

# **LEBANESE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY**

## **Power-Sharing in Bahrain: Institutional Engineering, Mutual Recognition, and Autonomy**

By

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*To Ezzat and Rajaa...*

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# Power-Sharing in Bahrain: Institutional Engineering, Mutual Recognition, and Autonomy

Bann Tabbara

## ABSTRACT

The Arab Spring demonstrated that authoritarian regimes in the region are not immune to violent breakdown. Oppressed citizens are looking for the establishment of democratic political systems to replace authoritarian rule. However, where the society is deeply divided along vertical cleavages, majority-based liberal democracy may not be a viable option. Instead, liberal consociational institutions that accommodate cultural and ethnic diversity are necessary. The establishment of such institutions should go hand in hand with mutual recognition of cultural differences and the autonomy of the polity to ensure the sustainability of post-authoritarian power-sharing political systems. This thesis takes the case of Bahrain, a country with a deeply divided society, to demonstrate how the existing authoritarian regime may be replaced peacefully by a liberal consociational one. It thus examines the prospects of liberal consociationalism in Bahrain by applying to the country the three concepts of institutional engineering, mutual recognition, and autonomy.

*Keywords:* Liberal Consociationalism, Power-Sharing, Institutional Engineering, Mutual Recognition, Autonomy, Bahrain, Arab Spring.

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# Chapter One

## Introduction

### 1.1. Introduction

The Arab uprisings proved that authoritarian regimes, no matter how powerful they may seem, are not sustainable in the long run. Citizens rebelled against oppression and demanded social justice. They are looking for the establishment of new democratic regimes that guard their rights of representation and recognition. However, in the countries where the issue of sectarianism is not settled yet and where there is a gap between the majority and the minority, authoritarianism cannot be simply substituted by a liberal majoritarian democracy that does not safeguard minority rights. Therefore, a power-sharing model with institutions that accommodate cultural and ethnic diversity are necessary. These institutions should be protected and defined in the constitution and must include four essential characteristics: “(1) executive power-sharing among representatives of all significant groups; (2) considerable internal autonomy for groups that wish it; (3) proportional representation and proportional allocation of civil service positions and public funds; and (4) the possibility of minority veto on vital questions” (Basedau, 2011, p. 4). However, the engineering of new power-sharing institutions may not prove successful unless it comes hand in hand with the complementary notions of mutual recognition and autonomy.

The first complementary concept to institutional engineering, mutual recognition, was primarily addressed by James Tully. Tully emphasizes the importance of realizing that cultural identities require some form of

acknowledgement or recognition in the institutions of a society as well as in public life in order to secure a sense of belonging. Since demands for cultural recognition constitute today's conflict, a new philosophy based on dialogue and mutual recognition, added to institutional engineering – both combined together – have the capacity to mediate conflicts and bring about peace. Nonetheless, autonomy is a third complementary requirement that should be added to recognition and institutional engineering in order to build a successful and long-lasting regime. Hence, these three complementary notions – institutional engineering, mutual recognition, and autonomy – will be explained and discussed throughout this thesis and applied to a country facing a deeply-rooted conflict.

## **1.2. A History of Agitation**

Bahrain, a country with a deeply divided society, demonstrates the necessity of replacing authoritarian regimes by a new power-sharing model. A Sunni royal family rules a majority Shia population who complain of discriminatory treatment at the hands of the government, in a deeply divided plural society struggling for democracy. Many sources indicate that the percentage of Shia in Bahrain revolves around 70 percent. The Bahraini government avoids publishing any official percentage in order not to highlight this gap.

The Shia majority did not wait for the Arab Spring to demand its rights, however. The latest uprisings in the Arab world, the successful ousting of some dictators, and the collapse of many authoritarian regimes triggered the Bahraini majority to fight again for its basic democratic rights. The Sunni Al Khalifa family has governed Bahrain since 1783 and continued to rule after the country achieved its independence from Britain in 1971. Iran always had interests in Bahrain because

“Bahrain was a Persian province, ruled by a Persian dynasty since 1603” (Tristam, 2008). In 1979, the Iranian revolution ousted the Shah and established a theocratic regime, and its Shiite leaders demanded that Bahrain, like Iran, be proclaimed an Islamic republic. Hence, it encouraged the Shia in Bahrain to protest against their monarchy. But Saudi Arabia criticized these protests, and since Bahrain’s oil and banking system depend on Saudi support, it had to end this turmoil. Additionally, Bahrain demanded the help of the United States, which increased its military presence on the island. Nonetheless, this decision did not hinder the maltreated Bahraini majority from continuously revolting against oppression and marginalization. The Sunni-dominated government proclaimed some reforms to accommodate the Shia by establishing a 40-member Council of Representatives. However, these reforms were not real because political parties were still banned, and the role of the Council of Representatives was nullified by an appointed 40-member Shura (or Consultative) Council (Tristam, 2008).

During the 1990s another set of revolts broke out but were “fundamentally different from that which prevailed after the Iranian revolution since the relations between Iran and the GCC states – Bahrain included – had improved” (Louer, 2013, p. 248). Moreover, in 2009, some protests occurred in Iran after the presidential elections against the disputed victory of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. These events, in addition to the globalization movement that promoted democracy and social justice around the world, made the Shia in Bahrain realize that they do not want to be affiliated with Iran nor desire establishing Islamic rule. Hence, their struggle was restricted to justice, freedom, and the establishment of a parliamentary system, free of sectarian and authoritarian control. These demonstrations happened to be across sectarian lines since “protestors came not only from the long suffering Shia majority

but also from the stereotypically loyal Sunni minority” (Yom & Gause III, 2012, p. 81). This obliged King Hamad Bin Issa Al Khalifa to apply more reforms. In response, he allowed the “formation of trade unions, political societies (parties), and an advisory parliament. But none of these reforms changed the condition of Shias as second class citizens” (Elrich, 2013). They were subject to continuous discrimination and were never granted any high position, neither in the military nor in the government.

The Shia had protested against injustice and poor living standards but Bahrain had never witnessed any uprising like the one of 2011. Unfortunately, however, the non-violent uprising led to a violent response from the Sunni-dominated government and its Saudi ally. They demonized the protestors as agents of the Iranian regime. The revolution was consequently portrayed by the government as a pure sectarian fight between the Sunni regime, supported by Saudi Arabia, against a Shia rebellion manipulated by Iran. Accordingly, the protestors were tortured, arrested, and killed. But effectively, the 2011 uprising was triggered by the Arab Spring and was not instigated by Iran. It was the product of previous protests against discrimination, oppression, and deteriorating socio-economic conditions (Tristram, 2008).

### **1.3. Disagreement over the Situation in Bahrain**

Different authors disagree on how they perceive the Bahraini regime. On one hand, Glada Lahan (2004), Russell Lucas (2004), Kito Boer and Jaap Kalkman (2007), and Steven Wright (2008) argue that Bahrain’s authoritarian regime is expected to survive. “Political, social, economic, and institutional factors have aided in the survival of the Arab Monarchies” (Lucas, 2004, p. 117). Prospects for reform

and liberalization may therefore be better than those for democratization. Hence, due to the continuous revolts against poor socio-economic conditions and protests in opposition to discrimination against the Shia population, the Bahraini government was obliged to implement successful reforms, without changing the regime.

Lahan (2004) contends that in 2002, Sheikh Hamad Bin Issa Al Khalifa executed some changes and reforms because the Shia majority was starting to complain of the need to change the regime. Lahan cited and approved the reforms that were implemented by Al Khalifa, concluding that Bahrain should be seen as a prototype for democratic change. However, Lahan does not mention that these reforms were minimal and that they were not implemented. She praises the current regime that, in her opinion, should be a model for the other authoritarian states. Her argument is justified through its publication by the Gulf Center for Strategic Studies, which only publishes the writings that praise the activities of Gulf regimes.

Wright (2008) claims that Bahrain has entered into a more progressive phase of its history under King Hamad Bin Issa Al Khalifa. Various parliamentary and legislative reforms, in addition to discernable changes within civil society, have taken place. “The reforms were driven by a recognition that far reaching political and economic changes were needed in order to combat the risk of a return to the wide spread riots that Bahrain was plagued with during the late 1990s” (Wright, 2008).

Boer and Kalkman (2007) interviewed Crown Prince Salman Bin Hamad Al Khalifa who argues that “the age-old power struggle between Persia and the Arab World is reaching a frenzy” and is manifested by Iran’s desire to dominate Bahrain (p. 82). The government is thus demonizing the Shia and showing that they are serving the Iranian Shia Crescent agenda.

On the other hand, some authors demonstrate how reforms in Bahrain have not been properly implemented and recommend the establishment of a democratic regime. Karen Dabrowska (1997) examines the many demonstrations that the Shia have organized to fight for their basic rights and to achieve democracy. She also describes how the Bahraini government has reacted by arresting, oppressing, and breaking the previously settled promises. Dabrowska identifies the instruments of authoritarianism; she focuses on the senior military positions that are granted to Sunnis affiliated with the regime, the arrests of students, the harassment of women, the unfair trials, the death penalty, and the torture of detainees. Dabrowska demonstrates that the minority/majority problem has long existed, and that it rightly can be classified as a deeply rooted conflict. She contends that the few reforms were undertaken only to distract and accommodate the minority. Moreover, she argues that the West is putting profits before rights, and is therefore not facing up the authoritarianism in such country and not criticizing human rights violations. The situation in Bahrain is hence described as a contest between “two worlds”. The first is the home of Western bankers who allow Bahrain to be one of the “biggest banking centers in the world” and the perfect location for the “American Fifth Fleet”. The other world contains the majority of Bahraini citizens who “live in a parched environment of deprivation from the echelons of power, wealth, and influence” (Dabrowska, 1997, p. 107). The International Crisis Group also issued a policy report in 2005 about “Bahrain’s Sectarian Challenge”. The report highlights how the sectarian clashes began in 1994 and how they were brutally repressed. It also brings to light how the different Shiite political organizations never stopped fighting for their rights.

The Arab Spring that initially started in Tunisia and Egypt proved that the aforementioned reforms – even if they were exactly implemented – cannot satisfy the desire of most Bahrainis who aim for fundamental changes. Therefore, the only existing alternative is democracy. Moreover, not any kind of democracy can be implemented in Bahrain. Majoritarian democracy does not protect minority rights and will most probably cause additional problems. Therefore, the only viable political style for Bahrain is consociational democracy or power sharing.

The existing literature on Bahrain, including the works of Mostafa Abdulla (2011), Yahya Fozi (2012), Kristian Ulrichsen (2013), and Frederic Wehrey (2013), regarding the latest revolution, explain how the uprising started acknowledging the oppression and admitting that the regime should be changed. They are all descriptive articles, however, and do not propose a solution or a model that can solve the sectarian problem in this country. Therefore, the specific case of Bahrain remains understudied since the prospects of the application of the power-sharing model in Bahrain has not yet been discussed.

Given its perpetual instability, the only solution in Bahrain seems to be a power-sharing system that protects the rights of the Sunni minority. The prospective government should “include the representatives of all significant groups and must revolve around inter-ethnic cooperation and log rolling” (Sisk, 2003). This topic was thus chosen to highlight the fact that the authoritarian regime in Bahrain is not a sustainable option, nor is majoritarian democracy a viable alternative. Thus, this thesis argues that the best model for Bahrain is power sharing based on institutional engineering, autonomy, and recognition. Bahrain was chosen as a single case study because its sociology and economy differ from other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. Moreover, it is a perfect case for this kind of exercise, embodying a



deeply divided society, for the evaluation of the three principles: institutional engineering, mutual recognition, and autonomy.

#### **1.4. Research Question**

This thesis describes how authoritarianism and majoritarian democracy are not viable options for Bahrain due to sociological and geopolitical reasons, empirical incidents, previous protests, and most importantly the existence of plural identities that should be protected. “Consociations may be the most benign political forms possible after serious internal identity-based wars and the best formats to prevent serious or recurrent wars” (O’Leary, 2005, p. xxxv). This thesis hence evaluates the prospects of the power-sharing model – the sole applicable alternative – in Bahrain and answers the following question: What would a successful power-sharing model for Bahrain look like?

All the aforementioned authors explain how the “rules affect the behavioral patterns of the actors” and argue that “well designing and managing these institutions is the only way to avoid conflict” (Basedau, 2011). However, in contrast, institutional engineering alone can harden divisions in society. Thus the literature on power sharing will be applied but some concepts from other authors will be borrowed and added to this theory to propose a viable regime for Bahrain. These are autonomy (Waldner, 2009) and mutual recognition (Tully, 1995). The thesis will hence assess how these three concepts – institutional engineering, autonomy, and mutual recognition – should be combined together to produce a successful power-sharing model in a deeply divided country like Bahrain. This question should therefore be answered to evaluate the type of regime that should replace the current authoritarian regime given its unsustainability.

## **1.5. Methodology**

Arab monarchies are still trying to verify the sustainability of their authoritarian regimes. According to Yom and Gause (2012), three factors hindered their collapse: “cross-cutting coalition, hydro-carbons rent, and the influence of a foreign patron”. The presence/absence of these three factors in Bahrain will be evaluated to justify the failure of authoritarianism and the uniqueness of Bahrain due to its distinctive sociological and geopolitical factors. The history of Bahrain and the previous protests will therefore be presented in order to highlight that authoritarianism is not an option anymore for this deeply divided country especially after the Arab Spring. The only viable alternative is the establishment of a democratic system that accommodates all the deep divisions in the country. Since majoritarian democracy does not satisfy this requirement, this thesis explains power sharing; being the unique viable solution, and provides its characteristics.

In order to assess the viability of this model, three overlapping concepts – institutional engineering, autonomy, and mutual recognition – will be explained and applied to Bahrain. Thus, these notions will be employed to explore how consociational Bahrain would look like. Additionally, a comparative example of similar deeply divided countries like Iraq will be explained to evaluate the viability of such power-sharing regime. This thesis is thus based on a single case study, and the research will be mostly built on secondary sources.

## **1.6. Map of the Thesis**

The second chapter explains how institutions should be engineered in order to establish a successful power-sharing model, and concludes that a new amended form of consociationalism, “liberal consociationalism”, is the best viable solution for any

deeply divided country. Also, it describes how autonomy and recognition are indispensable to hinder the collapse of these institutions. The third chapter examines the institutionalization of authoritarianism in Bahrain. It unpacks the unjust laws and policies that institutionalized an authoritarian regime and culture in the kingdom. It also describes the several demonstrations conducted by the discriminated-against majority claiming their rights. The fourth chapter explains the evolution of the Bahraini Spring in addition to the governmental, regional, and international responses. It also describes the move away from authoritarianism by presenting the best viable regime for the Bahraini deeply divided society, including the three complementary concepts – institutional engineering, mutual recognition, and autonomy. The final chapter summarizes the main findings, describes the current situation in Bahrain, and spells out the practical and theoretical lessons of the thesis to other deeply divided societies.

## **Chapter Two**

### **The Power-Sharing Model**

#### **2.1. Introduction**

People across the world are currently revolting against oppressive regimes. The struggle is not concentrated anymore between countries in the international system; it has been shifted to domestic arena. A study published by the International Crisis Group in 2012 shows that the majority of the conflicts are classified under the internal tension/war category (for example: Sudan, Turkey, Afghanistan, Mali, Lebanon, Iraq, and the Arab Spring countries). These internal wars are characterized as “domestic” due to the emergence of conflict between plural identities in the same country. Nowadays, culture is embedded in every conflict because religion and ethnicity, and not nationality, form the citizen’s identity and belonging. In fact, further attachment to identity and culture is the product of globalization. People became aware of their differences and were afraid of losing their identity in a Westernized world, which increased the attachment and identification to their own race, ethnicity, or religion. “Globalization actually generates identity – and, indeed, the danger that, in some circumstances, it produces too much identity” (Tomlinson, 2003, p. 272). People are hence focusing on their culture and refusing any kind of repression and discrimination against their race or sect. Therefore, in a country with plural identities, the minorities and the discriminated groups are currently revolting against autocratic and majoritarian rules, and they are constantly seeking social justice and looking for equality. These groups will eventually succeed and the repressing authoritarian rule will be ousted and replaced by a democratic regime.

But how should democracy and social justice be established in plural deeply divided societies? A simple majoritarian democracy cannot be applied in deeply divided societies and is rarely found in contemporary democracies because it will not solve the problem since the minority will still not be represented. Effectively, the unique viable democratic regime that can be established to resolve these conflicts in any heterogeneous society, after the collapse of the authoritarian rule, is the establishment of a power-sharing regime. Power sharing is a “system of governance in which all major segments of society are provided a permanent share of power” (Sisk, 2003, p. 1). Accordingly, it combines democracy and conflict management to satisfy the needs of all the classes, religions, or ethnicities in a single diverse country, which will preserve the rights of the minority.

This chapter compares several forms of power-sharing regimes to conclude that a new amended form, “liberal consociationalism”, is the best viable solution for any deeply divided country. Additionally, it clarifies that the institutional engineering of this new liberal consociational democracy cannot solely build a successful regime. Hence, the chapter also defines and interprets the two complementary notions that come hand in hand with the establishment of well engineered institutions: mutual recognition and autonomy.

## **2.2. Integration or Accommodation?**

In deeply divided heterogeneous countries, two opposed types of non-majoritarian power-sharing democracies can be applied, either integration or accommodation.

Integrationists promote the establishment of a single common national (civic) identity putting aside all the ethnic or religious parties. They believe that the ethnic

or religious divisions should remain social and should not be translated into politics. Integrationists believe that new coalitions across ethnical and religious groups will be made. Hence, they are promoting a unitary centralized state to maintain territorial integrity. “Integrationists deny ethnicity as a source of political power and aim to remove ethnic identity as a source of political mobilization” (Basedau, 2011, p. 8). However, this system increases the likelihood of violence because identities will remain repressed.

On the other hand, accommodationists mobilize citizens according to their ethnic or religious identities and advocate equality among all the groups. “Accommodationists seek to ensure that each ethnic group has the public space necessary to express its identity, to make its own decisions in areas of critical importance, and to protect itself against the majority” (McGarry, O’Leary, & Simeon, 2008, p. 42). Therefore, they protect minorities by empowering them and granting them equal rights. Hence, the accommodationists prefer the formation of a decentralized state and the establishment of a consociational model. Accordingly, consociationalism ensures the representation of all ethnic groups; it “accepts ethnicity as a source of political mobilization” (Basedau, 2011, p. 8) because the social aspect cannot be separated from politics. In fact, political life reflects the social ties between citizens. Therefore, if the different groups of a certain country are in a constant fight, they cannot form a coalition and thrust aside their social problems. It is almost impossible to eliminate the differences in politics and to suddenly detach the citizens from their ethnic or religious affiliation in a globalized world where identities matter more than nationalities. Consequently, this thesis advocates the accommodationist or consociational power-sharing model.

### **2.3. Institutional Engineering: The Implementation of Lijphart's Rules**

The consociational model accommodates and satisfies all the groups of a deeply divided country and preserves their dominant identity. It is hence the best viable democratic power-sharing regime for any plural society in which certain groups are seeking justice. For this consociational model to be successful, new well-engineered institutions should be established.

Arend Lijphart was a pioneer in discussing “consociationalism”. Lijphart (2008) argues that “consociationalism is the only democratic model that appears to have much chance of being adopted in divided societies” (p. 77). In order to establish this power-sharing regime, new institutions should be put in place. Hence, Lijphart gave the four basic characteristics that should be incorporated in newly engineered institutions that will permit the survival of democracy in such divided countries: “(1) executive power-sharing among representatives of all significant groups; (2) considerable internal autonomy for groups that wish it; (3) proportional representation and proportional allocation of civil service positions and public funds; and (4) the possibility of minority veto on vital questions” (Basedau, 2011).

First, an **executive power-sharing** model should be established. Deeply divided countries should be ruled by a parliamentary regime instead of a presidential one. In fact, “the cabinet in a parliamentary system is a collegial decision-making body, as opposed to the presidential one-person executive” (Lijphart, 2004, p. 101). A president elected by the citizens as the head of the state will be the only decision maker in the presidential system, which implies a zero-sum game tending toward a “winner-take-all” situation. However, in a parliamentary system, the citizens will be electing a coalition-based list; and all the parties that succeeded in obtaining a significant percentage (the quota should be identified in the constitution, for

example: 5 percent) will be accorded respectively a certain number of seats in the parliament and appropriately will be represented in the cabinet.

Second, a **minority veto** should be granted to minorities in order to preserve and secure their political and cultural rights. They should be involved in all the agreements and should be entitled the veto right on major decisions like amending the constitution. The minority can essentially veto a policy change, and their rights should be anchored in the constitution.

The third characteristic of a well-engineered power-sharing institution is segmented **autonomy**. If the country is big enough and can be geographically divided, each cultural or ethnic division can form its own federal and decentralized entity. Hence, all the groups would enjoy autonomy. However, if the “communal groups are not geographically concentrated, autonomy can also be arranged on a non-territorial basis” (Lijphart, 2004, p. 105). Hence, for example, the religious groups will maintain control over their schools and churches, which avoids the marginalization and discrimination of minorities. Therefore, decentralization is a major feature characterizing the institutions in a consociational democracy.

The fourth and most important aspect of well-engineered consociational institutions is **proportional representation (PR)**. The electoral system should be fair, simple, and easy to understand and operate. Majoritarian elections cannot take place since they oppose the power-sharing consensus by excluding minorities that would not be represented. “Proportional representation systems assign seats according to the relative strength in the vote share” (Basedeau, 2011, p. 12). Hence it is more adequate for an ethnically or religiously diverse and divided society since all its groups will be represented. Lijphart suggests that a closed list PR would encourage the formation of new coalitions that include different parties. Lijphart, but



also Bernard Grofman and Robert Stockwell (2001), Marsha Peipstein Posusney (2002), Ian O’Flynn (2010), Matthias Basedau (2011), and Allison McCulloch (2012) discuss in details “institutional engineering” or “constitutional design” that should be applied in order to obtain a successful power-sharing model. They all agree that an electoral system with proportional representation is the only law that secures the existence of cross-sectarian coalitions. Moreover, they justify the necessity of the formation of power-sharing government that operates in a decentralized parliamentary system.

#### **2.4. The Drawbacks of Consociationalism**

Nevertheless, one should acknowledge the problems that may be caused by the kind of institutional engineering that is supposed to accommodate conflict between all the groups in deeply divided society. The newly engineered power sharing system “may contain the seeds of its own self-destruction as the search for consensus turns into deadlock” (Sisk, 2003, p. 2). It is not easy to reach a consensus given that the parties have different interests and agendas. Consociational regimes create a slow decision-making process given the divergent interest of different groups and the veto right accorded to the minority. Thus, governments usually fail to maintain a healthy decision-making process (Papagianni, 2007, p. 29). Consensus works better in theory than in practice and Lebanon is a perfect familiar example characterizing this drawback of consociationalism. Tammam Salam’s cabinet was formed after nearly eleven months of debates and talks across all the coalitions and sects, characterizing the divergent views of the Lebanese parties and groups resulting in a slow decision-making process.

Additionally, “consociational democracy may exacerbate, rather than ameliorate, inter-communal tensions” (Seaver, 2000, p. 252). Consociational devices increase friction in plural societies, because several socio-economic problems are ignored to avoid inter-sectarian conflicts. Moreover, and due to the autonomy given for each group and the lack of cooperation between citizens, ethnic identities are reinforced, which is more likely to deepen the conflict. Parties fail to get a sense of the opposing view, which enlarges the gap and deepens the conflict. Hence, the connection between consociational democracy and stability has not been sufficiently demonstrated. “All one has to do is glance at the list of consociational failures of Lebanon, Cyprus, and Nigeria to see that consociational devices cannot always prevent inter-communal conflict, especially in the developing world” (Seaver, 2000, p. 248). Nonetheless, according to Lijphart, the establishment of an unstable democracy is much better than the existence of an authoritarian regime.

## **2.5. Corporate or Liberal Consociationalism?**

As previously mentioned, consociationalism is the unique viable solution for deeply divided countries. However, the literature distinguishes between corporate and liberal consociationalism. In fact, “corporate consociationalism accommodates groups according to ascriptive criteria, such as ethnicity or religion,” assuming that their identities are fixed and internally homogeneous (McCulloh, 2012, p. 2). This common type of consociationalism is frequently promoted by Lijphart due to its practicality since it lays down a certain quota or ratio accorded to specific ethnicities or religions that should always be adopted. One of the familiar examples of confessional distribution of seats is Lebanon, where a Maronite is supposed to fill the position of the President, a Sunni as the Prime Minister, and a Shia can hold the

position of the Speaker of the Parliament. This consensus was made in the 1943 National Pact and the Taef accord of 1989. However, this “corporate” consociational model envisaged in Lebanon proved to be unsuccessful due to the continuous difficulties and deadlocks faced in order to reach a consensus between all the sects. It exposed the country to perpetual crisis and external intervention. Therefore, corporate consociationalism produces a slow decision-making process.

On the contrary, “liberal consociationalism rewards whatever salient political identities emerge in democratic elections, whether these are based on ethnic or religious groups, or on subgroup or trans-group identities” (McCulloh, 2012, p. 2). It protects the individuals as well as the groups’ rights and bears supremacy on the corporate model of power-sharing. Corporate consociationalism cannot continuously adapt to demographic changes in the country. To accommodate these changes, the constitution should be amended, which also causes problems and deadlocks. “Corporate rules may create institutional obstacles to the dissolution of protected identities” (McCulloh, 2012, p. 8). However, liberal consociationalism can easily adapt to changes since the quotas are not constitutionally fixed and depend on the people’s decision and views, and is self-adjusting. Moreover, corporate consociationalism enhances religious identification and deepens the conflict since the citizens will only support their own ethnic or religious parties. Lebanon illustrates this caveat clearly. All the communal groups are locked and tied to their religious and sectarian identities. On the contrary, liberal consociationalism allows the creation of new parties with the emergence of new coalitions gathering various ethnic and/or religious groups. Finally, corporate rule classifies citizens according to their race or religion and views them only as part of these groups. However, “liberal rule leaves people free to decide for themselves whether the ethnic or religious group

to which they happen to belong is intrinsically valuable” (McCulloh, 2012, p. 9). Accordingly, liberal consociationalism is “democracy-enabling”. Therefore, it is a choice between “predetermination” in the corporate rule and “self-determination” with the liberal rule. The latter is more effective and avoids the problem of immobilization, but it is less likely adopted due to its complexity.

## **2.6. The Amendment: Liberal Consociationalism**

John McGarry and Brendan O’Leary distinguish between the two previously mentioned types of consociationalism: liberal and corporate consociationalism. They explain and promote liberal consociationalism by discussing the cases of Northern Ireland and Iraq. In fact, the development of liberal consociationalism allowed the re-emergence of consociational theory and showed how this model can freeze all ethnic and religious division. McGarry and O’Leary disagree with Lijphart over conceptual matters in the explanation and promotion of corporate consociationalism. They argue that corporate consociation models “oblige citizens to vote only within their own ethnic community and for their own ethnic parties” (McGarry & O’Leary, 2006, p. 217). They consider themselves as revisionist consociationalists improving this theory and presenting a more democratic and less conflict creating alternative in which citizens can vote across blocks for any party they prefer. Hence, liberal rule will not eliminate differences between ethnicities and religions, but it would definitely put away all the major divisions that cause deeply rooted conflicts.

McGarry and O’Leary explained the liberal consociational system and defended the new Iraqi constitution, which was based on this model. They contend that the four basic requirements – that grant minority rights – of a consociational model represented by Lijphart should be present but they amended some parts and

added further characteristics. Consociational democracy accommodate groups (a) by involving all sizable communities in executive institutions; (b) by promoting proportionality in the executive body, legislative body, and the public sector; (c) by acknowledging the autonomy right for each group; and (d) by granting minority vetoes.

First, liberal rule approves the involvement of all the communities in executive institutions, like in corporate consociationalism, however it does not set ethnic quotas. Hence, it rejects the predetermination of political divisions along ethnic lines and encourages self-determination. Citizens can freely choose their representatives and are not restricted to their own ethnic or religious affiliation. Hence, liberal consociationalism focuses on parties forming new interethnic coalitions and not on ethnic and/or religious groups.

Second, McGarry and O’Leary promote proportional representation, which is also a main condition in corporate consociationalism. However, they detect that d’Hondt’s proportional model spreads the allocated seats as evenly as possible. This system ensures that all significant parties, and not identities, are entitled to seats in the parliament and in the cabinet. Therefore, it focuses on interests instead of identities. This model was “invented in 1878 by the Belgian mathematician and lawyer Victor D’Hondt. The method relies on the highest averages formula for allocating seats in party-list proportional representation” (McGarry & O’Leary, 2007, p. 695). The allocation of votes is represented by the following formula:

$$quot = \frac{V}{s+1}$$

where “V” is the number of votes that a certain party received, and “S” is the number of seats allocated to this party so far, starting with 0. Hence, seats are allocated **singularly one after another**. The idea is that the party’s total votes is divided by a

certain divisor that increases as the party wins more seats which allows parties with lower total votes to also win seats<sup>1</sup>.

D'Hondt's method, advocated by McGarry and O'Leary supersedes the simple proportional representation allocation model. The latter divides each party's vote by the quota, receiving one seat for each quota. For example, "if there are 100 seats, then parties get a seat for each 1/100 of the total vote" (McGarry & O'Leary, 2007, p. 691). Hence, Lijphart's allocation model only favors the representation of parties with significant number of votes. On the contrary, D'Hondt's method allows the representation of a greater number of parties since it singularly allocates the seats.

Third, liberal consociationalism, like in Iraq, allows citizens to vote freely and decide how they want to be governed. "Constituencies decide if they want to amalgamate into federal regions or not, which seems to be prudent and completely democratic" (McGarry & O'Leary, 2007, p. 678). This action will promote stability and prosperity.

Fourth, McGarry and O'Leary focus on the protection of minority right even though these minorities may form a coalition with other groups. Hence, they agree with Lijphart on the necessity of the establishment of a "minority veto". However, they think that two independent institutions should be created to ensure the right representation of all ethnicities or religions. For example, MacGarry and O'Leary

<sup>1</sup> Example of how d'Hondt method works (McGarry and O'Leary 2007, 271):

Round	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	Comments
1	<b>39</b>	16	9	23	17	P1 has the highest total, wins 1 <sup>st</sup> round, and total (39) will be divided by 2 (1+1)
2	19.5	16	9	<b>23</b>	17	P4 has the highest total, wins 2 <sup>nd</sup> round, and total (23) will be divided by 2 (1+1)
3	<b>19.5</b>	16	9	11.5	17	P1 has the highest total, wins 3 <sup>rd</sup> round, and total (39) will be divided by 3 (2+1)
4	13	16	9	11.5	<b>17</b>	P5 has the highest total, wins 4 <sup>th</sup> round, and total (17) will be divided by 2 (1+1)
5	13	<b>16</b>	9	11.5	8.5	P2 has the highest total, wins 5 <sup>th</sup> round, and total (16) will be divided by 2 (1+1)
6	<b>13</b>	8	9	11.5	8.5	P1 has the highest total, wins 6 <sup>th</sup> round, and total (39) will be divided by 4 (3+1)
7	9.75	8	9	<b>11.5</b>	8.5	P4 has the highest total, wins 7 <sup>th</sup> and final round
Seats	3	1	0	2	1	TOTAL: 7 seats

argue that in Iraq, the Federal Council and the Supreme Court should be created to prevent the “dominant community from riding roughshod over the other demoi” (McGarry & O’Leary, 2007, p. 695). The **Federation Council** should be formed by the different groups represented in all the federations or constituents. Its role is restricted to approving legislative laws and constitutional amendments. And the **Supreme Court** should have three main functions: interpreting the constitution, solving the disputes between regional and federal bodies, and deciding if the laws ratified by federal and regional legislatures comply with the constitution.

These amendments help transform corporate rule into liberal rule, and allow the re-emergence and re-consideration of consociationalism as a viable power-sharing model after it was long considered as an unworkable system.

## **2.7. Limitations of Liberal Consociationalism**

Yet, even the better version of consociationalism – liberal rule – cannot by itself establish security, perfect democracy, cooperation, peace, stable institutions, and a conflict-free country. Additionally, since it does not set a certain quota, it cannot secure the preservation and representation of all the identities. In fact, “it does not provide ethnic groups with the same level of certainty as predetermination” (McCulloh, 2012, p. 10). David Waldner (2009) argues that to secure power sharing, institutional engineering alone is not enough and cannot solve sectarian or ethnic divisions. “On its own, institutional engineering fails to engender interethnic political dynamics and alliances, and hence democratic stability” (Salloukh & Clark, 2013, p. 744). Institutional engineering based on a liberal consociational approach can only minimize the divisions and end some short-term conflicts. Therefore, in order to be classified as a successful model, it should come hand in hand with other reforms,

such as autonomy and mutual recognition. As Waldner suggests, “institutions are not direct causes of democratic stability, instead they are only indicators” (Waldner, 2009, p. 1). They will set the ground for a flourishing establishment of a democratic system, but cannot be sustainable without the presence of two essential concepts: mutual recognition and autonomy.

## **2.8. Mutual Recognition**

James Tully (1995) emphasizes the role of modern constitution in recognizing and accommodating cultural diversity. All the religious or ethnic groups should have their demands and fears be protected by the constitution. However, these demands are “limited by the conditions necessary for institution and preservation of the social order” (Owen, 2011, p. 142). All the request of these groups cannot hence be accommodated in the constitution. Tully replaces the unattainable absolute accommodation of cultural diversity by the necessity of building mutual recognition among different cultures to enhance the appropriate functioning of the institutions and the establishment of intercultural peace (1995, p. 177). Additionally, he praises the non-violent nature of the Bahraini and Egyptian revolutions and suggests that the type of revolution will shape the future institutions because the means shape the ends (Tully, 2012, p. 16). Theorists tend to prioritize imposing institutions to ensure democracy rather than acknowledging and solving the complex plurality of already existing relationship problems (Tully, 2012, p. 5). However, people do not only interact with others through institutions, but they also engage in various social activities. Therefore, conflicts among these citizens should be prioritized and resolved in order to avoid the collapse of well-designed institutions. If a respectable relation was not established between all the ethnicities, religions, and groups of a



single country; all the institutions, no matter how strong they were, cannot function appropriately. If discrimination and lack of recognition describe the relation between citizens, conflict will arise and democracy would not result. Hence diversity should be accommodated in order to avoid the collapse of all the institutions.

Recognition is achieved through accepting and acknowledging the language, religion, history, schools, and institutions of other cultures. “A just form of constitution must begin with the full mutual recognition of the different cultures of its citizens” (Tully, 1995, p. 8). Cultural recognition is the most dangerous problem of this age since all the conflicts are arising from the lack of this condition. And all the signs indicate that these problems increased with globalization, which made people more aware of their differences and more attached to their race or religion. Recognition of the “other” is also achieved through listening to their stories, conducting intercultural dialogues, and exchanging experiences and pain caused by the other. The aim is not to produce a new uniform culture ignoring or eliminating the differences. Instead, all the cultures should be recognized in their language or voice without imposing a dominant culture. Hence, differences and cultural plurality are preserved instead of imposing uniformity and regularity. Traditions should be equally recognized and accepted by assimilating different cultures. The new constitution should support the concept of mutual recognition by protecting all the cultures, advocating group freedom, and imposing the respect of all individuals, without according privileges to a certain group, race, or religion. “A modern constitution is based on agreement, while an ancient constitution is based on de facto habit or custom” (Tully, 1995, p. 61). Previously, in all authoritarian regimes, the dominant culture of the people in power was imposed on all the citizens. In contrast, an agreement should be made between all the groups of a single country in order to

respect each other's identity because people should be taken as equal citizens living in the same society.

Recognition and accommodation of cultural diversity can prove successful only when all the groups manage to put themselves in the shoes of other groups to understand their point of view. "Free and open communication enables different groups to discover their own partiality by learning something about others' perspective on their collective problems and on themselves" (Tully, 1995, p. 132). This dialogue and story-sharing will raise diversity awareness and will allow groups to understand "the other" as well as themselves by seeing their image in the eyes of different groups. This interaction will allow the conservation of multiple cultures and the recognition of asymmetry.

Tully argues that federalism is certainly the best way to accommodate cultural diversity because it enables all the groups to reach agreement, accept others, and govern their own entity. Hence, each group can rule itself, and their autonomy should be respected by the central government and by the other constituents and groups. Nonetheless, a province has the choice to delegate its power and to be ruled by the federal government, if it desires. However, a federal regime cannot prove successful without the implementation of the concept of "mutual recognition". If the federations were separated and each group was allowed to govern itself; without mutually recognizing the other, problems will arise. Such is illustrated in the current situation of Iraq where citizens from different sects and backgrounds are fighting and involved in a continuous sectarian war. Hence, federations and autonomy cannot be established without the settlement of mutual recognition since repressing identities and cultural rights will result into war and extremism. When a certain group feels rejected and not recognized, its radical attachment to its identity will be triggered,

from which extremism and fundamentalism grow. Therefore, “different peoples, religions, and cultures should learn how to respect and honor each other’s differences” (Tully, 1995, p. 212) to live in a diversified and peaceful environment because the differences should be enriching the country instead of separating it.

## **2.9. Autonomy**

“The challenge of building democratic regimes in deeply divided societies becomes even more complicated in regions where groups with shared identities transcend state boundaries” (Seaver, 2000, p. 248). Successful power sharing with strongly engineered institutions will collapse if external countries interfere and make decisions on behalf of an absent government. These great powers, instead of fighting directly on their territory, are implicitly combating on the terrain of a certain geopolitically strategic country, and the victim state will then suffer the consequences. For example, in Lebanon<sup>2</sup>, the decision is never made autonomously by the Lebanese parties or groups. The war in Lebanon did not end because the Lebanese parties agreed to settle the conflict; but only because the external countries arranged to end the deeply rooted conflict. And alas, till now, any decision or any conflict is not solved until external countries and great powers settle their problems and provide the Lebanese parties the green light. Hence, there is a lack of sovereignty and the people do not get the chance to be “democratically governed” and to autonomously make their own decisions and get their rights. Therefore, if the external powers get the big hand on the country, all the institutions will not properly work and will reach a stagnation phase, and later on they might collapse. These institutions will hence

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<sup>2</sup> The 15-year (1975 – 1990) Lebanese war ended by signing the “Taef Agreement” in Saudi Arabia only after the development of the international agreement over the Lebanese case among the following countries: Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Syria, France, the United States of America, and the blessing of Iran.

provide a cover for external intervention. Only if the country was sovereign and autonomous will the newly engineered institutions get the chance to independently, democratically, and successfully apply the rules settled for a fair power-sharing model.

Unfortunately, full autonomy does not exist anymore in this era of interdependence, with the emergence of multinational organizations, and the formation of regional groups (regionalism), in a globalized world. The great powers cannot be “great” if they did not influence other less-powerful countries. Moreover, any country cannot survive if it disconnects itself from other states. However, the less powerful strategic countries are the ones suffering most from the lack of autonomy. Hence, “many forces abroad in the world challenge the established models and practices of state sovereignty and autonomy” (Baker, 1999). Especially in plural societies, external actors profit from the division and take a side with a group hindering the autonomy of the state. But, dependency should retain a certain degree of autonomy in order to protect decisions and citizen’s will and dignity. In fact, people recognize the changes in the world order but insist on shaping their fate and enjoying a certain degree of self-governing autonomy (Pauly & Coleman, 2008).

## **2.10. Conclusion**

This chapter examined three overlapping concepts – institutional engineering, mutual recognition, and autonomy – and contended that they should go hand in hand in order to have a successful power sharing agreement in a deeply divided society. All the scenarios emphasize that the three notions are inseparable. In fact, well-designed institutions will immediately collapse if people are not willing to abide by the rules and recognize the “other” – even if the institutions were perfectly

engineered and provided the perfect environment for the establishment of democracy. They will not properly function and the war or the deep conflict will restart again leading to more complicated conflicts. Additionally, even if the institutions were perfectly engineered and all the groups mutually recognized each other, the country cannot democratically function if the government was not sovereign and enjoying a certain degree of autonomy. Moreover, if a certain country enjoys autonomy and citizens “recognize” each other, the country cannot function without adequate institutions to organize and settle democracy. Therefore, these three concepts, combined together, are crucial for the establishment of a successful democratic power-sharing model in any deeply divided society.

The next chapter examines the institutionalization of authoritarianism in Bahrain to understand the deeply rooted conflicts and the sufferance of its repressed minority. This helps applying in the following chapters, the three concepts – institutional engineering, mutual recognition, and autonomy – necessary to resolve Bahrainis political predicament.

## **Chapter Three**

### **The Institutionalization of Authoritarianism in Bahrain**

#### **3.1. Introduction**

The Kingdom of Bahrain consists of thirty-three small islands and is located in the Persian/Arab Gulf, between Qatar and Saudi Arabia. The economy of Bahrain depends on trade more than petrochemical industry due to its poor oil resources in comparison with the rest of the Gulf countries. It ameliorated its financial institutions and liberalized its market to establish an attractive environment for foreign investors. Bahrain became the leader in financial regulations and the center for banking services in the Gulf area.

Bahrain is not a homogeneous Arab state due to its particular ethnic composition. Thirty percent of the population follows the Sunni branch of Islam, while the majority (70 percent) belongs to the Shia sect. The last official demographic statistics were conducted in 1941, however. The Shia population constituted then only 53 percent of the entire Bahraini population (Lawson, 1989, p. 3). Later, in the middle of 1980s, when the percentage of the Shia citizens started to rise, the Sunni government stopped issuing official statistics to avoid highlighting the sectarian demographic gap. Despite their numerical disadvantage, the Sunnis have dominated the country through authoritarian rule that dates to the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It has continuously discriminated against the Shia community, which makes up the majority of Bahraini citizens. This has caused constant protests demanding the establishment of reforms, social justice, and equality.

This chapter examines the institutionalization of authoritarianism in Bahrain. It unpacks the unjust laws and policies that institutionalized an authoritarian regime and culture in the kingdom. This empirical knowledge is provided to evaluate how the ruling family imposed its authoritarian institutions and culture. This is a prerequisite to understand the application of a new power-sharing system in the next chapter.

### **3.2. History**

Bahrain is the smallest state in the Gulf Cooperation Council, and its population is the most complex among those states. In fact, as previously mentioned, the Shia citizens currently constitute 70 percent of the Bahraini population, while the Sunni ruling sect forms only 30 percent of the population. This uneven authoritarian domination by the Sunni regime, due to historical facts, launched several sectarian clashes between the discriminated Shia majority and the Sunni-dominated government.

The islands were ruled by the Persians up to the 4<sup>th</sup> century, and then were conquered by the Arabs, and stayed under Arab rule until 1541. However, Persia believed then that Bahrain should be under its own authority. It hence fought and re-claimed it in 1603, which explains the significant presence of Shia in Bahrain (Tristam, 2008). However, Ahmad Ibn Al-Khalifa, backed by Arab Sunni Tribes, succeeded in invading the islands of Bahrain through Qatar during the 18<sup>th</sup> century (1783), overthrowing the Persian administration and establishing Al-Khalifa rule (International Crisis Group, 2005, p. 4). Henceforth, the ruling family began importing and nationalizing Sunni Bedouins from Syria and other Arab Muslim

countries to counter-balance the percentage of Shia population (Dabrowska, 1997, p. 6).

When Britain decided to secure its road to India, it made Bahrain a British protectorate in 1820. These two countries ratified a treaty recognizing Al-Khalifa as the ruling family of Bahrain. The Bahraini administration was forbidden from signing any agreement with a foreign government without the consent of British authorities. In return, Britain secured the Bahraini islands from external aggression, “mainly referring to Iran and its continuous desire to annex Bahrain under its authority claiming that it originally belongs to the Persian Empire” (Lawson, 1989, p. 30). Under the British mandate and due to its strategic location, Bahrain succeeded in increasing its commercial activity and the amount of manufactured products passing through its territory. “Although oil was discovered in Bahrain during the 1930s, it was relatively little compared to other Gulf states, and the wells are expected to be the first in the region to dry up” (Nakhleh, 1976, p. 4). Sheik Issa Ibn Salman Al-Khalifah, who became Emir in 1961, was determined to diversify and promote his country's economy. He successfully promoted Bahrain as a major regional financial and banking center.

Bahrain became independent on 14 August 1971, following Great Britain's decision to pull its armed forces out of the Gulf. Its 108-article constitution was ratified in June 1973 guaranteeing that all Bahraini citizens are equal before the law and granted justice, freedom of speech, freedom of press, and freedom of religious beliefs (Dabrowska, 1997, p. 9). Moreover, all the population is entitled to free primary education and free medical care. These laws have nonetheless never been uniformly applied as the Sunni minority enjoys more privileges and rights than the marginalized Shia citizens. Similarly, the articles referring to freedom of speech,



freedom of press and equality were never applied at the political, economic, and social levels. The authoritarian regime was implied and the citizens were continuously supposed to acknowledge that the Al-Khalifa is the single ruling family of Bahrain with absolute powers. The formation of political parties was consequently banned.

### **3.3. The Institutionalization of Authoritarianism**

The 1973 constitution states that “the political body of Bahrain is constituted of a national Assembly composed of 14 appointed members of the Cabinet and 30 members elected by popular vote” (Nakhleh, 1976, p. 10). However, the Emir should ratify all rules issued by this assembly, and can issue decrees without referring to the national assembly. He can also dissolve the assembly and the appointed cabinet at any time. This characterizes the type of regime in Bahrain as authoritarian. A law was issued by the Emir on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of October, 1974, and is still being applied today. Entitled “Decree Law on State Security Measures”; it “empowers the minister of interior to order the detention of any political suspect for three years without charge or trial” (Human Rights Watch, 2012, p. 7). The parliament protested against this unjust and non-humanitarian rule, but the Emir refused this objection and hence suspended the parliament and the constitution in 1975. Instead, he appointed a Consultative Council (*Majlis Al Shura*) justifying its legitimacy as being equally divided between Sunnis and Shias, and not including any member from Al-Khalifa ruling family. However, this Shura Council can only propose some laws and present them to the Emir, but has absolutely no power in legislating new decrees or amending existing laws. Moreover, it is always headed by a pro-regime Shia figure and its members are handpicked mainly from loyalist families.

The first coup against the regime took place in 1981, after the 1979 Iranian revolution, and was directly supported by Tehran, aiming at regaining power over Bahrain and spreading its Islamic revolution. “The Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain party published newsletters and books in which it described its attempts to overthrow the Al Khalifa ruling family and install Iranian-style Islamic rule instead. These documents provided evidence for the group's involvement with the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, and of the support the Iranian regime provided for their activities against the Bahraini government” (Al-Hasan, 2011, p. 603). But the coup failed and 73 protestors from the party were exiled or arrested. After the failure of this movement, the Shia population was subjected to additional discrimination, which increased their isolation and aggravated their living standards. “A prominent Shia cleric lost his citizenship, and a Shia cabinet minister went to jail on charges of funneling money to Iran’s Islamic Guard Corps” (Wehrey, 2013, p. 122). The protests were re-launched in 1992 but this time due mainly to the deteriorating socio-economic conditions and the further marginalization and discrimination against the Shia population. Three hundred Bahraini intellectuals submitted a petition to the Emir requesting the restoration of the parliament and the constitution. Moreover, they demanded an end to discriminatory policies that were being used against the Shia community. However, the ruling family ignored these demands. A bigger movement was organized two years later, in October 1994. The same petition was signed by 25,000 citizens from both sects – Sunni and Shia. They pointed to Article 65 of the constitution, which states that “if the Assembly was dissolved, elections for a new assembly must be held within a period not exceeding two months after the date of dissolution. If elections were not held during this period, the dissolved assembly would restore its complete constitutional powers, and shall

meet immediately as if the dissolution has not taken place and shall continue its functions until a new assembly is elected” (Dabrowska, 1997, p. 11-12). The Emir categorically refused the petition and believed that this movement crossed the red line. He hence ordered the deployment of security forces against the protestors. The Sunni government labeled this movement as a Shia-led revolution backed by Iran – much like the first failed coup in 1981 – and aimed at overthrowing the Sunni regime supported by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United States. But, “the 1990s uprisings were fundamentally different from that which prevailed during the 1981 coup attempt. The uprising occurred in a period when the relation between Iran and the GCC states had markedly improved” (Louer, 2013, p. 248). Iran did not want to intervene anymore in Bahrain and desired instead to maintain good relations with all the Gulf states. To prove its good intentions, Iran closed the office of the Bahraini opposition party in Tehran (Dabrowska, 1997, p. 52).

Four parties formed the Bahraini opposition: Popular Front in Bahrain, Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain, National Liberation Front, and Bahrain Freedom Movement. They issued a joint statement on April 12, 1994 rejecting the decree. The government reacted by suspending the National Assembly and the constitution. They also called for the suspension of the “State Security Law”, demanded the release of all political prisoners, and organized a peaceful demonstration to express their demands. Moreover, they insisted on a review of discriminatory employment policy since the Bahraini unemployment rate became the highest among the Gulf states<sup>3</sup>. However, the security forces responded by arresting some Bahraini citizens for taking part of the demonstration (International Crisis Group, 2005, p. 8). Additionally, the security forces voided the home and arrested

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<sup>3</sup> “It was estimated that up to 30,000 Bahraini nationals were without jobs in 1990, a figure representing more than 30 percent of the national work-force” (Dabrowska 1997, 13).

the Shia pro-democracy campaigner Sheikh Ali Salman. The ruling family used different methods to repress the popular uprising: it blocked roads and sprayed tear gas from helicopters. Consequently, hundreds of Bahraini citizens were killed or arrested as a result of the cruel aggression of the security forces. For example, “Hani Abbas Khamis and Hani Ahmad Al-Wasti were shot dead during the demonstrations, Zainab Al-Rashed was hit in the eye by a bullet when she was resisting a policeman who arrested her son, and the forces hit Ali Mohammed Ismael and broke three of his ribs” (Humans Rights Watch, 2012). The Committee for Human Rights in New York estimated that 5,000 Bahraini citizens were detained between December 1994 and January 1996. Several international reporters were also deported because they described accurately the cruel actions performed by the security forces and did not accept the regime’s version of events which demonized the Shia community and refused to relate this movement to Iran’s desire of dominating the country. Nevertheless, the demonstrations and the democratic demands for justice, employment, and the release of detainees never stopped. On the other side, the application of violence, torture, death sentences, unfair trials, arrests of students, harassment of women, religious discrimination, and forced exile against the opposition never stopped also. The regime refused to respond to the demands of Amnesty International and human rights organizations. “Meanwhile the Iranian press dismissed Arab, Gulf, and Bahraini accusations of involvement in Bahrain unrest” (Dabrowska, 1997, p. 34). It aimed at mending its relation with the Gulf states and refused all the accusations of backing up the protestors and aiming at annexing Bahrain to its territory.

Recommendations to end the violence were sent to the Bahraini government from Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the British authorities. This

drove the new Emir, Sheikh Hamad Al-Khalifa, in 2001 to announce the establishment of some reforms that tried to accommodate the opposition. These reforms were divided into two categories: political and economic. On one hand, political reforms included the decision to dissolve the State Security Law, giving citizens more freedom to express their views, granting voting rights to both genders, and creating a new 40-member elected Council of Representatives. The King also released 320 political prisoners and pledged that a constitutional commission would be formed to propose adequate amendments to the 1973 constitution (Lahan, 2004, p. 6). “In 2001, the Emir introduced the National Action Charter, which called for the creation of a constitutional monarchy, a new legislative structure, an independent judiciary, and allowed women’s political participation” (Wehrey, 2013, p. 119). On the other hand, the regime continued to liberalize the Bahraini market, which improved its significance as an attractive banking center. The Emir also slightly reduced rent value and electricity costs, and offered a one-month bonus to government workers.

However, only the aforementioned economic reforms were implemented while all the promises of political reforms were ignored. The ruling family persisted in discriminating against Shia citizens, ignoring all the political reforms, and institutionalizing authoritarian laws. Additionally, the Emir changed the constitution, declaring himself a King and issued a new law for the upcoming 2002 elections. This decree appointed a superior 40-member Shura Council, which nullified the role of the elected Council of Representatives.

### **3.4. Authoritarian Electoral Laws**

The Bahraini legislative authority is comprised of the King and the National Assembly. The Assembly is bicameral, formed by the appointed Consultative Council and the elected Chamber of Deputies, the first being the superior with law-making powers. “The Consultative Council has effective veto power over decisions made in the Chamber of Deputies, and in the event of a deadlock, the president of the Council casts the tie-breaking vote” (Carnegie, 2009, p. 4). Additionally, the elected council is only allowed to propose or amend laws, it is forbidden to initiate or draft any legislation. Even though the role of the Council of Representatives – *Majlis al Nuwab* – was nullified by the appointment of a superior council, the ruling family insisted on holding the first elections in 2002, after the suspension of parliament in 1975, to show the Shia community and the entire world that the government is implementing reforms and conducting a fair democratic activity allowing the representation of the opposition. However, to secure majority seats in parliament, the government issued an unfair electoral law, which gerrymandered electoral districts to favor Sunni candidates and areas.

The 2002 electoral law set by the government and the King determines the four-year term of the lower house and sets the rules of the parliamentary elections. All Bahraini citizens above 21 years old (women and men) are allowed to vote. To increase the number of Sunni voters, “citizens of GCC countries who are Bahraini residents as well as non-residents who own property in Bahrain are also allowed to vote, but citizens of non-GCC countries are not allowed to vote” (Carnegie, 2009, p. 9). A two-round majoritarian electoral system divides Bahrain into 40 small single-member constituencies. In fact, “run off elections are held if no candidate obtains an absolute majority in the first round. An absolute majority is not required in the

second round, and voting is not compulsory” (Lahan, 2004, p. 9). However, these 40 single member constituencies are divided according to the distribution of Sunni demographics in the country in order to minimize as much as possible the number of Shia winning candidates. The upper chamber is not included in the electoral law since its members are appointed by the King, and the speaker of the National Assembly is chosen from this appointed council. The National Assembly can issue a law only when it is approved by the majority of the two chambers and ratified by the King. The electoral law, which favors the Sunni candidates, empowers the appointed council, diminishes the jurisdiction of the elected council, and grants the King absolute rights and power. It demonstrates the electoral institutionalization of authoritarianism in Bahrain.

“The weakening of the parliament by the appointment of a superior council, along with the gerrymandering designed to ensure Sunni dominance, spurred the Shiaa to boycott the 2002 parliamentary and municipal elections” (Wehrey, 2013, p. 119). Moreover, the arrest of Abed Al-Hadi Al-Khawaja, a prominent human rights activist, in 2004, re-launched the demonstrations that the security forces crushed through violence.

The question of joining the parliamentary elections in 2006 split the Shia community. Al-Haq party categorically refused to participate in a rigged electoral game with pre-determined winners. On the other side, Al-Wifaq advocated participating in the elections acknowledging that they can still win seats given the size of their electoral base. They thus participated with the aim of changing politics from within, and managed to win 17 out of 40 seats, but did not hold the majority to pass the laws that they desire. And even if they managed to win the majority of seats, laws approved by Parliament should be also endorsed by the upper chamber and then

ratified by the King. Hence, the authoritarian regime and Sunni domination are well embedded in the Bahraini constitution.

Al-Wifaq party was portrayed by the Shia community as helpless since it could not promulgate any new law granting them their basic rights during its four-year parliamentary term. Yet, the Shia voted for them again during the 2010 elections despite all the accusations and disappointment, granting them 18 seats out of 40. They supported Al-Wifaq party to highlight their frustration against the Sunni regime, which continued to arrest and pursue them.

The existence of parliamentary elections does not imply that the political system is democratic. In Bahrain, legislative power is vested in the King and the National Assembly. Any law or decision taken by parliament should be approved by the King in order to become effective. Additionally, the King nullified the power of the elected body by appointing a superior chamber to prevent the promulgation of laws that could break his authoritarian rule in case the Shia won majority in parliamentary elections.

The institutionalization of authoritarianism is also illustrated in the cabinet appointments. The council of ministers is not formed based on the result of the parliamentary elections. The Prime Minister and the ministers are instead appointed by the King; and the majority, especially the key ministries (like defense, oil, interior and foreign affairs ministries) are assigned to members from the Al-Khalifa royal family. The appointed Prime Minister is not allowed to form his own cabinet, he can only propose some ministers; and the King has the sole power in selecting the names. Hence, all executive decisions are dictated by the King who represents the head of the state and controls political life. Therefore, the royal family represented by the King should approve all decisions issued by political institutions, whether legislative



or executive, which safeguards the authoritarian regime.

### **3.5. Military and Judiciary Authoritarian Institutions**

In addition to the implementation of authoritarian measures in the legislative and executive branches, other institutions are also used to institutionalize authoritarian rule. The Bahraini Defense Forces (BDF) were granted wide-ranging authority with the issuance of the Decree Law on State Security Measures. Due to the constant protests organized by the Shia opposition, the royal family decided to employ Sunni loyal forces, not necessarily formed by Bahrainis, in the military. The loyal Armed Forces obey the King's orders and support his regime by controlling and suppressing the continuous protests led by Shia. The regime is aware that a military formed from Shia or neutral citizens would not obey violent instructions of the authoritarian ruling family. This explains the employment of pro-regime population in the army. Hence, Sunnis from Syria, Jordan, Pakistan, Yemen, and Sudan were naturalized and given employment in the armed forces. Additionally, all the military officers are from the royal family or Sunni tribes. One of the major reasons that triggered protests against the regime was the high unemployment rate among the Shia citizens. They blamed the government for naturalizing more than 10,000 non-Bahraini Sunnis to fill vacant military positions instead of employing native Bahrainis (Al-Murshed, 2013). The government, in turn, refutes these accusations. The Information Minister Mohammed Abdel Ghaffar declared that "these jobs are open to any citizen according to their merits" (Bahrain Center for Human Rights, 2006).

The judicial body does not differ from other authoritarian institutions since the ruling family is well represented in it to control decisions, verdicts, and appeals.

The judiciary institution is divided into two main branches: Shari'a Law Courts, managing the status of Muslims in the country and Civil Law Courts, applying and interpreting the laws, and dealing with criminal, commercial, and civil issues (Joyce, 2012, p. 125). The King appoints all the judges within the two branches. The Law on State Security Measures allows the judiciary to establish an additional branch, the special military courts and trials for "Bahrainis caught up in the national safety dragnet" (Human Rights Watch, 2012, p. 2). These courts lack independence and impartiality; their main obligation is to arrest and torture protestors, especially Shia citizens opposing the regime. "The arrested protestors were frequently unable to communicate with counsel, were not able to testify in their own defense, and were subject to physical abuse" (Human Rights Watch, 2012, p. 3).

### **3.6. Class Structure**

The Bahraini movement was initiated in response to (1) the suspension of parliament and the constitution, (2) the high unemployment rate, and most importantly (3) the discrimination based on sectarian and social bases. In fact, Bahraini society is divided into four hierarchical classes created by authoritarian rule that penetrates the institutions, the political life, and even Bahraini social structure. Class A constitutes the central branch of Al-Khalifa family. It enjoys all the political and economic privileges, and dominates official positions. These rich sheikhs have ruled the entire country since the 1780s and have made considerable fortunes through the expansion of commerce and the development of agricultural lands. "Out of 18 members in the cabinet in 1996, nine were from Al-Khalifa family, holding all sovereign-related offices" (Dabrowska, 1997, p. 5).

Class B citizens are merchant families with long-standing ties to Al-Khalifa family. They enjoy some privileges and are being granted some important official positions. These families used to control the pearl market and contribute to the economy of the island (Lawson, 1989, p. 7). Class C Bahrainis are ordinary Sunni citizens who support the rule of Al-Khalifa family and the privileges granted to the merchants. They enjoy a regular middle-level life without any kind of discrimination. Poor Sunni citizens from Syria, Yemen, Jordan, and many other Muslim countries were brought to Bahrain and were naturalized to increase the percentage of Sunnis in the country. However, class D constitutes all the Shia population suffering from the unjust discriminatory rule of the Sunni Al-Khalifa authoritarian regime. “The Shia of Bahrain are banned from senior positions in Foreign, Defense, Interior, and Justice Ministries and have been sidelined in service industries such as Health, Transport, Water, and Electricity” (Dabrowska, 1997, p. 75). “If you do not have a college or high school degree, but if you are a Sunni, you can always find a job in the military or the police, but Shias simply cannot” (Zill, 2012). Such discrimination and intolerance caused the sectarian division and the long-lasting revolts against the marginalization of the entire Shia community.

### **3.7. Lack of Mutual Recognition and the Absence of Autonomy**

The nature of authoritarianism in Bahrain has caused much distrust between Sunni and Shia citizens. The ruling family demonized the Shia by emphasizing that the protestors are taking orders from Tehran and are being controlled by the Iranian regime that wants to dominate the Bahraini Island. This exacerbated the relations between Shia and Sunni Bahrainis. The anti-Shiite strategy heightened Sunni anxiety, which views the Shia majority in Bahrain as a threat to their existence in the

country. At the same time, this sectarian discrimination frustrated the Shia population, which increased their protests and demands. “The government played the sectarian card on several occasions to justify its pressure and discrimination against the Shia citizens” (International Crisis Group, 2005, p. 12). The government aimed at enlarging the gap and creating tensions between the two sects to demonstrate that Sunni citizens refuse Iranian influence and manipulation over Bahraini Shia population. “Dozens of interviews conducted with Sunni Bahrainis express their views advocating the regime’s story and approving the disloyalty of the Shia Bahrainis” (International Crisis Group, 2005, p. 12). The regime’s agenda succeeded in creating deep divisions between the two sects and the complete absence of mutual recognition and mutual acceptance of each other’s rights and demands.

On the other hand, during the 1980s, at the beginning of the protests, the Shia citizens admitted that they were influenced by Iran and aimed at being re-affiliated with the Persian regime. They however acknowledged that this affiliation does not satisfy their demands. They are proud Bahraini citizens looking for their basic needs of representation, co-existence, justice, and equality. They emphasize that their positive relation with Tehran does not imply or indicate their disloyalty to their country and to the ruling family. “To express their loyalty to the State, in 2005, the Shia opposition urged the protestors to display only the Bahraini national flag” (Joyce, 2012, p. 127).

The sovereign state of Bahrain was never autonomous due to the continuous intervention of several countries in its government decisions and opposition parties’ actions. Saudi Arabia is perceived as the patron of the island due to the economic dependence of the Bahraini economy on Riyadh’s support. In fact, Saudi Arabia is the biggest contributor to Bahraini’s banking system. To improve the bonds between

these two countries, a bridge that connects Saudi Arabia to Bahrain was constructed. Additionally, a vast amount of Bahraini revenues come from an offshore oil well located in the maritime borders between Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, on which they both share sovereignty. However, “it is entirely operated by ARAMCO, a Saudi oil company. It pays back 50 percent of its profit to the Bahraini government” (Louer, 2013, p. 252).

Bahrain relies on US protection, demonstrating the American presence on its territory. The island “hosts the headquarters of the US Navy’s Fifth Fleet” (Louer, 2013, p. 252). The United States indirectly mentioned, through its humanitarian organizations, that it was not satisfied with the violent practices of the Bahraini armed forces. However, it did not alter its foreign policy towards Bahrain or imposed the settlement of democracy, justice, and human rights due to the facilities that are being granted by the ruling family. The American government does not directly intervene in the domestic affairs of the Bahraini government, instead, it leads from outside through its exceptional coalition and unique relation with Saudi Arabia. Hence, the United States maintains a special relation with Bahrain and all the GCC countries due to major interests in the region.

During the 1970s and 1980s, Iran wanted to re-conquer the island and bring it back under its sphere of influence, did not succeed however. Instead, it built up a strong relation with the Shia community and opposition parties in Bahrain. However, this special and strong relation does not imply that Iran controlled and launched all protests against the government. During the 1990s, Tehran adjusted its relationship with the GCC countries and certified that it is not collaborating with the Bahraini opposition. Nonetheless, Iran enjoys imposing its power over any country, especially these from the GCC to counter-balance the Saudi-American power in the region.

Saudi Arabia accuses Iran for influencing and supporting the Shia opposition not only to break Iran's power, but also to restrain the Shia in Bahrain from achieving their rights. If the revolution in Bahrain succeeds, Saudi Arabia fears the spread of Shia opposition movements in the rest of the GCC countries, starting by the collapse of its own regime. It hence keeps on mentoring and controlling the situation in Bahrain.

### **3.8. Conclusion**

According to the Bahraini constitution, the King, as the head of the state with ultimate jurisdiction over all Bahraini institutions, controls the entire political sphere. A study conducted by Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in 2008 criticizes the high level of authoritarianism in Bahrain. Additionally, the King has the right to veto, amend, and ratify the laws passed by the National Assembly. The King appoints and dismisses the Prime Minister, the Cabinet, the Speaker of the House, and the Parliament. He is also the "commander in Chief of the armed forces, the chairman of the Higher Judicial Council, and he appoints judges" (Carnegie, 2008, p. 3). This authoritarian culture is also reflected in the Bahraini social life. The "superior" sect formed by the ruling family and the Sunni citizens demonizes and rejects the recognition of the "inferior" sect. The next chapter describes the events of the Bahraini Arab Spring, the response of the regime, and Saudi Arabia's intervention. It also analyzes the best viable power-sharing case scenario suitable to Bahraini's deeply divided society.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Beyond the Bahraini Uprising**

#### **4.1. Introduction**

The marginalized population of Bahrain has never missed a chance in raising their requests demanding an end to discrimination and the establishment of social justice. Influenced by the successful uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt, the Bahraini opposition launched its most significant non-violent revolution in February 2011. However, their small protests, which were mostly led by Shia activists, never threatened the authoritarian regime. However, after witnessing the victorious fall of the authoritarian regimes in Tunis and Cairo, the Bahraini citizens from the two sects – Shia and Sunni – got inspired by the Arab Spring movement and insisted on pursuing their long-lasting demands. The latest uprising was different. The Bahrainis constantly demanded for changes but never protested like this before: “in 2011, the Pearl Roundabout cross-sectarian uprising was a watershed in the political life of Bahrain” (Wehrey, 2013, p. 116). These peaceful demonstrations were faced by a predicted violent response led by Bahraini, GCC, and Saudi Armed Forces.

This chapter explains the evolution of the Bahraini Spring in addition to the government, regional, and international responses. It also describes the move away from authoritarianism by presenting the best viable regime for the Bahraini deeply divided society, including the three previously explained complementary concepts – institutional engineering, mutual recognition, and autonomy.

## **4.2. The 2011 Bahraini Uprising**

The Bahraini government demonized the protestors of 2011 as agents of the Iranian regime. The revolution was consequently portrayed as a pure sectarian fight between the Sunni regime, supported by Saudi Arabia, against a Shia rebellion manipulated by Iran. To counter the regime's attempt to manufacture a sectarian rift, the protestors raised the following slogan to show that they represented cross-sectarian Bahraini citizens demanding justice, freedom, and democracy: "No Shiites, No Sunnis, only Bahrainis" (Abdulla, 2011, p. 161). King Hamad Al-Khalifa refrained from using violence and tried to accommodate the protestors by "announcing a gift of 1,000 Bahraini Dinars for each family, creating 20,000 jobs, constructing 50,000 new housing units, and appointing new ministers" (Wehrey, 2013, p. 125). But from previous experience, the citizens were confident that the government was not willing to execute any reform. They hence organized open demonstrations at the Pearl Roundabout on 14 February 2011.

The unimplemented reforms, the systemic discrimination, and the successful uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt inspired the majority of Bahraini citizens to revolt. Formed by Sunni and Shia activists, and especially young citizens, the peaceful demonstrations made the Pearl Roundabout their iconic place for open protests until their demands are met; they even settled tents and camped out for overnights. A fifth of Bahraini citizens participated in the demonstrations across the country expressing their desire to topple the regime and establish social justice (Al Jazeera, 2014). However, in response to these demonstrations, the Bahraini government banned all sorts of gatherings and deployed its armed forces to end these revolts. The homogeneous loyal military stood by the regime. "On 17 February 2011, the Bahraini Security Forces closed in on sleeping protestors, using rubber bullets,



birdshot, and tear gas” (Wehrey, 2013, p. 122). This so-called bloody Thursday resulted in the death of more than three hundred activists, and to the detention and torture of a significant number of protestors. In response, the Shia Wifaq party pulled all its members from Parliament refusing to deal with a government that intentionally kills its own citizens. However, this bloody response did not deter protestors from pursuing their demands. “About 50,000 citizens participated in the funeral of the victims and marched throughout the capital” (Davidson, 2013, p. 3). On 25 February 2011, 40 percent of the Bahraini population protested in front of the Parliament demanding the resignation of the elected members that could not represent them and were incapable of issuing laws that protect their rights (Abdulla, 2011, p. 163).

The ruling family was divided between those who wanted an immediate and violent response to crush the demonstrations, and others that advocated a peaceful solution in which they would accommodate the protestors’ demands. Since violence did not hinder the cross-sectarian movement from roaming the streets and demanding change, the Crown Prince pushed for the implementation of some reforms hoping to contain and end the rebellion. The King consequently ordered the release of several political detainees and dismissed some ministers (Erlich, 2012). Nevertheless, the protestors could not trust the regime and its pretended reforms, which were not implemented and were not meant to grant them their rights. The demonstrations therefore continued during the month of March and their demands escalated. At the beginning of the 2011 protests, the Bahrainis wanted the establishment of a new constitution that only permits fair parliamentary elections. But then, the violent response of the regime, which resulted in the death and torture of many protestors, pushed the majority of the Bahraini citizens to start calling for the removal of the Al-Khalifa King and his Prime Minister. The ruling family declared that the protestors

had crossed the red line in their demands of removing the King. It hence acknowledged that minor reforms would not accommodate the revolution and approved that the only way to terminate the uprising resides in going back to a violent crackdown.

Saudi Arabia pressured the regime to adopt the violent strategy; it was not satisfied with the peaceful response of accommodating the protestors. In their media and official speeches, Riyadh also demonized the revolution and pictured it as a coup organized and manipulated by Iran to annex the islands of Bahrain to its territory. However, this accusation was not only aimed at counter-balancing Iranian power in the region. Instead, Saudi Arabia was mainly concerned about the expansion of the protests into its own backyard. The collapse of the monarchy in Bahrain could have a snowball effect that would threaten other authoritarian Gulf regimes, and revolutions might take place in the rest of the Gulf, especially Saudi Arabia. Therefore, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) decided to deploy its “Peninsula Shield Forces”, led by Saudi Arabia, in Bahrain on 14 March 2011 to end the uprising violently. The troops crossed into the island through the bridge that links Saudi Arabia to Bahrain. Since the island is part of the GCC, all the other members were expected to back it up when it requests support. The next day, 15 March 2011, the King declared a state of emergency in the kingdom for three months. This decree did not hinder Bahraini citizens from marching towards the Saudi Arabia Embassy to show their dissatisfaction with its military intervention. This demonstration, along with other protests in universities and across the country, were again faced by violent and bloody responses. Thousands of protestors were killed, detained, or tortured. Doctors who helped the protestors, journalists who highlighted the cruel actions of the ruling family, lawyers who defended the detainees, and Members of Parliament from the

Shia sect were arrested, with some of them dying in custody (Zill, 2012). Additionally, on 18 May 2011, the significant Pearl Roundabout monument was removed and replaced by traffic lights to avoid the assemblage of protestors in this symbolic location. The Bahraini Forces destroyed some Shia mosques at the pretext that they were illegally built. They also banned the two main Shia political parties, and their members were arrested. The clashes, torture, arrests, and discrimination did not restrain the majority of the citizens from continuing to demand justice and equality. Nevertheless, the 2011 revolution, which threatened the Bahraini ruling family, ultimately fell apart and was put down by the beginning of a national dialogue. Later, to corroborate his positive intension, the King responded to the request of the moderate Crown Prince, Prince Salman Bin Hamad Bin Issa Al-Khalifa, who refused the use of violence response, and headed the dialogue committee. However, the dialogue sessions did not last for a long time and did not generate any solution due to the unchanged violent and discriminated response of the government, like the arrest of a leading official from Al Wifaq, the main Shia opposition party.

### **4.3. Foreign Suppression of the Revolution**

The Bahraini uprising was suppressed by the government and especially by the intervention of foreign countries. Saudi Arabia feared Shia domination in Bahrain, which might extend the revolution and the unrest to its territory and the rest of the Gulf states. It justified its refusal to accept any reforms by blaming the movement on Iran and depicting it as being manipulated by Tehran. Given that the Bahraini armed forces could not face the revolution on its own, Riyadh led the deployment of 1,500 troops from the GCC forces; which crashed down the uprising.

Bahrain is also the home of the US Fifth Navy Fleet and the latter holds a special relation with Saudi Arabia. Therefore, it could not promote its values of freedom, democracy, and social justice in Bahrain as in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Syria. The US indirectly criticized the violent response of the Bahraini armed Forces, which resulted in the death of a large number of citizens; it however never encouraged regime change. The US only promoted the establishment of rounds of dialogue to accommodate the revolts and the demands of the Shia population. Bahrain hence clearly exposed the double standards of US foreign policy because American's strategic interest prevailed over American values in Bahrain. The strategic location of Bahrain secures the passage of oil from the Gulf to the US and helps to keep an eye on Iran. Therefore, the US values its special relation with Bahrain. Accordingly, it would not profit from promoting democracy and freedom in such a strategic country.

Nor did the media and the international community properly highlight the bloody response of the government. Only a few international NGOs, like Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and International Crisis Group shed light on the violent reaction of the military (Human Rights Watch, 2012). They however did not mobilize the international community to put an end to these violations. Additionally, many Gulf states sponsor international media channels such as CNN, Al-Arabia, Sky News, and Al-Jazeera. This prevents them from transparently broadcasting and criticizing the regime's violent and non-humanitarian response. These politicized channels helped in sustaining the authoritarian regime in Bahrain (Brynen, Moore, Salloukh, & Zahar, 2012). They carried the regime's message pretending to face the Iranian conspiracy. "Saudi-owned Al Arabiya channel reflected the official point of

view, condemning activists of being Iranian proxies and accusing demonstrators of being armed” (Hashem, 2012).

All aforementioned reasons contributed the crushing of the Bahraini uprising. However, this did not silence the opposition. Small opposition movements are still being organized, especially on the yearly anniversary of the revolution. “The protesters marched in Manama on 14 February 2012, trying to revive the revolution and retake the Pearl Roundabout, since renamed al-Farouq Junction” (McEvers, 2012), but they were again faced by bullets and tear gas. However, for now, the uprising appears to be over. The ruling family is still in power, enjoying the same authoritarian rule, just like nothing ever happened” (McEvers, 2012). Nonetheless, the discriminated group will not rest and will eventually, in the long run, move away from authoritarian rule. The next section hence proposes the best viable power-sharing regime for Bahrain.

#### **4.4. The Institutionalization of Power-Sharing**

The uprising was crushed and the demands of the protestors, especially the Shia opposition, were never realized. But, the activists and the discriminated majority will not rest until they achieve justice. However, when the dictatorship collapses, the replacement of the authoritarian regime should be well planned since a simple majoritarian democracy will not solve the problem of a deeply divided society; the minority will then face the issue of marginalization. Therefore, as discussed in Chapter 2, the only viable democratic solution for Bahrain is the establishment of a power-sharing regime that will reassure the representation of the Shia majority as well as the Sunni minority.

A specialized committee with members from the two sects should agree on a constitution that implements the values of democracy based on a power-sharing prototype. This constitution should take into consideration Bahrain's geopolitical location. In fact, given that Bahrain is a member of the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Al-Khalifa family ruled Bahrain for decades, the King cannot be overthrown. Therefore, a democratic constitutional monarchy should be put in place. A king from the Al-Khalifa family would be considered as the honorary head of the state with limited political power. The constitution should also describe the parliamentary system that will be established in Bahrain, with the Prime Minister being the political head of the state.

The new regime will be based on a liberal consociational power-sharing model that accommodates all the groups in a deeply divided country. Since Bahrain is a small country in which citizens are divided into two sects only, the formation of federal rule would be impossible. In fact, a two-federation state will cause more problems and will further divide the country causing dual competition and leading to eventual separation. If the "communal groups are not geographically concentrated, autonomy can also be arranged on a non-territorial basis" (Lijphart, 2004, p. 105). However, decentralization is essential and each sect should be allowed to possess its own schools and mosques. "Decentralization helps in improving the channels of citizen participation and political accountability. It also allows for a more responsive, and thus effective, government allocation of public goods to a diverse citizenry" (Daughters & Harper, 2007, p. 215). Hence, further autonomy should be given to municipalities and mayors, which allows them to focus on the demands of their community. This decentralization process will stop discrimination against a certain sect and focus on improving the citizen's conditions.

#### **4.4.1. Legislative Authority**

The legislative authority under the authoritarian regime was formed by the King and the National Assembly. This assembly was bicameral, created by an appointed Consultative Council and an elected Chamber of Deputies, the first being superior with law-making jurisdictions, while the power of the lower elected body was constrained. After the suspension of the parliament in 1975, the Bahraini citizens were allowed to vote three times in 2002, 2006, and 2010. However, these elections were based on a tailored, unfair, and discriminated electoral law that gerrymandered the districts to favor the Sunni candidates. “The elections became part of the institutional ensemble organized by the regime to avoid democratization and reproduce authoritarianism” (Brynen et al., 2012, p. 147). Hence, the royal family employs and shapes the pre-determined elections in order to stay in power. In fact, these elections are designed to favor the pro-regime contestants and to also “absorb the opposition activity into the regime’s institutional framework” (Bryen et al., 2012, p. 158). The four-year term of the current Bahraini parliament ends in 2014, and the opposition was planning on boycotting the polls since no reforms were made and their demand for issuing a new fair electoral law was not met.

A move away from authoritarianism entails establishing a bicameral legislative system, with *Shura* or Consultative Council being the appointed upper house and *Majlis Al Nuwwab* or Chamber of Deputies being the elected lower house. The new electoral law should grant the lower house the right in making all legislations. As for the upper house, it should enjoy limited power. Its role should be restricted to only taking a second look at the laws issued by the lower house that require the amendment of the constitution. However, if the two chambers disagree on

a certain law, the opinion of the elected body should prevail. In other words, the upper chamber should be similar to England's House of Lords.

### *Upper House*

The seats of the Bahraini upper house should be equally divided (half Shia and half Sunni) with a mutual veto right. This equal division guarantees the rights of the Sunni minority and allows their engagement in the major decisions. The appointed upper chamber tends to be the smaller of the two legislative bodies. Additionally, its representatives serve more time than the elected members, but have less power. Since the Bahraini population is small, the Consultative Council should be composed of 30 members only, 15 Shia and 15 Sunni. This chamber has a very limited role in a parliamentary system. In fact, it cannot veto all the decision taken by the lower house and cannot initiate any budgetary legislation. It only has an advisory role of revising and vetoing the laws or decrees that need to amend the constitution. It can also propose the amendment of some other laws, but the lower chamber can refuse its suggestions. The upper house is appointed by the prime minister, and its members are usually experts or distinguished Bahraini citizens. The members of Consultative Council can serve for eight years since their role is very limited. However, the equal seats division and the mutual veto right can paralyze the country and create a slow decision-making resulting sometimes in a deadlock. However, such division ensures that the minority will not be trampled. Therefore, the risk of reaching a stalemate is better than causing the marginalization of the minority.



### *Lower House*

The Representative Council should be granted more powers than the upper house, as per the constitution, since it is the sole directly elected body; it can even supersede the upper house. It usually contains more members than the lower house and enjoys a shorter term. Bahrain is a small country with 1,336,254 citizens according to the 2014 World Population Review; hence the number of elected members of parliament should relatively be small. The Bahraini population, males and females above 18 years old, should be granted the right to elect 50 candidates according to the proportional representation (PR) model. Chapter 2 argued that liberal consociationalism is the best viable solution for a deeply divided country. It puts in place a fair electoral law, based on proportional representation, in which citizens can vote for the party they prefer. Hence, liberal rule will not eliminate differences between Sunnis and Shias, but it would put away all the major divisions that cause deeply rooted conflicts.

The liberal consociational model tries to get rid of all the divisions in the society by forming a homogeneous parliament with cross-sectarian coalitions. It does not allocate a quota for each sect; it instead applies the closed party-list of proportional representation, with Bahrain considered one electoral district. Each party forms a closed list and orders its candidates by order of priority. And since no quota is required, cross-sectarian coalitions will be established, and new non-sectarian parties may emerge. Hence, liberal consociationalism focuses on interests rather than identities. As explained in chapter 2, D'Hondt's electoral model provides the best proportional representation law because it spreads the allocated seats as evenly as possible. It allows the representation of a bigger number of parties in the parliament since it allocates the seats singularly, one after another. In fact, the party's

total votes is divided by a certain pre-determined divisor that increases as the party wins more seats, which allows parties with lower total votes to also win seats. This system ensures that parties, and not identities, that accumulated a significant percentage during the election are entitled to seats in the parliament. The below table shows all the parties in Bahrain<sup>4</sup>:

Name and Affiliation of the Current Bahraini Parties:

Al – Asalah	Pro-government, Sunni Islamist
Al – Menbar Islamic Society	Pro-government, Sunni Islamist
Al – Meethaq	Pro-government, Secular
Economist Bloc	Pro-government, Secular
National Justice Movement	Pro-government, Secular
Al – Wefaq National Islamic Society	Opposition, Shia Islamist
Progressive Democratic Tribune	Opposition, Secular
National Democratic Action Society	Opposition, Secular
Nationalist Democratic Rally	Opposition, Secular
Bahrain Freedom Movement	Opposition, Unlicensed
Haq Movement	Opposition, Unlicensed
February 14 Youth Coalition	Opposition, Youth
Shabeeba Society of Bahrain	Opposition, Youth

With the new power-sharing constitution and the end of the authoritarian era, Bahraini political parties would not be categorized anymore according to their sectarian affiliation. They will have to be accountable to the electorate and will have

<sup>4</sup> The name and affiliation of all the Bahraini parties were retrieved from: A Field Guide to Bahraini Political Parties. (2011) *The Telegraph*. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/8334582/A-FIELD-GUIDE-TO-BAHRAIN-POLITICAL-PARTIES.html>

to address people with new socio-economic plans and objectives. Additionally, the closed list proportional representation model will lead to the formation of new cross-sectarian coalitions between the parties that have common goals. Therefore, the sectarian division between Sunni and Shia would not be a problem anymore because their parties will be united under the liberal consociational closed party list. Moreover, this electoral law will drive the formation of additional secular parties with non-political views, like the green party, or a party that empowers women.

#### **4.4.2. Executive Authority**

During the authoritarian rule of Al-Khalifa family, the Prime Minister and the ministers were appointed by the King; and the majority, especially the key ministries (like defense, oil, interior and foreign affairs ministries) were assigned to members from the royal family.

In a parliamentary system, the prime minister is the head of the government and the political representative of the country. The prime minister is elected by the lower house of the legislative authority, hence the party or the coalition that won the majority of parliamentary seats democratically chooses its representative to fill in the position of the head of the government. The elected prime minister chooses the ministers that will form the cabinet and requests a vote of confidence from the lower house. The executive body is hence formed by the prime minister and the cabinet that were given the confidence vote; its role is to execute the laws legislated by the parliament and to deal with the day-to-day administrative activities of the country. The executive branch will be reflecting the cross-sectarian coalitions that were formed in the lower house of the parliament.

#### **4.4.3. Judicial Body**

The judicial body should be an independent branch that applies the laws, interprets them, and implements the constitution. During the authoritarian regime, all the judges were appointed by the King and were specifically chosen from the royal family. The judicial body was divided into three branches: the Shari'a Law Courts that deal with the status of Muslims, the Civil Law Courts that are responsible of all the remaining issues, and the Special Courts that prosecute citizens involved in counter-regime movements. However, a new structure should be put in place. In fact, the Shari'a Law should be restricted to each sect and should not be considered as a section in the official judicial branch. As part of the decentralization plan, each sect should be able to solve its own religious problems according to its own Shari'a/courts. Hence, all the laws that deal with Sunni or Shia status should be affiliated under the jurisdiction of the Shari'a of each sect. As well, the extra-legal Special Courts established by the authoritarian rule to prosecute the protestors should be closed. All citizens should be granted freedom of speech and should be able to express their opinion peacefully, without harming the others or causing any trouble. If they do not respect the law, they would then be subject to normal procedure under the civil law courts.

The Bahraini judicial system should hence be divided into two sections: the Council of State and the Civil Law Court. Since Bahrain cannot be divided into federational districts, it cannot have a federation council that represents all the federal entities of the country. This entity can be replaced by a simple judiciary council called "Council of State" representing the two sects. Its role consists in approving constitutional amendments to ensure that the minority rights will always be protected. It is also the highest and final authority that can interpret the

constitution. The other section of the judicial branch is the regular Civil Law court that deals with criminal and civil matters. This branch should be completely independent and its judges should not be affiliated to any political party.

#### **4.4.4. Military Forces**

During the rule of the authoritarian government in Bahrain, the military was one of the most corrupt branches. Only Sunni officials – even non-Bahrainis from Yemen, Jordan, Syria, and Pakistan, who showed their complete loyalty to the royal family – were granted the Bahraini citizenship and hired in the military. Moreover, the military’s officer corps was mostly composed of Al-Khalifa family members and some loyal Sunni tribes. In the past, few Shia citizens were recruited but were not granted official positions. Nonetheless, when the demonstrations started in the 1990s, and the primary task of the armed forces became the suppression of these protestors, the Shia representation in the army completely disappeared. During the Bahraini uprising, these security forces defended the regime without any qualms. The coup-proofing strategy of only recruiting Sunnis in the military immunized the authoritarian regime against the Shia internal threat (Louer, 2013, p. 245). Hence, avoiding the recruitment of Shia in the four main security agencies: “the Bahrain Defense Force (BDF), the National Guard (NG), the Public Security Forces (PSF), and the National Security Agency (NSA)” succeeded in repressing the regime-threatening uprising (Louer, 2013, p. 246).

However, in a democratic power-sharing system, the hired forces should be recruited according to their merit. The authoritarian government claimed that the military needed more forces, but due to the limited number of Bahraini citizens that were not even applying to fill in the vacant positions, it was obliged to hire non-

Bahraini people. This excuse was not approved by the discriminated Shia majority that was looking for jobs in all the fields and was complaining from the high unemployment rate. Therefore, the new democratic government should give the opportunity to all the Bahraini citizens to apply for vacant positions in the military. And if Bahraini citizens could not fill these positions, the recruitment of foreigners would then be justified. The composition of the forces does not require being proportional to reflect the sectarian percentage. In fact, the military should be considered as an independent, autonomous, and unified player. Therefore the armed forces are supposed to be recruited based on their meritocracy. During the rule of authoritarianism, “the Bahraini security apparatus lacked coherence. Several bodies held similar functions, pointing the lack of coherence of the security apparatus” (Louer, 2013, p. 253). When Bahrain moves away from the rule of authoritarianism, it should re-structure and unify its military and discard the division between royal forces that protect the ruling family from internal threat on one hand, and regular army on the other hand. In fact, the military must be regarded as a separate, unified, and distinct entity.

#### **4.5. Mutual Recognition**

“Culture is an irreducible aspect of politics. How can the proponents of cultural recognition bring forth their claims in a public forum in which their cultures have been excluded or demeaned for centuries?” (Tully, 1995, p. 56). The Shia in Bahrain were obliged to accept Sunni institutions, history, language, and culture. They were marginalized and rejected by the government and the constitution; they were never allowed to express their opinion and culture. Hence the issue that Tully addresses is “Can a modern constitution recognize and accommodate cultural

diversity?” To do so, the modern constitution cannot be transported from one country to another because it will not completely fit the culture of the new nation. Therefore, to establish an adequate customized constitution for a democratic Bahrain, discussions among the two sects and the liberal and secular parties should be organized, “in which each speaker gives its input and its demands” (Tully, 1995, p. 6). However, the constitution can never accommodate and answer the entire demands of all the groups present in Bahrain or any other divided society. Out of this realistic answer, Tully argues that liberty and cultural recognition are limited by the necessity of the formation of democratic and impartial institutions and the maintenance of social order. Hence, there is no appropriate form of constitutional recognition of cultural diversity since the constitution and the institutions can never accommodate all the cultures. Rather, mutual recognition across sects should be established to avoid the collapse of the institutions. An open dialogue that describes the history, the culture, and the fears of each group should be conducted between the Shia and the Sunni in Bahrain in order to accept and understand each one’s point of view.

Free and open conversations that raise diversity awareness will break the wall between the two sects and will let them discover the particularity of the other and see their image in the eyes of different groups. Therefore, the absolute cultural recognition that cannot be achieved should be replaced by a sense of mutual recognition between the Shia and the Sunni. “The mutual recognition of the cultures of citizens engenders allegiance and unity for two reasons. Citizens have a sense of belonging to, and identification with a constitutional association in so far as, first, they have a say in the formation and governing of the association and, second, they see their own cultural ways publicly acknowledged and affirmed in the basic institutions of their society” (Tully, 1995, p. 197-8). Therefore, even if the perfect

democratic and transparent constitution was put in place in Bahrain, the deeply divided conflict between the two sects will persist and the well-engineered institutions will collapse if the citizens were not involved in the formation of these institutions.

#### **4.6. Autonomy**

If well-engineered institutions were continuously been interrupted by foreign countries, they will eventually collapse because when domestic decisions become regionalized, the threat of civil war increases. As mentioned in chapter 2, powerful countries cannot expose their strengths unless they were controlling weaker strategic states. Additionally, no country can be isolated from the external world, but a certain degree of autonomy must be preserved. Bahraini autonomy or sovereignty is breached by two countries: Saudi Arabia and Iran. The turbulent relation between these two countries can contribute in the collapse of the Bahraini power-sharing regime. In fact, Saudi Arabia considers itself the patron of the island, it profits from its banking system and continuously gives orders to suppress the Shia, not only to counter balance Iran's power in the region, but also to avoid the empowerment of their own Shia citizens. Nonetheless, Saudi Arabia will never end its intervention in the Bahraini domestic affairs.

On the other side, Iran could stop manipulating the Shia in Bahrain but of course would always have interest in the small country especially to counter balance Saudi Arabia's patronage. The intervention of both countries, each supporting one of the two sects in Bahrain would ruin the country and re-launch a deeply divided sectarian conflict. Therefore, the new power-sharing government should be aware of this problem and agree on a form of Finlandization whereby Bahrain retains good



relations with Saudi Arabia and Iran. However, Bahrain's economy is based on Saudi Arabia's cash inflow into its banking system. Also, it receives 50% of the oil revenue from ARAMCO, the Saudi Arabian country that extracts oil from Bahraini-Saudi borders. If Bahrain decides to limit its relationship with Saudi Arabia, the latter can easily damage the island's economy. Hence, a tremendous challenge is facing the new power-sharing government in accommodating Saudi Arabia. Additionally, the United States of America also has interests in Bahrain, but is not considered as a major player in Bahrain. The island is the home of its Fifth Navy Fleet and it profits as well from its geopolitical strategic location to easily transport oil and to keep an eye on Iran. However, the US is leading from behind by delegating Saudi Arabia to control all the decisions made in Bahrain.

#### **4.7. Conclusion**

This chapter illustrated the big picture of how a democratic power-sharing model should be institutionalized and engineered in a way that solves the deeply divided conflict in the Bahraini society. It however does not dig into the detailed laws of the constitution and the branches of the government. It engineers the institutions to provide the essential environment for a well-structured power-sharing model. However, even if the institutions were perfectly structured and met the constitution's requirements, they would not function without the respective acceptance of the citizens. The Sunni and Shia population should agree on living together; however this cannot be achieved unless they mutually recognize each other. Finally, to be able to implement the power-sharing model, a certain degree of autonomy should be guaranteed because any foreign intervention can create a conflict that might lead to the re-launch of problems between the two sects and the

collapse of the institutions. Hence, these three concepts – institutional engineering, mutual recognition, and autonomy – should come hand in hand to mark a successful democratic transition in Bahrain. The next chapter summarizes the main findings, describes the current situation in Bahrain, and explains the practical and theoretical lessons of the thesis to other deeply divided societies.

# Chapter Five

## Conclusion

### 5.1. General Findings

Bahrain is a deeply divided country that had witnessed continuous protests since 1994. The 70 percent Shia majority is complaining from discrimination and suppression. They are regarded as second-class citizens that do not enjoy the same rights as the Sunni minority. This sect is not appropriately represented. Only pro-government Shia figures occupy official positions in the cabinet, military, and judiciary. The marginalized Shia population confronted the regime by forming opposition parties and organizing several demonstrations. They first did not request the overthrow of the king and the Al-Khalifa ruling family, but only wanted to set up a new electoral law that ensures the fair representation of their marginalized sect. Nevertheless, these small demonstrations did not succeed in changing any laws nor did they prevent discrimination against the Shia community.

The 2011 uprising is the most threatening challenge yet to Al-Khalifa rule, influenced by the Arab Spring in Tunisia and Egypt. However, the Bahraini armed forces, backed by GCC and Saudi troops, crushed the uprising, resulting in the death and torture of thousands of protestors. This violent response triggered Bahrainis to demand a change of regime and the replacement of the ruling Al-Khalifa family. Alas, this cross-sectarian revolution failed in establishing a new rule that grants the Shia community their rights. Further discrimination and violence beg for the establishment of a new democratic rule in Bahrain, one that ensures a fair representation of the two sects. However, the establishment of a simple majoritarian

democracy will not solve the deeply rooted conflict, as the absolute majority will solely rule the country causing additional division. Therefore, the best viable regime for Bahrain is the creation of a power-sharing system. This thesis argues that the new constitution should be tailored according to the needs of the society and the cultures of the two sects. The institutions cannot be previously designed in another country and imported to Bahrain.

Consociationalism is the best viable power-sharing regime that can be implemented in a deeply divided country. However, two types of consociationalism exist: corporate consociationalism and liberal consociationalism. The first was advanced by Arend Lijphart. It lays down a pre-fixed quota for the representation of each sect, which in the case of Bahrain hardens religious identification and deepens the conflict since the citizens will only support their own sect. On the contrary, liberal consociationalism aims at reducing the deeply rooted conflict. It does not pre-determine quotas for representation. This allows the creation of additional secular parties and the emergence of new coalitions gathering the two sects. Liberal consociationalism, promoted by John McGarry and Brendan O'Leary, holds the same basic rules established by Lijphart but with few amendments that can solve the deeply rooted conflict and prevent future divisions.

A democratic constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary system is the best form that suits the Bahraini's divisions. The Al-Khalifa King will consequently become the honorary head of the state, and all the institutions will be established according to a new constitution based on the liberal consociational model. This brand of liberal consociationalism advocates the involvement of the two sects in the government institutions. It however does not set a quota except for the upper house of the legislative body. The legislative authority would thus be bicameral. The seats

of the appointed upper house are equally divided. The two sects are entitled to mutual veto rights and possess a very limited advisory role. The members of the upper house can only review and veto the laws that need to amend the constitution. On the other hand, the elected lower house supersedes the upper house as it is directly elected by Bahraini citizens, and is not based on a predetermined quota. The elections are conducted with a closed list proportional representation law. This electoral law will form new coalitions between Shia, Sunni, and secular parties, proposing a new non-sectarian platform. These alliances lead to cooperation between parties and sects, which can diminish the deeply rooted conflict. The votes are calculated according to d'Hondt's model, which allocates the seats as evenly as possible. It allows the representation of several coalitions since the seats are allocated singularly, one after another. The idea is that the party's total votes is divided by a certain divisor that increases as the party wins more seats, which allows parties with lower total votes to also win seats. Accordingly, the winning coalition gets the chance to form the executive body. Hence, the cabinet will also be formed by a set of alliances, reflecting the represented parties in the parliament. Other institutions, such as the military and the judiciary, should be independent and impartial. The vacant positions in these two bodies must be filled by Bahraini citizens according to a meritocratic process, rather than on sectarian affiliations.

According to Lijphart and the corporate consociational rule, the minorities should be granted a "veto right". However, this might create a slow decision process and institutional deadlock. Instead, the neutral Judicial Council of State reviews the laws and the constitutional amendments to prevent harming the minority. Moreover, Bahrain cannot be divided into any number of federal states due to its small size and because a dual division risks in separating the country. Instead, a decentralized

strategy should be implemented. The two sects will enjoy the establishment of their own schools and mosques that regulate Islamic-related issues according to the Shari'a.

These liberal consociational institutions would not function properly if the citizens refuse to abide by them and were not able to solve their – often regime-created – deep divisions. “Institutions are not direct causes of democratic stability, instead they are only indicators” (Waldner, 2009, p. 1). Hence, this thesis borrows Tully’s mutual recognition theory. The modern liberal consociational constitution should include both the demands and concerns of the Shia and Sunnis to ensure the successful functioning of democratic institutions. However, not all the needs of the two sects can be accommodated. Tully anticipates this, noting that it is almost impossible to establish a modern constitution that perfectly accommodates all the groups of a certain society. Nonetheless, to avoid the institutional collapse and the escalation of conflict, the concept of mutual recognition should be applied in post-authoritarian Bahrain. People interact with others through institutions and also engage in various social activities. Hence, all their problems should be resolved by mutually recognizing the culture and history of the other sect. The Shia and Sunni citizens do not want to divide the country; therefore they should share their stories to view their image in the eyes of the other sect in order to understand their concerns. This free and open communication would preserve the well-engineered institutions and protect against the failure of the liberal consociational experiment.

An additional concept should be added to well-engineered institutions and mutual recognition to avoid the collapse of such institutions and the rise of additional conflicts. Any weak and strategic country cannot avoid the interference of international and regional actors in its internal policy. Bahrain, in particular, is

witnessing such intervention and is not allowed to autonomously take decisions. Saudi Arabia controls the Bahraini economy. It is hence considered the foreign patron of the country that hinders its economic collapse. Moreover, Saudi Arabia manipulates domestic and especially military decisions because it fears the Shia domination of the island, which can influence its own security interests. On the other side, even though Iran is not behind the protests against the current authoritarian regime, it would always have interest in Bahrain due to its strategic geo-political location and at the same time, to counter-balance the Sunni Saudi Arabian domination of the region. Additionally, Bahrain is the home of the US Navy Fleet, it also allows the oil's easy access from the Gulf countries to America, and keeps an eye on Iran. Therefore, the United States interferes in Bahraini decisions, but is playing this role from behind, leaving the lead to Saudi Arabia. When all these three countries decide to interfere in the Bahraini decisions and transmit their geo-political battles into its territory, the island's post-authoritarian institutions will collapse. In other words, if the Bahraini sectarian conflict was regionalized, the democratic power-sharing regime is prone to collapse. Bahrain cannot prevent or stop foreign regional and international intervention, it is however supposed to limit this external interference to preserve its institutions and avoid their collapse. Hence, the sustainability of the democratic power-sharing regime is also determined by the degree of autonomy that a deeply divided society like Bahrain enjoys.

The democratization of Bahrain will be faced by a regional constraint. In fact, Saudi Arabia will resist the regime change, as it fears the collapse of its own ruling system. However, the new Bahraini liberal consociational regime should guarantee the interests of both Saudi Arabia and Iran. If the interests of these two countries were met, they would become more flexible in approving the democratization of

Bahrain. Therefore, to preserve its autonomy and to avoid regional and international interference, Bahrain should maintain a Finlandization strategy reflected in the neutrality of its foreign policy.

Thus, this thesis takes Bahrain as a case study to illustrate the importance of the three concepts – institutional engineering, mutual recognition, and autonomy – in the establishment of a successful democratic power-sharing regime. These three complementary concepts should be implemented in any country encountering a deeply divided problem to ensure its stability.

## **5.2. The Particularity of Bahrain**

Bahrain is the only constitutional monarchy in the Gulf that has witnessed a serious revolution that could have toppled its regime. Three facts justify why only Bahrain, and not other GCC countries, faced such threat. First, the Bahraini population is 70 percent composed of the Shia sect ruled and discriminated against by an authoritarian Sunni regime. The government does not recognize the demands and the needs of the Shia that are continuously being marginalized and suppressed. The high unemployment rate among Shia citizens, their political and social persecution, and the emergence of the Arab Spring triggered the discriminated majority that was also supported by some Sunni citizens to revolt against the authoritarian rule. Shia citizens are also present in some other GCC countries like Saudi Arabia and Kuwait; they however do not constitute the absolute majority of the population. Therefore, their protests can be easily controlled.

Second, Bahrain has the lowest oil reserve among the GCC countries, and its economy is not based on hydrocarbon rents. Instead, it depends on trade, financial institutions, and foreign investment. Alike the rentier states, Bahrain's authoritarian



regime cannot insulate itself from sociopolitical challenges. Other Gulf countries possess enormous oil and gas reserves which allows them to co-opt wide sectors of society. They were financially able to create new employment opportunities, increase the salary of the public sector employees, and grant benefits and monetary gifts to their citizens. These countries hence financially accommodated their population. “Kuwait announced a US\$5 billion domestic program that provided \$3,500 in cash to every citizen along with free foodstuffs for a year; the Saudi monarchy committed \$130 billion to job creation, salary increases, and development projects; and Qatar announced massive pay and benefit hikes for public servants and military personnel” (Yom & Gause III, 2012, p. 83). However, Bahrain does not have these means to accommodate its citizens.

Third, other GCC ruling families especially in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, and Oman form a cross-cutting governmental coalition and nurture their alliance with other parties to maintain their authoritarian rule (Yom & Gause III, 2013, p. 86). By contrast, in Bahrain, the Al-Khalifa ruling family is solely ruling the country. It did not form any coalition with the Shia parties; it even banned the creation of some. The only Shia present in the government were pro-government figures that do represent the majority of the population. In other words and unlike other Gulf states, Bahrain’s authoritarian regime does not seem to be durable indefinitely.

### **5.3. A Look to the Future**

For the time being, some GCC countries have been able to financially accommodate their citizens and prevent protests demanding regime change. As for

Bahrain, the non-accommodated opposition organized the most threatening revolution, and was violently crushed.

Nonetheless, the governments of Saudi, Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, and other GCC countries may not always be able to financially accommodate their citizens. And the discriminated-against Shia in Bahrain will eventually not fear the violent response of the regime. With the improvement of technology and globalization, no population will accept anymore to be discriminated, marginalized, and ruled by an authoritarian regime. The Arab uprisings are not over yet, they have just started and the future is now being shaped. The citizens revolted against their dictators and called for freedom, dignity, social justice, human rights, and democracy. These protestors will not let injustice, corruption and oppression rule indefinitely. This reconstruction process would be championed by the leaders of Al-Wifaq party, it however will take a long time. After the collapse of authoritarian regimes, the viable and successful power-sharing model that can stabilize political institutions and prevent future divisions between the citizens of Bahrain is the one that contains the three principles discussed in this thesis: the institutional engineering of liberal consociationalism, mutual recognition, and autonomy.

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