

Bahrain – Saturday Night Research

Paul Mabry, Jonathan Paul, Dylan Quigley

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Summary

We recommend for the inclusion of Bahrain on the slate of potential topics due to its very significant geopolitical importance and importance to the broader “Arab Spring” events.

We add the reservation that inclusion of Bahrain may suggest broadening the topic mechanism beyond just “democracy assistance” to potentially include mechanism that allow for the removal of support for the regime such as the ending of military aid/arms sales and/or negative political conditionality.

Bahrain represents a uniquely rich area of harms diversity, superceded possibly only by Iran and Syria in the list of countries we are considering tonight. As a largely Shiite country that is ruled by a Sunni Monarchy, both Iran and Saudi Arabia are perceived to be constant interlopers in its internal politics. Bahrain could very well become the hot-button Arab Spring country before the year is over. Embroiled by protests the Royal Family has finally lifted martial law and indicated a willingness to open dialogue with the opposition.

Rational for inclusion:

--Geo-Strategic Importance: it is one of, if not the most, important country in terms of US interests and relevant security threats in the region. It is probably the best access point to debates about Saudi Arabia and one of the more compelling links to Iran arguments. Bahrain allows unique access to Sunni/Shiite divide issues, US naval power projection, Iranian relations, ME soft power and GCC containment as well as very strong evidence to the traditional advs of ME democracy and Saudi Arabian relations.

Arabia Today, 2/21/11

<http://arabia2day.com/reports/for-us-more-at-stake-in-bahrain-than-base-alone/>

As political unrest shakes its tiny Gulf ally Bahrain, much more is at stake for the United States than just the fate of the US Fifth Fleet's base, analysts said.

Also in play are Washington's extensive strategic ties with Bahrain's influential oil-rich neighbor Saudi Arabia and efforts by US arch-foe Iran to spread its influence from across the Gulf, they said.

In many ways, the unrest in Bahrain “is **much more dangerous**” for the US than the current state of affairs in Egypt, more than a week after mass protests forced president Hosni Mubarak to step down, said analyst Aaron David Miller. To be sure, Egypt has greater weight than Bahrain, said Miller, a former State Department analyst and negotiator who is now an analyst with the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. It is the largest and most powerful Arab state, has a peace treaty with Israel and receives \$1.3 billion in US military aid each year. And the Egyptian-US alliance remains intact, at least for now.

However, Bahrain's vulnerability “to more convulsive change and the impact that it could have vis-a-vis Arab policy for Iran, Saudi Arabia and the rest of the Gulf makes it ... a more hot-button issue right now.” Miller told AFP.

--Timeliness: There is a chance that Bahrain is the primary policy issue regarding the Arab Spring within a few months. They just had a protest with over 10,000 people and the Royal Family (particularly the moderate Crown Prince) has indicated a willingness to negotiate with opposition groups.

Washington Post, 6/6/11

http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/an-opening-in-bahrain/2011/06/06/AGeSrbKH_print.html

SINCE MARCH, the Persian Gulf emirate of Bahrain has been in the forefront of reaction against the Arab Spring, relentlessly cracking down on domestic proponents of democratic reform with the help of troops from neighboring Saudi Arabia. This self-defeating repression, which has been tinged with sectarian enmity of the ruling Sunni elite toward the majority Shiite population, is a major problem for the United States because of its potential to inflame sectarian conflict in the region, and because Bahrain is a U.S. ally that hosts the Fifth Fleet.

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Now the Obama administration appears to have a chance to turn the situation around. The most liberal member of the island's ruling family, Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad al-Khalifa, is scheduled to meet Tuesday with President Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton. His invitation to Washington follows the lifting of a state of emergency last week by King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa and an agreement with opposition leaders to begin negotiations. Mr. Obama, who chastised the regime for its repression in his address on the Middle East last month, is seeking to bolster the reformists in the hope they will follow through on promises of genuine political change.

There is, unfortunately, much damage to undo. Since the crackdown began March 14, thousands of Bahrainis have been detained; many were beaten or tortured and at least four died in custody. Scores have been put on trial before special security courts, including 47 doctors and nurses who treated people wounded by security forces and several members of political parties now invited to negotiations. Human rights activists and journalists still face harassment.

The relative good news is that the opposition al-Wefaq party accepted the offer of negotiations following private discussions with the regime, reversing a stance it took before the crackdown. Bahraini officials have been telling American counterparts that the king is prepared to make real, if limited, concessions, including making the appointed prime minister and cabinet accountable to the elected parliament and redrawing electoral district lines that favor the Sunni minority. They describe a process of slow but sustained change leading over a period of years to representative government.

Success for this strategy would require opposition forces to temper their demands; some have sought the overthrow of the ruling family. But the biggest obstacle is probably divisions within the regime. U.S. officials have rightly asked about the tenure of Prime Minister Khalifa bin Salman al-Khalifa, who has served for 40 years and leads a hard-line faction; Bahrainis reply that the repression has made him popular among Sunnis. Yet the talks cannot be expected to succeed unless political prisoners are released, abuses by security forces are ended and there is a meaningful change in government.

The incipient change of tack by the regime shows that the United States has leverage. Mr. Obama should use it — not only by boosting the crown prince but also by linking the continued basing of the Fifth Fleet in Bahrain to reform.

--Pedagogical Reasons: The events in Bahrain are integral to the events of the Arab Spring and represent the hypocritical flip side of the US response to Egypt and Libya. The perceived geopolitical importance of Bahrain in terms of housing the 5th fleet, fending off Iranian influence and keeping up relations with Saudi Arabia has made the United States very slow to change its policy in words and has not changed at all in terms of deeds. The “very inherent” nature of the Aff is a strong plus in terms of uniqueness for negative arguments as well as the continuing quality of the literature base over the next several months.

Rational not to include:

Assuming a verb stem that includes only “increasing democracy assistance”, we have found limited solvency evidence that makes prescriptive claims for specific topical actions. First, we have found good but general evidence that advocates increasing US support for civil society in Bahrain especially around US military installations as a way of securing US influence and presence in the country even if backlash against the government occurs. Second, we have found evidence that speaks to the significant importance of labor organizations in democratic resistance to the Monarchy and speaks generally to the necessity of US supports for those organizations. Third, we have found good but again general evidence for the promotion of constitutionalism as a governmental structure within the country. None of the evidence we have found for these mechanism rise to the specificity required for a IAC card but do speak to a proof of concept that could be found by someone with more time or skill than ourselves.

There is a wide variety of traditional and explicit DA being done by the US in Bahrain now which may indicate the existence of literature calling for its expansion but we have found a paucity of solvency advocates in our limited research time.

The general direction of much of the prescriptive literature on Bahrain speaks to negative gestures such as threatening the removal of the 5th fleet unless reforms are made or ceasing arms exports to the monarchy. This makes sense in terms of the literature because the US, with the exception of some slightly stronger words in Obama's speech last month, is generally actively supporting the regime. The lower level DA programs that we fund now in the areas of Human Rights

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and Women's Issues are well funded but functionally irrelevant in the face of massive support for the regime.

Obviously much will depend on how many other quality DA Affs people find tonight but if this is a problem that plagues many of the other pre-transition countries, we think it would be valuable both in terms of pedagogical value and debatability, to discuss an expansion of the topic mechanism to allow good solvency for countries like Bahrain.

***The Status Quo

US security concerns have consistently overwhelmed any real moves to respond to the monarchy – inherency is strong

Fisher (an associate editor at The Atlantic) **May 19 2011**

(Max, The Bahrain Dilemma: Obama's Speech No Solution, but a Step Closer,

<http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2011/05/the-bahrain-dilemma-obamas-speech-no-solution-but-a-step-closer/239167/>)

Few observers in either the U.S. or the Middle East seemed to expect that President Obama's speech today on the Middle East would seriously depart from the hesitant but steadfast support that both he and George W. Bush have given Bahrain, or that Obama was even likely to mention the country at all. For activists in the region, "Bahrain" had become a keyword, a symbol that American foreign policy, no matter how ideologically committed to freedom and liberty its leaders claimed it to be, was still at its core about protecting American security and energy, those two pursuits that have so tainted America's history in the Middle East. Obama, whatever his words and actions on Egypt, Libya, and Syria, still looked to many in the Arab world, for the blind eye he appeared to be turning to Bahrain, like a hypocrite.

"If America is to be credible, we must acknowledge that our friends in the region have not all reacted to the demands for change consistent with the principles that I have outlined today. That is true in Yemen, where President Saleh needs to follow through on his commitment to transfer power. And that is true, today, in Bahrain," Obama said this afternoon.

In pressing Bahrain's regime in the speech, Obama took the same first step that he took in Egypt, Libya, and Yemen before pushing for those countries' leaders to step down. He called for an end to the crackdown and the opening of a "dialogue" about reforming the political system. "The only way forward is for the government and opposition to engage in a dialogue, and you can't have a real dialogue when parts of the peaceful opposition are in jail. The government must create the conditions for dialogue," he said. Over eight months after the U.S. stood silent over Ali Abulemam's imprisonment, Obama has publicly tied U.S. support for Bahrain to the release of political prisoners.

Obama's most significant criticism of the Bahraini regime came when he said, "For this season of change to succeed, Coptic Christians must have the right to worship freely in Cairo, just as Shia must never have their mosques destroyed in Bahrain." In comparing Egypt's Christian minority to the persecuted Bahraini Shia majority, who also make up many of the protesters, Obama did far more than just condemn the Khalifa government's violence against protesters. Americans, as members of a secular but majority Christian nation, have long sympathized with the Middle East's persecuted Christians. Obama's line was clearly meant to evoke sympathy among Americans for the Shia protesters, and to signal that the U.S. would be shifting, if ever so slightly, its political as well as cultural loyalties from the Sunni Khalifa regime to the rallying Shia majority.

There is no guarantee that Obama's call for "dialogue" in Bahrain, and the private diplomatic efforts that no doubt accompany that call, will be enough to prod Khalifa to truly reform. And it remains extremely unlikely, as Obama's doubters in the region point out, that the U.S. would ever seek the Bahraini regime's ouster, as it has in Egypt, Yemen, and Libya. Obama's speech does not resolve the Bahrain dilemma, a problem that is small in scope by symptomatic of the larger U.S. struggle to reconcile its desire for a democratic Middle East with the allure of a stable status quo, nor does it finally or decisively align America's foreign policy interests with its ideals. But by taking this small step away from one of the closest and most problematic U.S. Arab allies in a region full of unsavory and regrettable allies, Obama is clearly trying to move the U.S. toward the right side of history. Ali Abdulemam may not be free -- he was released from prison but is currently in hiding -- but the U.S. will no longer stand in his way, and may some day become the ally that he and his fellow liberal Arab activists will need.

Tensions are still high, government increasing repression but nothing is boiling over yet

Gutman (Middle East Correspondent, McClatchy Newspapers) **June 8th 2011**

(Roy, Continuing Crackdown in Bahrain, [http://www.cfr.org/bahrain/continuing-crackdown-bahrain/p25232?cid=rss-](http://www.cfr.org/bahrain/continuing-crackdown-bahrain/p25232?cid=rss-middleeast-continuing_crackdown_in_bahrai-)

[middleeast-continuing_crackdown_in_bahrai-060811&utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+region%2Fmiddle_east+%28CFR.org+-+Regions+-+Middle+East%29](http://www.cfr.org/bahrain/continuing-crackdown-bahrain/p25232?cid=rss-middleeast-continuing_crackdown_in_bahrai-060811&utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+region%2Fmiddle_east+%28CFR.org+-+Regions+-+Middle+East%29))

President Barack Obama met briefly June 7 with Bahrain's Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad bin Isa al Khalifa and supported the Sunni royal family's ending of martial law, calling for a national dialogue to begin in July. However, the crackdown on Bahrain's majority Shiite population continues. Dozens of doctors and nurses went on trial June 6 on charges of participating in efforts to overthrow the monarchy, and leading Shiite political figures are in prison. It seems that little has changed, says Roy Gutman, Middle East correspondent for McClatchy newspapers, who believes the ending of martial

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law was largely staged to encourage the staging of the Formula One in Bahrain this fall. While the visit of the crown prince, a reform proponent, was an effort to ease tensions, Gutman says the government seems to be pressing its offensive against protesters.

Reforms are a good sign but will most likely be a smoke screen

Ulrichsen June 6, 2011

(Kristian Coates, What next for Bahrain?, http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/06/06/what_next_for_bahrain)

Emergency rule may now be over in Bahrain, at least for the time being, but all is not well in the Kingdom. The regime's brutality and reliance on external forces to crush the opposition won it at best a temporary breathing space, but at the cost of its political authority and local legitimacy among the 60 percent (or so) Shiite population. Anti-regime demonstrations restarted almost immediately, and the security services attacked protesters in more than 20 villages within hours of the lifting of martial law. Saudi forces remain in Bahrain, on an apparently open-ended basis, and will continue to underwrite the security of the ruling family as the King embarks on a process of "national dialogue" with an opposition increasingly radicalized and unlikely to hold him in good faith.

The problem is that Bahrainis have seen this all before. In 2001, overwhelming popular support for a National Action Charter signalled a return to constitutional rule following the uprising that rocked the country from 1994 to 1999. Specific measures of reform included a new constitution and quadrennial elections to a National Assembly. The political process eventually included most opposition groups following their boycott of the first election in 2002. However, escalating tensions and a heavy-handed crackdown on opposition and human rights activists in the run-up to the October 2010 election hinted at the tensions to come. Meanwhile, the unrest since February signalled the definitive end of the post-2001 period of reform.

Aid Programs in Place Now - Judicial, media, women's rights, civil society assistance

Katzman, 5/17/11

(Specialist in Middle Eastern Affairs-CRS, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/95-1013.pdf>)

The United States has long sought to accelerate political reform in Bahrain and to empower its political societies through several programs, including the "Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI)." Some funds have been used to help build an independent judiciary and strengthen the COR. Other U.S.-funded programs focus on women's empowerment, media training, educational opportunities, and civil society legal reform. MEPI funds have been used to fund AFL-CIO projects with Bahraini labor organizations, and to help Bahrain implement the U.S.-Bahrain FTA. In May 2006 Bahrain revoked the visa for the resident program director of the National Democratic Institute (NDI), and has not allowed the office to reopen. NDI is conducting programs to enhance parliamentary capabilities through a local NGO. In February 2010, the MEPI office of State Department signed a memorandum of understanding with Bahrain to promote entrepreneurship there and promote opportunities for trade with U.S. small businesses. Still, some human rights group and Bahraini activists believe the United States has consistently (including during the February 2011 unrest) downplayed democracy promotion in favor of broader security issues.

Bahrain receives development assistance through Middle East Partnership Initiative

Dept. of State

<http://mepi.state.gov/gulf-region/bahrain.html>

In Bahrain, MEPI focuses on issues surrounding legal reform, economic growth and trade issues related to the U.S. – Bahrain Free Trade Agreement (FTA), expanding political participation, and raising awareness of major human rights issues. MEPI-funded projects help strengthen political institutions and civil society organizations, including parliamentary and municipal councils, political societies, advocacy and relief organizations, and the judiciary. MEPI continues to work with Bahraini women to help them advocate for their own causes and to be better prepared to contribute in all sectors of society. In addition, MEPI initiatives assist Bahrain in improving its capacity to support democracy initiatives and implement the labor provisions of the FTA. Related but separate efforts have encouraged the government and parliament to address critical national issues, including initiatives designed to increase the effectiveness of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and building civil society capacity through MEPI's local grants projects.

PROJECTS

Here are some of MEPI's recent projects in Bahrain:

The Young Women Leaders project develops young Middle Eastern advocates for greater women's rights, particularly at the community level. A total of 20 participants from four Gulf countries including Bahrain traveled to Lebanese American University's Beirut campus for a two-week training course on project development and management. During the summer 2009 session, each country group developed a women's rights advocacy project and received small grant funding to implement their projects over the course of the following nine months. The Bahraini team is promoting a public awareness

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campaign which educates Bahraini workers and the general public on gender discrimination evident in government social life insurance policies, which do not permit female workers to determine their beneficiaries.

Mayasem Communications, in conjunction with MEPI and the Supreme Council for Women in Bahrain, held political campaign training workshops in February 2010 for thirty-five Bahraini women who are planning to run for the upcoming parliamentary and municipal elections later this year. The women who participated represent various political and youth societies, women's associations, and other local organizations. The three-day workshop featured members of Dr. Aseel Al Awadi's campaign team. She was one of four women to win a seat in Parliament during Kuwait's recent elections, and her team drew from their personal experiences and offered lessons learned to the eager participants. Other training components included volunteer outreach, voter outreach, and communication strategies.

In February 2010, with funding from MEPI, the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), signed a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the government of Bahrain to promote entrepreneurship in the Middle East and expand trade opportunities for America's small businesses. The MOU is the result of a shared vision between the SBA and MEPI to support economic development, with a special focus on the unique needs of women small business owners, and to provide technical assistance in the Middle East and North Africa. The agreement lays out a broad framework of mutual engagement and support between the SBA and the government of Bahrain, and will be followed by a detailed plan of action that will result in direct and impactful change for small and medium-sized enterprises in Bahrain.

The American Bar Association (ABA) continues to be a leader in judicial and legal development in the Gulf Region. Recently, the Economic Development Board (EDB), led by the Crown Prince of Bahrain, approved an extensive reform strategy for the justice sector and charged the Bahraini Ministry of Justice (BMOJ) with its implementation. ABA is an implementing partner in the EDB strategy, and the BMOJ and Department of Legal Assistance (DLA) requested continued ABA technical assistance with Ministry and DLA's upgrading efforts through 2010. ABA technical assistance will primarily support the implementation of the EDB Justice Sector Reform Strategy, continued judicial capacity development, continued capacity development within the DLA, and efforts to strengthen the legal profession.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) provides technical assistance in support of implementation of the free trade agreements between the U.S. and Bahrain, with a focus on building capacity to strengthen domestic environmental governance. To this end, the EPA has provided training courses and assistance on the principles of environmental laws and enforcement and environmental impact assessment. These activities support Bahrain's ability to carry out integrated environmental impact assessments, increase transparency and public participation to reduce corruption in the environmental sector, and build capacity to measure the effectiveness of environmental laws and corresponding enforcement programs.

*****Harms Areas**

Power Projection/5th Fleet

The Navy's 5th Fleet is in Bahrain. It's important for Middle East power projection and specifically crucial in terms of deterring Iran. The link the democracy goes both ways (instability undermine 5th fleet and that a more democratic Bahrain would kick the US out)

Ottaway, 4/4/11

(Director-Middle East Program at Carnegie, <http://carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=43416#>)

But U.S. concerns in dealing with the Bahrain crisis—protecting access to the military base that houses the headquarters of the Fifth Fleet, restoring damaged U.S.-Saudi relations, and at the same time showing support for pro-democracy protesters—cannot be satisfied through one clear policy. This places the United States in a difficult position. If Washington presses the Bahraini government to enact real reforms, it shows that it is committed to democracy in the Middle East but angers the Saudis and the ruling family in Bahrain, putting access to the naval base in jeopardy. If it does not push the ruling family too hard but backs modest reform measures, it can maintain good relations with the Bahraini government and keep the naval base; however, such a stance does not help its reconciliation with Saudi Arabia nor will it convince Arab advocates of change that the United States is on their side. On the other hand, if the United States implicitly backs Saudi Arabia and the Bahraini ruling family by ignoring the repression of the protests and the collective punishment of the Shia population, it will repair relations with the Saudis, please other ruling families in the Gulf, but destroy its credibility on democracy. It will be seen as business as usual, with the United States once again siding with an autocratic regime. Initially, Washington opted to push for reform in Bahrain, moving quickly to promote negotiations in the face of escalating protests. Within ten days of the outbreak, Assistant Secretary of State for the Middle East Jeffrey Feltman was in Bahrain. He visited the country four times in rapid succession between February 25 and March 3, met with government officials and representatives of the opposition, and tried to push all sides toward talks and compromise. Defense Secretary Robert Gates also visited Bahrain, stating at the conclusion of his visit on March 12 that the country had to introduce significant reform and that baby steps would not be enough. At the same time, Saudi Arabia was trying to convince the ruling family not to give in. In the end, Saudi advice prevailed. Bahrain asked for the assistance of other GCC members and Saudi troops moved onto the island, followed by small contingents from other GCC countries in the following days. Assistant Secretary Feltman returned to Bahrain on March 14, after the Saudis had moved in, but he had trouble meeting with government officials, let alone convincing them of the necessity of negotiations. The policy adopted by the government was to restore order first—by blanketing Manama and the surrounding villages with tanks and armored personnel carriers, using live ammunition as well as tear gas and rubber bullets to break up demonstrations, and creating a general sense of insecurity among the Shia population. The United States has kept largely silent since the crackdown—criticism has been muted and has come from mid-level officials. Washington has seemingly accepted that for the time being the Saudis have won the battle for influence in Bahrain and concluded that mending relations with Saudi Arabia should take precedence right now. This is a policy that cannot continue. The Obama administration has so far been spared the cost to its reputation and its credibility on democracy by the crisis in Libya and now the mounting trouble in Syria, which has distracted attention from Bahrain. But sooner or later, attention will refocus on the tiny island, and Washington will have to reconsider which of its conflicting interests it wants to protect.

There is a lively debate as to whether democratization will increase or decrease the sustainability of the 5th Fleet's basing

Gutman (Middle East Correspondent, McClatchy Newspapers) **June 8th 2011**

(Roy, Continuing Crackdown in Bahrain, [http://www.cfr.org/bahrain/continuing-crackdown-bahrain/p25232?cid=rss-](http://www.cfr.org/bahrain/continuing-crackdown-bahrain/p25232?cid=rss-middleeast-continuing_crackdown_in_bahrai-)

[middleeast-continuing_crackdown_in_bahrai-060811&utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+region%2Fmiddle_east+%28CFR.org+-+Regions+-+Middle+East%29](http://www.cfr.org/bahrain/continuing-crackdown-bahrain/p25232?cid=rss-middleeast-continuing_crackdown_in_bahrai-060811&utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+region%2Fmiddle_east+%28CFR.org+-+Regions+-+Middle+East%29))

I don't know that that's the motive. It's certainly an assumption that people make pretty readily. The relationship between the United States and Bahrain has many dimensions of real depth, strength, and age. It's a two-way street there, with the Fifth Fleet being there. Because at least a portion of Bahrain's population has Iranian roots and Iran did once claim it as a province, Bahrain does have fear of Iranian designs. Were there a vacuum in the Gulf, who knows what would happen. The United States by its presence fills the vacuum. And while the United States is happy to maintain its presence there, Bahrainis also need the security guarantee the United States provides. So it's a two-way street. There are other places in the Middle East where the United States can put its ships--for example, in Qatar, which is much more liberal, and takes certainly a more advanced and progressive approach to many world issues. I wouldn't say that people in the U.S. military

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are happy with what's going on, because a lot of their officers live on [there], and the tensions affect relations with locals. The local media is attacking the United States with ferocity, and locals are looking at the U.S. embassy highly critically. The television has nonstop assaults on the personnel and the practices of the U.S. embassy. This spills over to the U.S. military.

Middle East Soft Power

The US has refrained on acting to support democracy in Bahrain cause of fears that a democratic Bahrain would undermine its interests, this is killing its credibility in the region and falsely assumes an increase in Iranian influence

Bayenat June 10, 2011

(Abolghasem, Bahrain: Beyond the U.S.-Iran Rivalry, Foreign Policy In Focus,

[http://www.fpif.org/articles/bahrain_beyond_the_us-](http://www.fpif.org/articles/bahrain_beyond_the_us-iran_rivalry?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+FPIF+%28Foreign+Policy+In+Focus+%28All+News%29%29)

[iran_rivalry?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+FPIF+%28Foreign+Policy+In+Focus+%28All+News%29%29](http://www.fpif.org/articles/bahrain_beyond_the_us-iran_rivalry?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+FPIF+%28Foreign+Policy+In+Focus+%28All+News%29%29))

The popular uprising in Bahrain has put U.S. foreign policymakers in an awkward position. The U.S. government has largely lent its diplomatic weight to the Saudi regime in stifling popular uprising in Bahrain for fear that any democratic transformation in that country **would work to Iran's advantage**, thus undermining U.S. interests in the Persian Gulf region.

This fear of Iran explains why President Obama refrained in his recent address on the Middle East from even mentioning Saudi Arabia, let alone criticizing it for its military intervention in Bahrain, and why he only gave soft criticism of the Bahrain's crackdown on its pro-democracy movement. This posture, and the perceived double standard it brings, **has further undermined the image of the United States in the eyes of Middle Eastern publics**. It is likely to work to the detriment of U.S. strategic interests in the region in the long run.

These events have led some to question the rationale behind current U.S. policy toward Bahrain. Iran specialist Hamid Dabashi has argued that the popular uprising in the tiny Persian Gulf kingdom has nothing to do with Iran and that the **Iranian government actually has a lot to lose from a democratic government in Bahrain**. Other analysts have also played down the sectarian nature of the popular uprising in Bahrain. According to Arshin Adib-Moghaddam of the Centre for Iranian Studies, "These demands cross religious, ethnic, tribal and class lines. The sectarian card was played by the hardliners in the Al-Khalifa family in order to divert attention away from the demands of the people by blaming Iran for the uprising."

Leads to ME war

Bayenat June 10, 2011

(Abolghasem, Bahrain: Beyond the U.S.-Iran Rivalry, Foreign Policy In Focus,

[http://www.fpif.org/articles/bahrain_beyond_the_us-](http://www.fpif.org/articles/bahrain_beyond_the_us-iran_rivalry?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+FPIF+%28Foreign+Policy+In+Focus+%28All+News%29%29)

[iran_rivalry?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+FPIF+%28Foreign+Policy+In+Focus+%28All+News%29%29](http://www.fpif.org/articles/bahrain_beyond_the_us-iran_rivalry?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+FPIF+%28Foreign+Policy+In+Focus+%28All+News%29%29))

The Saudi military intervention in Bahrain and the continued suppression of the public uprising by the Bahraini regime is clearly unsustainable and **has the potential to escalate to outright military confrontations** in the Persian Gulf. The U.S. zero-sum mentality vis-à-vis Iran has created unnecessary costs for the foreign policies of both countries and above all has **harmed the genuine democratic aspirations of the overwhelming majority of the Bahraini population**. Unconditional U.S. support for the Saudi invasion and its refusal to apply any substantive pressure on Bahrain will further harm U.S. credibility and long-term interests in the region by placing it on the wrong side of the unfolding history in the Middle East.

ME Democracy

Democratization of Bahrain would cause a wave of democratization throughout the region Press TV, 3/19/11

<http://www.presstv.ir/usdetail/170804.html>

Saudi Arabia has “used all its muscle with the Obama administration” to stifle the pro-democracy movement in Bahrain, says Husain Abdulla, Director of Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain. If Bahrain becomes a functioning democracy “it will be a foothold for Iran” so the United States and Saudi Arabia “use Iran as a bogymen in the Persian Gulf.” Abdulla said in an exclusive interview with Press TV's U.S. Desk on Saturday. “It is an abomination for the Obama administration to believe that the pro-democracy movement in Bahrain is influenced by Iran,” he added. “When pro-democracy movements took place in Egypt and Tunisia we saw the United States reluctantly backing those movements, however in Bahrain it is not the case... because the U.S. has such huge interests in the Persian Gulf,” he noted **“If Bahrain becomes democratic then every single country would follow.”**

Saudi Arabia is actively intervening in Bahrain precisely because they fear a domino effect of democratization

Adib-Moghaddam (that dude who wrote all the Iran k cards on the first ME topic) **April 25, 2011**

(Arshin, Bahrain in the shadow of Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United States, http://articles.cnn.com/2011-04-25/opinion/bahrain.saudi.iran.arshin_1_bahrain-al-khalifa-family-saudi-arabia?_s=PM:OPINION)

In the absence of a strong legitimacy of the state, systematic violence has functioned as a short cut to safeguard the regime. Hence, the current crackdown, which has not drawn much criticism from the United States and the European Union, who were/are by far louder about the situation in Libya (and indeed about anything that happens in Iran). The second strategic factor is the involvement of Saudi Arabia. After Yemen, Bahrain is the second country in which the Saudis have intervened militarily in support of long-standing allies battling restive societies. In Bahrain, military forces dispatched from Saudi Arabia have helped suppress the protest, and for pragmatic reasons: From the perspective of the Saudi state, a Shia-dominated Bahrain could be a potential ally of Iran, and the downfall of a tribal monarchy that rests on a comparably absolute mandate to rule could trigger a domino effect throughout the Arabian peninsula.

Bahrainian Economy/Stability

Continued intransigence by the regime threatens both the economy and stability – they act as a model for the regional response to the post-oil economy

Ulrichsen June 6, 2011

(Kristian Coates, What next for Bahrain?, http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/06/06/what_next_for_bahrain)

Facing the imminent and difficult shift to a post-oil economy, Bahrainis simply cannot afford another wasted ten-year cycle of partial reform and renewed repression. Over the past decade, Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad projected himself as a liberalizing alternative to his conservative great-uncle, the Prime Minister Khalifa bin Salman. With oil reserves rapidly dwindling, he spearheaded an ambitious "Business-Friendly Bahrain" strategy intended to form the cornerstone of the Kingdom's economic diversification and reduce oil's 80 percent share of government income. Attention focused on attracting inward investment, partially through a prestigious Free Trade Agreement with the United States in 2004, and positioning Bahrain as a regional financial hub, against intense competition from Abu Dhabi, Dubai, and Qatar. Yet Bahrain's international and business credibility has taken a battering recently, with Standard and Poor's slashing its credit rating to BBB, its lowest investment grade, and foreign companies now relocating elsewhere in the Gulf.

This economic uncertainty will further increase Saudi Arabian leverage over its small eastern neighbor. Already, the majority of Bahrain's (otherwise negligible) oil revenues come from its share in Saudi Arabia's offshore Abu Saafah oilfield, and Saudi Arabia will contribute the bulk of a \$10 billion "bailout" package for Bahrain announced in March. These contributions will effectively keep the Bahraini economy functioning and compensate for the hemorrhaging of foreign capital and jobs, but a deeper challenge lies ahead, and not just in Bahrain.

Gulf ruling families' legitimacy is rooted in their ability to redistribute oil revenues and co-opt opposition. Its breakdown in Bahrain hints at the difficulties to come when rulers no longer can simply spend their way out of trouble (as Saudi Arabia is presently doing), or rely on resource rents to put off the difficult political and economic reforms necessary to underpin economic transformation into productive post-oil economies. This inescapable reality drives economic diversification programs in all six GCC states as rulers attempt to cushion the looming challenges of transition. **Officials elsewhere will be absorbing lessons from the Al-Khalifa's crushing of opposition at the expense of its international credibility.**

Cracking down so hard may have saved the Al-Khalifa, at least for now. But their survival has come at a very high price economically and politically, and shattered social cohesion in a country polarized as never before. Even the apparent vote of confidence from the FIA may rebound if the Bahrain Grand Prix provides a focal point for the resumption of protests in the glare of global media. With their ruling family determined to swim against the tide of the Arab Spring and uninterested in meaningful political compromise, and reliant on the Saudi Arabian National Guard as the guarantor of regime security, Bahrain's future looks bleaker today than ever before.

K Ground

The US' refusal to support democracy in Bahrain is based on an imperial desire for power projection, an Orientalist fear of Iran and a geopolitical desire for "stability" over the freedom of the people

Winegard March 11, 2011

(Ben, Understanding Bahrain: How Bahrain Shines a Light on Imperial Policies,

<http://dissidentvoice.org/2011/03/understanding-bahrain-how-bahrain-shines-a-light-on-us-imperial-policies/>)

US Interests in Bahrain

The US has obvious interests in the Middle East which involve possessing unfettered control of the oil resources of the region. Such control has long been understood to give the possessor tremendous international leverage. This desired control has led the US to pursue a policy which involves supporting rulers who obey its orders and opposing any signs of independence in the region, especially the scourge of independent nationalism.¹⁹ Dictators who follow Washington's orders, even if rulers of theocratic and patriarchic states, are often given the label 'moderate' by commentators and pundits. As Stephen Zunes puts it:

"The term [moderate] is used primarily in reference to governments that have been friendly to the United States and its foreign policy goals in the Middle East; it has also been used in reference to governments that have been relatively less hostile towards Israel and U.S.-led peace initiatives. In either case, there is virtually no correlation between this label and a given government's record on democracy and human rights."²⁰ Human rights and democracy are of little importance to the US. Instead, the drivers of policy are furthering "national security interests" and maintaining or promoting "stability." These terms, like most American political argot, need to be translated from the imperial tongue. "National security interest" generally refers to policies that are perceived to benefit elite sectors of the population and has little to do with true security. Indeed, many actions undertaken in the name of "national security" have predictably made the US less safe, such as the March, 2003 invasion of Iraq.²¹ "Stability," per Noam Chomsky, refers to the "maintenance of specific forms of domination and control, and easy access to resources and profits."²² Bahrain is an important strategic ally of the US: it promotes "stability" in the Gulf, and is vital to the administration's goal of checking the "destabilizing" influence of Iran. Thus, supporting Bahrain furthers our nation's "national security interests." Not surprisingly, the Al-Khalifas are "moderates" in US nomenclature. A key element of Bahrain's strategic importance is its location in the Persian Gulf through which about a fifth of the oil supplies of the world pass. Furthering Bahrain's importance, it is the home of the US Navy Fifth Fleet which was logistically important in both Iraq wars, helps guard the strategic Strait of Hormuz, and serves as a counterweight to Iran in the Gulf. As explained on its official website, the Fifth Fleet "conducts persistent maritime operations to forward U.S. interests, deter and counter disruptive countries, defeat violent extremism and strengthen partner nations' maritime capabilities in order to promote a secure maritime environment in the USCENCOM area of responsibility."²³ Once the requisite translation is conducted, the mission of the Fifth Fleet becomes clear. In any future conflict with Iran, the Fifth Fleet would be essential. Aside from these functions, Bahrain's Shi'ites present headaches for the Saudi ruling family. Saudi Arabia is the largest oil producer in the region and a staunch US ally. While ruling family. Saudi Arabia is the largest oil producer in the region and a staunch US ally. While Shi'ites make up only 15% of Saudi Arabia's population, they are estimated to dominate in many of the key eastern petroleum cities, such as Qatif, Damman, and al-Hasa, which are geographically close to Bahrain. Many Shi'ites in Saudi Arabia relate more to fellow Shi'ites in Bahrain than they do their Sunni counterparts.²⁴ The minority Shia population in Saudi Arabia has complained of discrimination and oppression for some time and the Saudi Kingdom has not been immune to the reverberations of the Arab revolt. On Wednesday, February 23, King Abdullah called for an additional 36 billion in social spending, including house-hold debt relief, more housing loans, and a 15% raise in wages for state workers.²⁵ This came on the heels of Facebook calls for protests, the first of which consisted of around 100 Shi'ites and took place on March 4, leading to 22 arrests. The Kingdom's most recent, if predictable, response has been to place a ban on all protests.²⁶ Clearly, if Shi'ites in Bahrain were able to successfully overthrow the Khalifas it would place additional strain on Saudi Arabia and could potentially see Bahrain move closer to Iran. This is an eventuality that is not acceptable to US policy makers.

US Policy toward Bahrain in a Regional Context

US policy toward Bahrain and the Gulf states both before and during the uprising has been unequivocally supportive. From 2005 to 2009, the US sold around 37 billion dollars worth of arms to the Gulf states and recently announced a 60 billion dollar package, including 70 Apache attack helicopters and a fleet of F-15s, with Saudi Arabia.^{27,28} In 2010, the US provided Bahrain with an estimated 19 million dollars worth of foreign military funding.²⁹ It is estimated that the countries comprising the Gulf Cooperation Council—Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, Oman, Qatar, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia, along with stalwart ally Jordan, will spend 70 billion dollars on defense in 2011. Much of this spending will be used to procure

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US arms.³⁰ Arms sales and military assistance are often explained as moves designed to beef up the defense capabilities of the Gulf region in order to curtail Iran's expansionist desires. While this may be one factor in the decision making process, there are more insidious reasons having little to do with Iran. One reason for weapons sales, of course, is that it creates large profits for weapons manufacturers. Another reason these states purchase US weapons—and one which must be known to US policy makers—is that they can use them on their own populations, should they need to. This promotes “stability,” if we are fluent in the imperial tongue. Supporting the more insidious interpretation, while Bahraini officials have asserted that Iran is meddling in their internal affairs, the US has found no supportive evidence. A classified cable leaked by wikileaks discusses this issue:

“Bahraini government officials sometimes privately tell U.S. official visitors that some Shi'a oppositionists are backed by Iran. Each time this claim is raised, we ask the GOB [government of Bahrain] to share its evidence. To date, we have seen no convincing evidence of Iranian weapons or government money here since at least the mid-1990s, when followers of Ayatollah Shirazi were rounded up and convicted of sedition. (The so-called Shirazis were subsequently pardoned and some now engage in legal politics as the very small Amal party, which has no seats in Parliament.) In post's assessment, if the GOB had convincing evidence of more recent Iranian subversion, it would quickly share it with us.”³¹ Further support of the insidious interpretation comes from Bahrain's response to the recent protests. The government quickly rolled out M60A3 tanks and flew F5 Freedom Fighter Warplanes, both made in the USA.³² Indeed, it is not at all clear why a tiny island nation with no conceivable enemy capable of invading—Iran would be insane to try—would need armored tanks. The US is not the only guilty party: British arms, including tear gas canisters, shotguns, and stun grenades were also used in the anti-protest crackdown.³³ Whatever the exact reasons for arming Bahrain, it is clear that both Bahrain and the US have an interest in seeing Iran's influence limited. If Bahrain exaggerates the nature of Iran's influence over its Shi'ites, the US is only too happy to go along. Thus, there is a synergistic effect at work benefiting both sides. Aside from the cozy security relationship between the US and Bahrain, the two nations also have close commercial relations with each other including a bilateral free trade agreement which was signed into law by George W. Bush in 2006.

Given this milieu, it is unsurprising that the administration has not greeted the Bahraini uprising with the euphoria one would expect if democracy were a concern. While the administration allegedly supports the “democratic aspirations of all people,” it is clear that such aspirations are only operational if they do not interfere with “stability.” The administration's public response to the Arab uprising is telling. In regard to Egypt, the regime had been given warnings by policy makers for well over a year that the “calm” was an illusion and that Egypt's young population was disillusioned with the Mubarak regime.³⁴ Exactly what the administration did with this information is unknown, but they were clearly taken by surprise when protests broke out. This must be placed within the context of the long US-Egyptian alliance, which has included the US sending billions of dollars to the Egyptian army. In June of 2009, during an interview with the BBC, Barack Obama was asked whether he thought Hosni Mubarak was an authoritarian ruler. His response is telling:

“No, I tend not to use labels for folks. I haven't met him. I've spoken to him on the phone. He has been a stalwart ally in many respects, to the United States. He has sustained peace with Israel, which is a very difficult thing to do in that region. But he has never resorted to, you know, unnecessary demagoging of the issue, and has tried to maintain that relationship. So I think he has been a force for stability. And good in the region. Obviously, there have been criticisms of the manner in which politics operates in Egypt.”³⁵ Unfortunately, the population did not think that this dictator was “good” although, in the imperial tongue, he was “a force for stability.” The administration's response when the Egyptian protests broke out was muddled. In the end, the administration saw the writing on the wall and decided to throw its rhetorical weight behind the aspirations of the protestors. Unlike Bahrain, Egypt does not have a majority Shia population capable of aligning with Iran or threatening Saudi Arabian “stability.” Further, the Egyptian army, which has been firmly ensconced in power since 1952, and the US have cooperated closely for decades. Therefore, lending rhetorical support to the uprising was a relatively costless move. Indeed, assuring Israel that their peace treaty would be honored was one of the first acts of the post-Mubarak ‘transitional’ regime. Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman succinctly stated what Washington was certainly thinking, namely that Israel was not concerned with Egypt's internal affairs, but only that “regional stability be preserved and the peace treaty respected.”³⁶ From the beginning the administration has rhetorically and strategically supported the ailing Bahraini regime. The New York Times noted that the US was taking “two paths” in its response to protests in Iran and Bahrain. Speaking to Bahrain and other allies, Obama counseled, “you have a young, vibrant generation within the Middle East that is looking for greater opportunity; and that if you are governing these countries, you've got to get out ahead of change. You can't be behind the curve.” Speaking to protestors, rather than the government, in Iran, Obama hoped they possessed “the courage to be able to express their yearning for greater freedoms and a more representative government.”³⁷ Given the administration's open disdain for Iran and the strategic importance of Bahrain, this tact is readily explicable. The Obama administration needs to avoid “instability” in the region, while lending enough rhetorical support to democratic movements so as to avoid being accused of blatant hypocrisy.³⁸ This appears to be the diplomatic strategy Washington has settled on:

“After weeks of internal debate on how to respond to uprisings in the Arab world, the Obama administration is settling on a Middle East strategy: help keep longtime allies who are willing to

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reform in power, even if that means the full democratic demands of their newly emboldened citizens might have to wait.”³⁹

On February 20, Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Michael Mullen traveled to Saudi Arabia to reassure the Kingdom and other Arab allies that the administration would provide security and remained an ally. On the 23 of February, both Mullen and Defense Secretary Robert Gates gave full support to the Khalifa regime and encouraged what they called “a national dialogue” between the regime and the mostly Shia protestors. At this time, the idea was hatched that Bahrain would make reforms in return for full support from the White House. This was offered as the “Bahrain model,” and could be readily transposed to other beleaguered US allies in the region. According to the Wall Street Journal, the White House accepted and threw its full support behind King Khalifa on February 27 while a similar message was delivered to embattled Moroccan King Mohammed VI.⁴⁰

The “Bahrain model” is not a model that emphasizes democracy and human rights: It is imperial rebranding, much like Obama himself, that is intended to perpetuate decades old policies under the guise of democracy, reform, and change. In short, there will be no regime change or democracy in Bahrain.

*****Solvency**

Constitutionalism Solvency

US should promote constitutionalism instead of a full end to the monarchy

Michael Rubin 02.18.2011

(What to Do About Bahrain, <http://www.commentarymagazine.com/2011/02/18/what-to-do-about-bahrain/>)

The White House and State Department should make this the moment to promote real constitutionalism. Article 33 of the Bahrain constitution is a dictator's dream. The list of royal prerogatives can be found here. Preserve the monarchies — they are more moderate than republics. The royal families also personify unique nationalism, but they should no longer be above the law. Governments should be elected, not dismissed on the whims of a hereditary ruler. At the same time, constitutions might empower national leaders with decisions over defense, for effective defense and defense partnerships require long-term planning and commitment. Realists may want to go back to the old days, when pro-American dictators ruled over fiefs and kept the natives in line; but it is unrealistic to believe those days can continue. Promoting a constitutional transformation not only in Bahrain but also in Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait may present the best hope for renewed stability and preservation of regimes that are essential to U.S. national security.

Fostering Civil Society Solvency

US should foster civil society to preserve its influence in Bahrain

Cooley and Nexon (Associate Professor of Political Science at Barnard College; Associate Professor in the School of Foreign Service and the Department of Government at Georgetown University) **April 5, 2011**

(Alexander and Daniel, Bahrain's Base Politics, Foreign Affairs, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/67700/alexander-cooley-and-daniel-h-nexon/bahrain-s-base-politics?page=show>)

It is time for U.S. officials to reconsider their basing policies. First, they should create broader constituencies for the continued presence of the U.S. military in host countries. In Bahrain, this means U.S. policymakers should do their best to ensure that the Shia community garners economic benefits from the naval base and its related facilities, rather than allowing those benefits to be monopolized by a handful of elites. The base contributes about \$150 million annually to Bahrain's economy, or about one percent of GDP. Last May, U.S. officials announced a plan to double the size of the base by 2015, with the intent of spending an additional \$518 million. Given the precarious current political environment, U.S. planners should ensure that Bahraini Shia companies and workers gain a large share of the resulting contracts.

Second, Washington needs to avoid thinking about its basing arrangements in terms of a simple trade-off between pragmatism and idealism. As recent events suggest, traditional strategies of binding the United States to loyal strongman regimes can undermine both U.S. interests and values. Defense officials and U.S. diplomats can best preserve security contracts and commitments by broadening their engagement with a wide variety of political, social, and economic actors, even over the initial objections of authoritarian elites.

Third, U.S. officials should make efforts to decouple the rationale of a given basing relationship from support for a particular regime. This means creating political space between Washington and the policies of authoritarian host countries whenever possible. With respect to Bahrain, U.S. officials should make clear that the U.S. military maintains its facilities for the defense of its territory and for regional stability -- not for the purposes of propping up the ruling family. At the same time, Washington needs to signal that it believes that both countries' interests are best served by greater political liberalization.

Abandoning the idea of a zero-sum trade-off between pragmatism and idealism is particularly important when considering U.S. policy toward Bahrain. Some see Bahrain as a proxy state in the struggle among Saudi Arabia, the United States, and Iran, and so they believe that further pressuring Manama to democratize will open the door to Iranian domination. But this misreads the national loyalties of Shia Bahrainis and confuses the main source of current Iranian influence. Bahrain's Shiites have shown little interest in allying themselves with the deeply reactionary regime in Tehran. Indeed, the more Washington promotes the inclusion of Shiites in Bahrain's political system, the less of a political opening Tehran will have. Some observers raise legitimate concerns about such hedging strategies, on the grounds that the United States should avoid reinforcing suspicions among its strategic partners that it will abandon them in a political pinch. But a nimbler approach to relations with host countries and their citizens would not mean abandoning autocratic allies. Ensuring that the benefits of U.S. bases are more broadly distributed, cultivating ties with a larger swath of host countries' civil societies, and clarifying the nature of the strategic relationship are all prudent steps that should do little to jeopardize strategic relationships that often pay significant dividends for the host countries.

Labor Unions Solvency

US should support development of labor unions in Bahrain

Bader-Blau, 5/11

(Middle East regional program director for the Solidarity Center, a core institute of the National Endowment for Democracy, the Washington-based democracy assistance group., <http://labourtime.blogspot.com/2011/05/reassess-priorities-and-confront.html>)

The Arab spring confirms that the region's people want not only democracy, but dignity – economic opportunity as well as political liberty. Labor unions played a vital mobilizing role in the pro-democracy upsurge and President Obama must address the backlash against one of the region's few bastions of non-sectarian politics, writes Shawna Bader-Blau. Today's speech is a test for President Obama. From a worker rights perspective, nothing short of a radical reassessment of U.S. policy toward the region – one that links democracy to economic justice and labor rights – will do. Bahrain, a close U.S. ally and home of the Navy's Fifth Fleet, is descending into dictatorship, and democratic institutions like the trade unions are being systematically dismantled. Will President Obama remain silent while union leaders are brought before military tribunals for exercising their right to strike? Will the United States "stay the course" on policy toward the region, while nearly 1,500 Bahraini citizens have been fired from their jobs for participating in the peaceful citizen reform movement there? As Bahrain's multiparty, non-sectarian trade union movement sees its leaders forced into exile, fired and otherwise threatened with brutal retaliation, the United States must reassess its priorities and stand up for people who need it the most, wherever they may live. Syrians deserve human rights, and so do Bahrainis. American values and interests are better served by a more consistent approach, and the whole world is watching.

Support for labor movements crucial to political reform in Bahrain

Campaign for Peace and Democracy, 5/20/11

<http://www.uslaboragainstawar.org/article.php?id=24191>

Hundreds of workers, including union leaders, have been fired for striking for democratic change. Security forces closed down the General Bahraini Federation of Trade Unions headquarters. The Bahrain Center for Human Rights writes, "Bahrain is currently considered a dangerous zone for the freedom of press and journalists." On April 3 the government suspended the country's only independent newspaper, Al Wasat. On May 2 it arrested two politicians belonging to the opposition Al Wefaq party. Bahrain's population is 60 percent or more Shia, with the government dominated by a Sunni minority. There is systematic discrimination against the Shiite majority in political representation, employment, wages, housing, and other benefits. The government has tried to split the opposition along Shia-Sunni lines, but uprising leaders insist their struggle for democratic rights is non-sectarian. Zainab Alkhwaja wrote to President Obama after her father, Abdulhadi Alkhwaja, former head of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights, was beaten unconscious in front of his family and arrested by masked men: "if anything happens to my father, my husband, my uncle, my brother-in-law, or to me, I hold you just as responsible as the Al Khalifa regime. Your support for this monarchy makes your government a partner in crime. I still have hope that you will realize that freedom and human rights mean as much to a Bahraini person as it does to an American, Syrian or a Libyan and that regional and political considerations should not be prioritized over liberty and human rights." Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Physicians for Human Rights, the International Crisis Group and many others have exhaustively documented the brutal terror of Bahrain's government. No further evidence is needed. As long as the repression continues, the promise to lift the state of emergency is only an empty public relations gesture. The United States should end all aid to Bahrain, condemn the invasion by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, and sharply denounce Bahrain's horrific suppression of democratic rights. As the Arab Spring has swept through North Africa and the Middle East, the role of the United States has been truly shameful. Washington's rhetoric cannot conceal a deep fear of democracy. Its first instinct was to stand behind its old friends. Only when it became obvious that Ben Ali's and Mubarak's days were numbered were they abandoned. As for Saudi Arabia, this ultra-reactionary monarchy, with its appalling treatment of women and religious minorities, is almost never criticized by U.S. officials. There are those who, while deploring repression in Bahrain, justify continuing U.S. support for that country's brutal tyranny as "realism"; in a dangerous world, they argue, our security depends on having a Middle Eastern state willing to host the Fifth Fleet. This argument is profoundly mistaken. Interventionist naval forces are part of a foreign policy that, by siding with despots and pitting the United States against the Arab people's longing for responsible government and a better way of life, guarantees endless terrorism and bloodshed and an even more dangerous world for everyone. For good reason, democratic movements around the world today do not trust the United States, which they see as motivated by imperial interest. That is why the U.S. desperately needs a new foreign policy, one that welcomes democratic forces -- not hypocritically, in order to manipulate them and blunt their impact, but to stand in solidarity with their struggles to win political power for the people and achieve social and economic justice.

End Military Exports

Several new reports and public activism calling for the suspension of military aid and arms sales to Bahraingo

Turse (a fellow at Harvard Universitys Radcliffe Institute) **March 15, 2011**

(Nick, Pacific Free Press, How the Tiny Kingdom of Bahrain Strong-Armed the President of the United States, Tom Engelhardt, LN)

Last week, peaceful protesters aligned against Bahraings monarchy gathered outside the U.S. embassy in Manama carrying signs reading æStop Supporting Dictators, æGive Me Liberty or Give Me Death, and æThe People Want Democracy. Many of them were women.

Ludovic Hood, a U.S. embassy official, reportedly brought a box of doughnuts out to the protesters. "These sweets are a good gesture, but we hope it is translated into practical actions," said Mohammed Hassan, who wore the white turban of a cleric. Zeinab al-Khawaja, a protest leader, told Al Jazeera that she hoped the U.S. wouldnt be drawn into Bahraings uprising. æWe want America not to get involved, we can overthrow this regime," she said.

The United States is, however, already deeply involved. To one side its given a box of doughnuts; to the other, helicopter gunships, armored personnel carriers, and millions of bullets -- equipment that played a significant role in the recent violent crackdowns.

In the midst of the violence, Human Rights Watch called upon the United States and other international donors to immediately suspend military assistance to Bahrain. The British government announced that it had begun a review of its military exports, while France suspended exports of any military equipment to the kingdom. Though the Obama administration, too, has begun a review, money talks as loudly in foreign policy as it does in domestic politics. The lobbying campaign by the Pentagon and its Middle Eastern partners is likely to sideline any serious move toward an arms export cut-off, leaving the U.S. once again in familiar territory -- supporting an anti-democratic ruler against his people.

"Without revisiting all the events over the last three weeks, I think history will end up recording that at every juncture in the situation in Egypt that we were on the right side of history," President Obama explained after the fall of Egyptian strongman Hosni Mubarak -- an overstatement, to say the least, given the administrations mixed messages until Mubaraks departure was a fait accompli. But when it comes to Bahrain, even such half-hearted support for change seems increasingly out of bounds.

Negative Conditionality

Obama should pressure the Royal Family for reform and condition the presence of the 5th fleet on reform

Washington Post Editorial Board June 6 2011

(An opening in Bahrain?, http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/an-opening-in-bahrain/2011/06/06/AGeSrbKH_story.html)

Success for this strategy would require opposition forces to temper their demands; some have sought the overthrow of the ruling family. But the biggest obstacle is probably divisions within the regime. U.S. officials have rightly asked about the tenure of Prime Minister Khalifa bin Salman al-Khalifa, who has served for 40 years and leads a hard-line faction; Bahrainis reply that the repression has made him popular among Sunnis. Yet the talks cannot be expected to succeed unless political prisoners are released, abuses by security forces are ended and there is a meaningful change in government. The incipient change of tack by the regime shows that the United States has leverage. Mr. Obama should use it — not only by boosting the crown prince but also by linking the continued basing of the Fifth Fleet in Bahrain to reform.

*****Negative Ground**

Saudi Backlash DA

US pushing for reforms in Bahrain could seriously strain its relationship with SA which is key to heg and counterterrorism

Arabia Today, 2/21/11

<http://arabia2day.com/reports/for-us-more-at-stake-in-bahrain-than-base-alone/>

As political unrest shakes its tiny Gulf ally Bahrain, much more is at stake for the United States than just the fate of the US Fifth Fleet's base, analysts said.

Also in play are Washington's extensive strategic ties with Bahrain's influential oil-rich neighbor Saudi Arabia and efforts by US arch-foe Iran to spread its influence from across the Gulf, they said.

In many ways, the unrest in Bahrain "is **much more dangerous**" for the US than the current state of affairs in Egypt, more than a week after mass protests forced president Hosni Mubarak to step down, said analyst Aaron David Miller. To be sure, Egypt has greater weight than Bahrain, said Miller, a former State Department analyst and negotiator who is now an analyst with the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. It is the largest and most powerful Arab state, has a peace treaty with Israel and receives \$1.3 billion in US military aid each year. And the Egyptian-US alliance remains intact, at least for now.

However, Bahrain's vulnerability "to more convulsive change and the impact that it could have vis-a-vis Arab policy for Iran, Saudi Arabia and the rest of the Gulf makes it ... a more hot-button issue right now," Miller told AFP. The Sunni Arab leaders of Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, who govern over restive Shiite Arab populations near Shiite but non-Arab Iran, fear Washington's push for reform will sow greater instability, said analyst Patrick Clawson. They strongly opposed Washington's pressure on Egypt for a transition to democracy to ease out Mubarak, according to Clawson, deputy director for research at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. "The perception in the (Gulf) region is that democracy means either the complete chaos you had in Iraq or else the stasis and bickering you had in Kuwait," he said. And if needed, the Saudis may be prepared to repeat their intervention in Bahrain in the 1990s, when they sent armored personnel carriers across the causeway linking the neighbors. "So the Saudis are in a position to ensure that things don't get out of hand in Bahrain and they are of a mind to do that. That is a powerful constraint to what the United States can do under these circumstances," Clawson said.

The course of events could put a strain on the US-Saudi strategic relationship, which involves US military bases and billions of dollars in US weapons sales, as well as close cooperation on regional diplomacy and counter-terrorism. Bahrain, fearing Iran's meddling, may continue taking a tough line toward unrest, although Bahraini security forces withdrew Saturday from a Manama square that had been the focal point of bloody anti-regime protests.

SA actively intervening to uphold the Monarchy – has strong fear of domino effect if the Monarchy falls

Adib-Moghaddam (that dude who wrote all the Iran k cards on the first ME topic) **April 25, 2011**

(Arshin, Bahrain in the shadow of Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United States, http://articles.cnn.com/2011-04-25/opinion/bahrain.saudi.iran.arshin_1_bahrain-al-khalifa-family-saudi-arabia?_s=PM:OPINION)

In the absence of a strong legitimacy of the state, systematic violence has functioned as a short cut to safeguard the regime. Hence, the current crackdown, which has not drawn much criticism from the United States and the European Union, who were/are by far louder about the situation in Libya (and indeed about anything that happens in Iran). The second strategic factor is the involvement of Saudi Arabia. After Yemen, Bahrain is the second country in which the Saudis have intervened militarily in support of long-standing allies battling restive societies. In Bahrain, military forces dispatched from Saudi Arabia have helped suppress the protest, and for pragmatic reasons: From the perspective of the Saudi state, a Shia-dominated Bahrain could be a potential ally of Iran, and the downfall of a tribal monarchy that rests on a comparably absolute mandate to rule could trigger a domino effect throughout the Arabian peninsula.

Iranian Influence DA

Democratic Bahrain leads to increased Iranian influence in the region, trades off with the US

(this article also contains answers to this arg but it is representative of one of the controlling reasons that we are not acting now and of a broader conservative lit base)

Bayyat June 10, 2011

(Abolghasem, Bahrain: Beyond the U.S.-Iran Rivalry, Foreign Policy In Focus,

[http://www.fpif.org/articles/bahrain_beyond_the_us-](http://www.fpif.org/articles/bahrain_beyond_the_us-iran_rivalry?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+FPIF+%28Foreign+Policy+In+Focus+%28All+News%29%29)

[iran_rivalry?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+FPIF+%28Foreign+Policy+In+Focus+%28All+News%29%29](http://www.fpif.org/articles/bahrain_beyond_the_us-iran_rivalry?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+FPIF+%28Foreign+Policy+In+Focus+%28All+News%29%29))

Although the Arab popular uprisings, including the one in Bahrain, are not primarily motivated by sectarian identities, Iran will certainly benefit from the fall of conservative authoritarian Arab regimes in both Shiite and Sunni majority states. The political empowerment of Shiites and Kurds in Iraq shows that Iran can gain advantage from regional political upheavals. Given the common religious ties between Iran and Bahrain, any democratic and popularly-based political system in Bahrain is expected to gravitate toward Iran. Moreover, a rapprochement between a future democratic Bahrain and Iran would be a symbolic gesture marking a break with the foreign policy of the previous authoritarian government.

5th Fleet DA

Democratization of Bahrain could lead to the expulsion of the 5th fleet and undermine American interests

Cooley and Nexon (Associate Professor of Political Science at Barnard College; Associate Professor in the School of Foreign Service and the Department of Government at Georgetown University) **April 5, 2011**
(Alexander and Daniel, Bahrain's Base Politics, Foreign Affairs, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/67700/alexander-cooley-and-daniel-h-nexon/bahrain-base-politics?page=show>)

Until the recent revolutions in the Middle East, Bahrain's relative stability and loyalty to the United States provided comfort to Pentagon officials. The U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet -- which brings with it several thousand onshore personnel and dependents, about 30 warships, and roughly 30,000 sailors -- has its headquarters in Juffair, a suburb of Bahrain's capital, Manama. The Fifth Fleet patrols the Arabian Sea, the Red Sea, the western part of the Indian Ocean, and the Persian Gulf, ensuring that sea-lanes remain open, protecting the flow of oil, conducting anti-piracy operations, and acting as a check against Iran's regional influence. Bahrain also hosts the United States' Naval Forces Central Command (NAVCENT) -- the maritime component to the U.S. Central Command -- and offers U.S. forces the Isa Air Base and space at Bahrain International Airport.

During the 1940s and 1950s, Bahrain was a British protectorate, and the U.S. military operated out of the country through a leasing arrangement with London. When Bahrain became independent in 1971, the United States agreed to pay \$4 million a year in exchange for continued basing rights. After the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, Bahraini authorities evicted the U.S. Navy, only to grant it reduced facilities following protracted negotiations. In 1977, Manama insisted that U.S. forces move their headquarters back on board ship.

The U.S. military maintained a low profile in Bahrain until the 1990 Persian Gulf crisis, when the country acted as a major naval base that hosted 20,000 U.S. troops and served as a hub for air operations against Iraq in Operation Desert Storm. After the war ended, in 1991, Washington and Manama negotiated a ten-year Defense Cooperation Agreement (DCA), and four years later the U.S. military's footprint expanded when Bahrain became the headquarters of the Fifth Fleet and NAVCENT. In 2001, the United States renewed the DCA. In addition to a \$6.7 million annual lease payment, the United States now provides Bahrain with military aid -- ranging from \$6 million in 2006 to \$18 million in 2010 -- and security pledges.

The current political upheaval in Bahrain began as a nonviolent protest by a diverse coalition, but the government and its allies have done their best to frame it as a purely sectarian conflict. Shiites comprise 60-70 percent of the country's 500,000 citizens (another 500,000 are foreign workers), yet they currently enjoy little political representation and few economic opportunities. Since independence, the al-Khalifi family has zealously guarded its power, failing to deliver on repeated promises to introduce significant political reforms. In the run-up to parliamentary elections last year, the regime arrested 23 opposition leaders and hundreds of activists, and charged them with such crimes as terrorism and conspiracy to overthrow the government.

On February 14 of this year, inspired by the movements in Tunisia and Egypt, Bahrainis took to the streets, congregating around the Pearl Roundabout in central Manama. Three days later, the security services cracked down, killing five demonstrators and injuring hundreds. King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa offered limited concessions, but the protesters, incensed by the regime's violence, demanded the end of the monarchy altogether. On March 15, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates intervened under the auspices of the Gulf Cooperation Council, deploying 1,000 troops, 500 security personnel, and more than 100 armored vehicles to quash the demonstrations. The king declared a three-month state of emergency and imposed martial law.

The use of force and foreign troops against peaceful demonstrators in a country with a major U.S. military presence necessarily implicates Washington. Even though U.S. officials maintain that they were informed of Riyadh's decision to intervene but not consulted about it, such a nuanced distinction will do little to remove the perception of U.S. complicity in the crackdown. Rumors now circulate that the United States green-lighted Saudi intervention in return for Riyadh's support for a no-fly zone in Libya. And the question of whether Bahraini security forces used U.S. military hardware and equipment against protesters remains open, as Washington and Manama have launched investigations into the conduct of the security services.

These developments have raised concerns that regime change in Bahrain will lead to the eviction of U.S. forces. The United States' relative silence gives further credibility to the idea that Washington sees a trade-off between political stability and democratic reform, and that it opposes the latter for fear of jeopardizing U.S. security interests. But the "base politics" of Bahrain are part of a broader pattern.