible link” between the protests in 2011 and the Iranian government. The Commission noted that the Bahraini government claimed to have evidence of such links but did not make it available to the Commission out of “security and confidentiality considerations.”<sup>326</sup>



© Chris Price  
Bahrainians watch Khomeini TV

The intervention of GCC troops (primarily Saudi) into Bahrain in 2011 during the 3 months of martial law was harshly criticized by Iran. The BICI report found no evidence of human rights violations by the Saudi military forces, despite public statements by Iranian officials that the Saudi army was perpetrating “massacres” in Bahrain.<sup>327</sup> Subsequent discussions between Bahrain and Saudi Arabia concerning the formation of a closer political union between the two states have been publicly denounced by Tehran.<sup>328</sup>

Prior to a United Nations referendum in 1970 that showed overwhelming support by Bahrainis for independence, Tehran had periodically claimed sovereignty of Bahrain on the basis of Persia's historical rule of the island before their ouster by the tribe of Al Khalifa and its allies.<sup>329</sup> Even after Iran formally accepted the results of the UN referendum, some Iranian officials and media outlets have occasionally revived these claims, although with no official government support.<sup>330, 331</sup>

<sup>325</sup> Hasan Tariq Alhasan, “The Role of Iran in the Failed Coup of 1981: The IFLB in Bahrain,” *Middle East Journal* 65, no. 4 (Autumn 2011).

<sup>326</sup> Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry, “Report of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry,” 10 December 2011, 387.

<sup>327</sup> Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry, “Report of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry,” 10 December 2011, 385–387.

<sup>328</sup> Reuters “Iranian Protesters Denounce Saudi-Bahrain Union Plan,” 18 May 2012.

<sup>329</sup> J. B. Kelley, “The Persian Claim to Bahrain,” *International Affairs* 33, no. 1 (January 1957): 51–70.

<sup>330</sup> Kenneth Katzman, “Bahrain: Reform, Security, and U.S. Policy,” Congressional Research Service, 6 November 2012, 30.

<sup>331</sup> Shahira Salloum, “Bahrain: A Hot Potato Across the Persian Gulf,” *Al-Akhbar* (Bahrain), 18 May 2012.

## Military

Bahrain has a small military force of fewer than 9,000 personnel, of which 6,000 are Army, 1,500 are Air Force, and 700 are Navy.<sup>332</sup> Collectively these three branches are known as the Bahrain Defence Force. Since 1991, Bahrain has purchased land, air, and naval equipment from the United States to upgrade its military capacity. Its forces have also received training assistance through the U.S.'s International Military and Education Training (IMET) program.<sup>333</sup>



Courtesy of Wikipedia  
Bahrainian naval ship

Bahrain's largest paramilitary units are the police, formally known as the Public Security Forces (PSF), and the National Guard.<sup>334</sup> The PSF has been on the front lines in most protest demonstrations and were criticized in the BICI report for excessive use of force against civilian demonstrators.<sup>335</sup> In the wake of the report, the Bahraini government hired former police chiefs from the United States and Great Britain to help institute policing tactics and procedures that followed international standards.<sup>336</sup>

A lingering issue that fuels Shi'a-Sunni tension in Bahrain is the high number of military, police, and national guard members recruited from other Muslim countries, such as Jordan, Syria, Yemen, and Pakistan.<sup>337</sup> In most cases, these foreign recruits are Sunni Muslims. Pakistan in particular has been a significant recruitment area for Bahraini security personnel, to the extent that some Bahraini Shi'a protesters view the Pakistanis as the face of the nation's police and national guard.<sup>338, 339</sup>

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<sup>332</sup> International Institute for Strategic Studies, "Chapter 7: Middle East and North Africa," in *The Military Balance 2011* (London: Routledge, 2011), 304–305.

<sup>333</sup> Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "Background Note: Bahrain," 13 January 2012.

<sup>334</sup> International Institute for Strategic Studies, "Chapter 7: Middle East and North Africa," in *The Military Balance 2011* (London: Routledge, 2011), 304–305.

<sup>335</sup> Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry, "Report of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry," 10 December 2011, 257, 266.

<sup>336</sup> Kenneth Katzman, "Bahrain: Reform, Security, and U.S. Policy," Congressional Research Service, 6 November 2012, 14.

<sup>337</sup> Ian Black, "Bahrain Security Forces Accused of Deliberately Recruiting Foreign Nationals," *Guardian* (UK), 17 February 2011.

<sup>338</sup> VOANews, "Pakistani Veterans Beef up Bahrain Security Forces," 17 August 2011.

<sup>339</sup> Alex Delmar-Morgan and Tom Wright, "Bahrain's Foreign Police Add to Tensions," *Wall Street Journal*, 25 March 2011.

## Terrorist Groups and Violent Activities

Though no international terrorist organizations are known to have bases in Bahrain, it has been subject to occasional terrorist attacks and threats. In November 2012, five bombs exploded in Manama, killing two workers from South Asia.<sup>340</sup> No Bahraini opposition group claimed credit for the bombing attacks, and some protest group representatives suggested that rogue police or military units might have set the bombs to discredit the opposition and justify the implementation of martial law.<sup>341, 342,</sup>

<sup>343</sup> Bahraini officials blamed the bombings on terrorists trained by Hezbollah, a Shi'a terrorist group supported by the Iranian government and based in Lebanon.<sup>344</sup>

Six months before the November 2012 Manama bombings, a Bahraini court convicted six Bahraini nationals involved in a plot to stage attacks on the King Fahd Causeway, the Ministry of Interior building, and the Saudi Arabian embassy. Several members of the terrorist cell were alleged by the Bahraini prosecutor to have received military training in Iran.<sup>345</sup>

Organized terrorist activities are less of a concern to average Bahrainis than the less sensationalized but more common street violence that has typified many Shi'a neighborhood demonstrations since the spring of 2011. Molotov cocktails (gasoline bombs) and rocks are frequently tossed by youthful demonstrators at police targets, and the police inevitably respond with rubber bullets and tear gas. Some protest leaders have expressed fears that the escalating militancy allows the government to marginalize the entire opposition movement. They also note that the increasingly militant tactics of the younger demonstrators and the sometimes disproportionate responses of the police increase the pressure on the opposition leaders to make stronger demands on the government.<sup>346</sup> In October 2012, the Bahrain government banned all street demonstrations indefinitely, citing the increasing violence as a justification for the ban.<sup>347</sup>



© MaMa BB / flickr.com  
Unrest in the streets

<sup>340</sup> *Al Jazeera*, "Deadly Blasts Hit Bahrain's Capital," 6 November 2012.

<sup>341</sup> *Al Jazeera*, "Deadly Blasts Hit Bahrain's Capital," 6 November 2012.

<sup>342</sup> Kareem Fahim, "Bombs in Bahrain's Capital Kill 2 Foreigners," *New York Times*, 5 November 2012.

<sup>343</sup> Zawya Dow Jones, "Bahrain Bombs Mark Escalation in Tensions," *Gulf News* (United Arab Emirates), 6 November 2012.

<sup>344</sup> Reuters, "Bahrain Arrests Bombing Suspects and Blames Hezbollah," 6 November 2012.

<sup>345</sup> Donna Abu-Nasr, "Bahrain Jails Six For Terrorism, Including Bridge Plot," Bloomberg, 27 May 2012.

<sup>346</sup> Reese Erlich, "Bahrain's Changing Opposition," Global Post, 12 December 2012,

<sup>347</sup> Reese Erlich, "Bahrain's Changing Opposition," Global Post, 12 December 2012,

## Other Issues Affecting Stability

### *Economic Effects of Anti-Government Protests*

Lacking the vast oil and gas resources of many of its neighbors, Bahrain has been focused on diversifying its economic base for several decades. But political instability makes it harder to attract foreign investment to Bahrain. In addition, business sectors in Bahrain such as tourism, finance, and real estate that traditionally are negatively affected by perceived risk face declining revenues. The financial sector in particular faces possible relocations to nations deemed more stable. Several of Bahrain's largest international tourism events, such as the Bahrain Air Show and the Bahrain Formula One Championship, have already been negatively affected by the unrest.<sup>348</sup> Though few banks have yet to pull out of Bahrain altogether, financial data from 2011 and 2012 indicates that foreign investor deposits have dropped.<sup>349</sup> To some extent, any declines in economic output because of private sector concerns about Bahrain's political unrest have been offset by increased government spending and aid supplied to Bahrain by wealthy Gulf neighbors.<sup>350, 351</sup>



© Lewa'a Alnasr  
2011 Democracy March

<sup>348</sup> Praveen Menon, "Unrest Weighs on Bahrain Economy's Recovery," Reuters, 1 February 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/02/01/us-bahrain-economy-idUSTRE81017220120201>

<sup>349</sup> Praveen Menon, "Unrest Weighs on Bahrain Economy's Recovery," Reuters, 1 February 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/02/01/us-bahrain-economy-idUSTRE81017220120201>

<sup>350</sup> Martin Dokoupil and Andrew Hammond, "Bahrain Economy Shrinks in Second Quarter," Reuters, 2 September 2012, <http://in.reuters.com/article/2012/09/02/bahrain-economy-idINL6E8K22N820120902>

<sup>351</sup> Praveen Menon, "Unrest Weighs on Bahrain Economy's Recovery," Reuters, 1 February 2012, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/02/01/us-bahrain-economy-idUSTRE81017220120201>

### *Sectarian Balance and Electoral Legitimacy*

The Bahrain census breaks out the number of residents who are Christians, Jews, or other minority religions, but it has never delineated the number of Sunnis and Shi'ites in the country. In a nation in which the ruling family is Sunni, which is conceded by essentially all observers to be the minority Islamic sect in Bahrain, both sides are greatly sensitive to the nation's religious demographics. Since the reinstatement of parliamentary elections in 2002, this issue has taken on even more heightened importance.



© PBS News Hour  
Interviewing Shi'a leader

Shi'ites generally oppose any perceived attempts by the government to alter the sectarian balance toward the Sunnis. Many Shi'ites feel that they will overcome their largely second-class standing in Bahrain only through the acquisition of true political power commensurate to their majority status. The naturalization of or issuance of Bahraini passports to many of the Sunni foreigners in the military and police is one issue that Shi'ite protesters have complained about regularly during the current unrest.<sup>352, 353</sup> Such practices are seen as a way to pad the electorate with likely pro-government voters.

In addition to the charges over naturalization, passports, and the voter rolls, frequent accusations are made that council districts are gerrymandered to favor Sunni candidates.<sup>354</sup> Political intimidation is another charge that has arisen more recently. The 2010 parliamentary elections were marred by the arrest of numerous Shi'ite political leaders on terrorism and other charges just prior to the first-round voting.<sup>355</sup> Kenneth Katzman, a specialist on Middle East Affairs who regularly provides in-depth analysis reports for the U.S. Congress through the Congressional Research Service, noted that "the tensions over the [2010] election almost certainly contributed to the major unrest that began in February 2011."<sup>356</sup>

<sup>352</sup> Reuters, "Bahraini Shi'ites Protest Against Settling Sunnis," 9 March 2011, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/03/09/us-bahrain-protests-idUSTRE7284W320110309>

<sup>353</sup> VOA News, "Democratic Doubts Surround Bahrain Elections," 22 October 2010, <http://www.voanews.com/content/democratic-doubts-surround-bahrain-elections-105596213/128811.html>

<sup>354</sup> Kenneth Katzman, "Bahrain: Reform, Security, and U.S. Policy," Congressional Research Service, 6 November 2012, 4, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/95-1013.pdf>

<sup>355</sup> Ben Bimbaum, "Bahrain Continues Crackdown on Shi'ite Opposition," *Washington Times*, 14 September 2010, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2010/sep/14/bahrain-shiites-fear-arrests-detention-torture/?page=all>

<sup>356</sup> Kenneth Katzman, "Bahrain: Reform, Security, and U.S. Policy," Congressional Research Service, 6 November 2012, 6, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/95-1013.pdf>

## Chapter 5 Assessment

1. Bahrain and the United States have had close relations since Bahrain became a nation over 40 years ago.

**TRUE**

The United States and Bahrain have had close political and military relations since Bahrain achieved independence in 1971.

2. Saudi Arabia and Bahrain have shown interest in establishing a closer political union between them.

**TRUE**

Since December 2011, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain have signaled their intentions to establish a “union” between the two nations, although its exact nature remains unknown.

3. Bahrain and Qatar continue to actively disagree over which nation has sovereignty over the Hawar Islands.

**FALSE**

In 2001, the International Court of Justice issued a binding judgment that granted Bahrain sovereignty over the Hawar Islands. This decision mostly ended the contentious boundary dispute between the two Gulf neighbors.

4. Bahrain recruits a significant number of its military and paramilitary forces from other Muslim countries.

**TRUE**

A lingering issue that fuels Shi’a-Sunni tension in Bahrain is the high number of military, police, and national guard members recruited from other Muslim countries, such as Jordan, Syria, Yemen, and Pakistan.

5. Although Bahrain has experienced demonstrations that sometimes become violent, it has been spared from terrorist attacks.

**FALSE**

Though no international terrorist organizations are known to have bases in Bahrain, the nation has been subject to occasional terrorist attacks and threats.

## FINAL ASSESSMENT

1. Muharraq is home to the U.S. Naval Support Activity (NSA) Bahrain, the joint headquarters of the U.S. Naval Forces Central Command, and the U.S. Fifth Fleet.  
**True or False?**
2. Hamad Town is a primarily Sunni City that is home to the palaces of Bahrain's king and prime minister.  
**True or False?**
3. Bahrain is vulnerable to rising sea levels and temperatures.  
**True or False?**
4. Bahrain's nonhazardous solid waste is dumped into the Persian Gulf after partial treatment.  
**True or False?**
5. Heat exhaustion is a potential health problem for visitors to Bahrain during summer.  
**True or False?**
6. Shi'ism in Bahrain traces its history to the Qarmatians, who entered the region in the late ninth century C.E.  
**True or False?**
7. The first of Al Khalifa rulers arrived in Bahrain from Persia in 1602.  
**True or False?**
8. Bahrain's first oil was discovered when offshore wells were drilled in the early 1960s.  
**True or False?**
9. Bahrain's first elections for its National Assembly took place in 1973, but no further elections were held until nearly 30 years later.  
**True or False?**
10. The protests in Bahrain that began during February 2011 were primarily staged by Sunni fundamentalists concerned by the nation's lack of adherence to Islamic strictures.  
**True or False?**
11. Travel and tourism is an unimportant part of Bahrain's economy.  
**True or False?**

12. Bahrain is an important financial center of the Arab world.  
**True or False?**
13. Bahrain's official currency, the riyal, has fluctuated greatly in recent years in terms of its exchange rate with the U.S. dollar.  
**True or False?**
14. Bahrain encourages and is a major recipient of foreign direct investment (FDI).  
**True or False?**
15. A majority of Bahrain's large population of guest workers are employed in private-sector jobs that have low pay and do not require extensive technical skills.  
**True or False?**
16. The Bahraini constitution bars any non-Islamic religious practices.  
**True or False?**
17. Legal decisions concerning marriage, divorce, and family matters may be determined differently by Sunni and Shi'a *shari'a* jurists.  
**True or False?**
18. Ali Bahar and his band Al Ekhwa were one of Bahrain's most popular musical acts for over 20 years.  
**True or False?**
19. Bahrain's most popular sport is football (soccer), and it has both men's and women's teams that compete in international competitions.  
**True or False?**
20. *Baharna* is an informal term used by Bahraini citizens to refer to foreign workers in the country.  
**True or False?**
21. Iran at various points in the past has claimed sovereignty over Bahrain.  
**True or False?**
22. The ongoing unrest in Bahrain has negatively affected several of the nation's business sectors.  
**True or False?**

23. Bahrain's Shi'ites have long complained that their numbers are underreported by the nation's census.

**True or False?**

24. Because of its important naval installation in Bahrain, the U.S. Government has refrained from commenting on the current wave of protests and the Bahraini Government's response to them.

**True or False?**

25. Saudi Arabia has a ruling Sunni Muslim royal family and a significant Shi'a minority in its eastern region near Bahrain.

**True or False?**

## FURTHER READING

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