

Forum: Security Council
Issue: Crisis in Bahrain
Student Officer: Sofia Kopsacheili
Position: Deputy President

PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

Dear delegates,

My name is Sofia Kopsacheili and I feel really honored to be appointed as a Deputy President in the Security Council. I've also attended the 5th conference of Platon MUN as a Deputy President in the ECOSOC and since it was my most thrilling MUN experience I am really looking forward to this one.

I am a student of the 10th grade in the German School of Athens and the reason I feel challenged by this upcoming attendance to the conference, is because I believe that this is the time to expand our views, our knowledge. If not now, then when? So, I strongly think that in this particular committee we all have a lot to win, learn, take, but also give.

As your Deputy President, I am here to help you through your preparation for the conference and also to guide you through the conference. I hope that my first task is completed with this study guide and it provides you the maximum help it should provide you with. But you should not base your preparation only on this study guide, because you get more general information about the topic and it does not focus on your country's policy. Additionally, new incidents concerning this topic may happen at any moment and you should be informed about them. That is your task to fulfill with your research, through which you can always use the web pages (the links are in the Bibliography) I've used through mine. I am always open to answer any questions you may have, in order to achieve the better possible preparation for the conference.

I am really looking forward to meet with all of you in the conference,

Regards,

Sofia Kopsacheili

INTRODUCING TOPIC

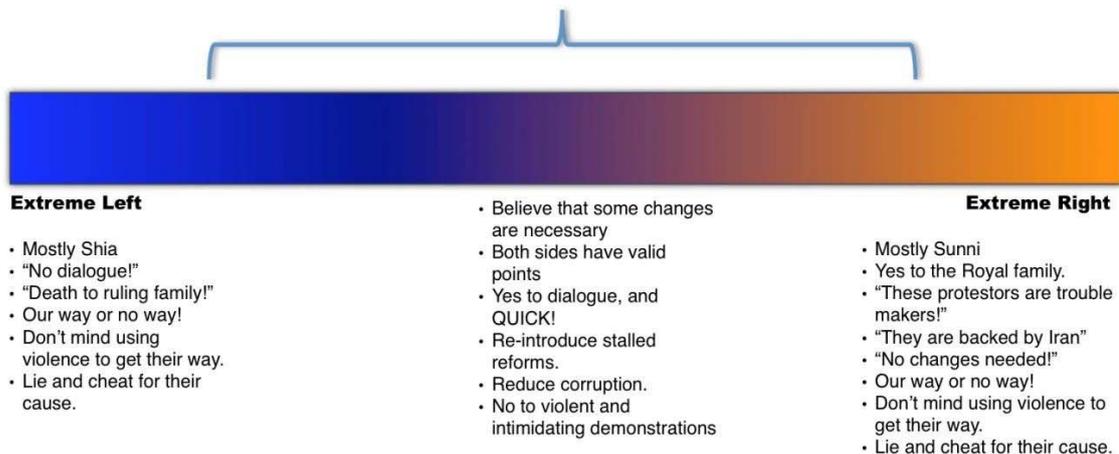
In 2011 the whole Arab world went through the so called ‘Arab Spring’. Many of the Arab countries, such as Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates etc. have a regime of dictatorship and have been oppressing their people. Therefore in early 2011 a massive protest movement has taken place, with the people demanding employment, no discrimination and better quality of life. Their major request was either the replacement of a monarchy with a constitutional monarchy or the complete transformation of their regime with a democratic Republic. Did this movement success? Realistically, we couldn’t know. Most of these countries are still in a crisis and a no long- lasting dictatorship, as these ones, can be overthrown in such a short period of time.

In the context of the Arab Spring a huge movement took also place in Bahrain. For years Bahrain is ruled by the Al Khalifa family, a Sunni monarchy, led by the king Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa. Bahrain is a country, whose majority is converted to Shia. The first uprising was in February of 2011 with the Shia majority complaining about the discrimination they are experiencing because of their beliefs. They have been asking for a constitutional monarchy, an elected government and a representative parliament. The police intervened and attacked them with open fire, something that kept the movement going. The reason, which still keeps Bahrain in this crisis, is because the Sunni royal family doesn’t make any real changes, despite the “efforts” that have been made.

THE BAHRAIN SPECTRUM



The “Silent Majority”

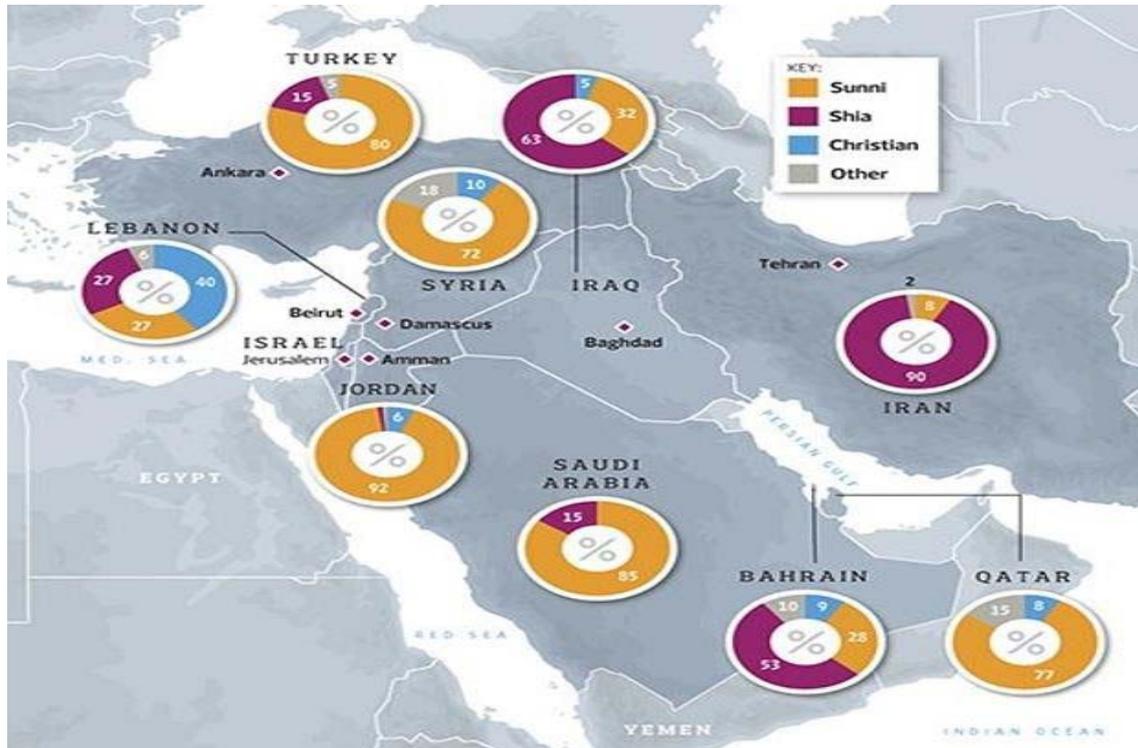


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KEY TERMS

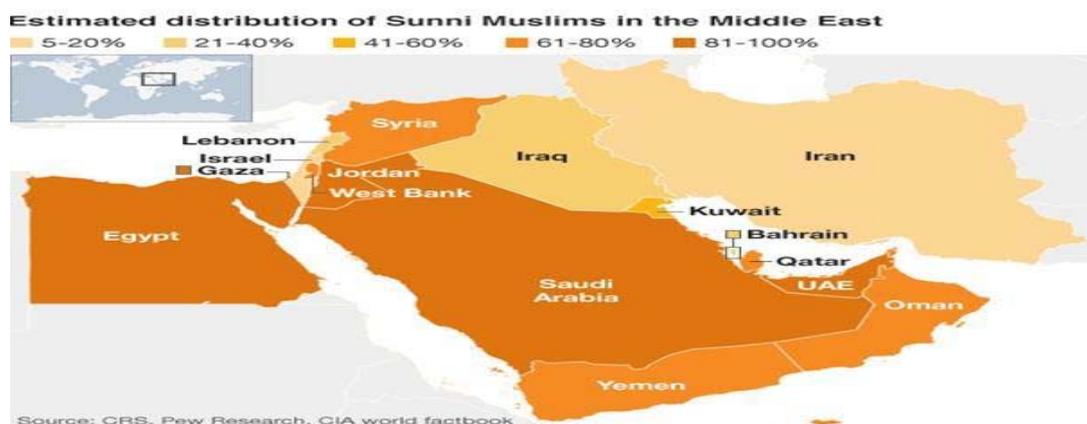
SHIA and SUNNI

Shia and Sunni are the two sects of Islam, as the orthodox and the catholic one of Christianity. They have many common beliefs and practices, but they differ in doctrine, ritual, law, theology and religious organization.



SUNNI

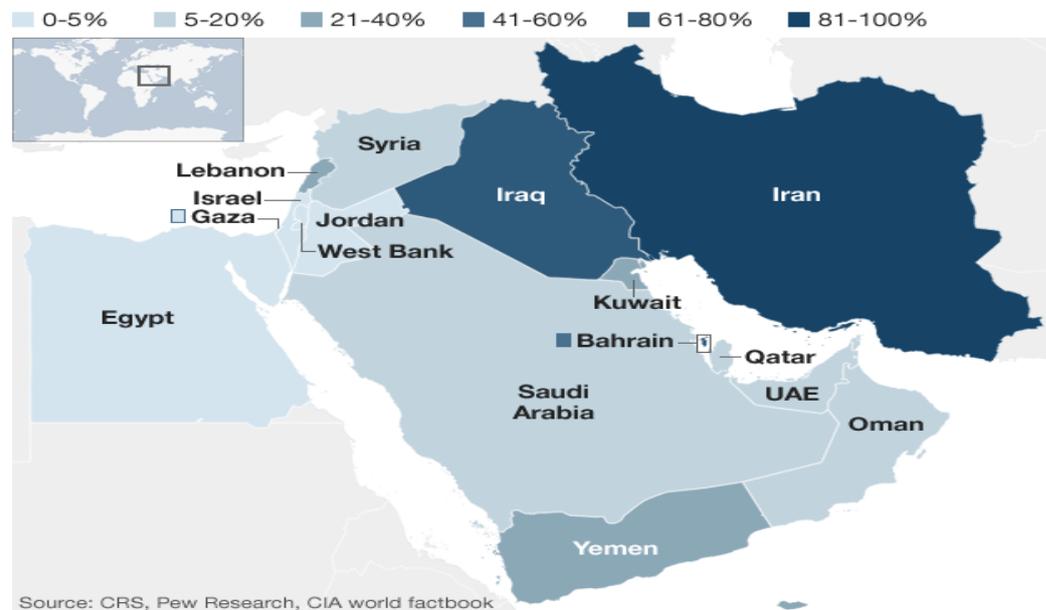
Sunnis regard themselves as the orthodox branch of Islam. The name "Sunni" is derived from the phrase "Ahl al-Sunnah", or "People of the Tradition". The tradition in this case refers to practices based on what the Prophet Muhammad said, did, agreed to or condemned. All Muslims are guided by the Sunnah, but Sunnis stresses its primacy. Shia is also guided by the wisdom of Muhammad's descendants through his son-in-law and cousin, Ali. They also compose the 56% of the world in the Middle East.



SHIA

In early Islamic history, the Shia was a movement - literally "Shiat Ali" or the "Party of Ali". They claimed that Ali was the rightful successor to the Prophet Muhammad as leader (imam) of the Muslim community following his death in 632.

Estimated distribution of Shia Muslims in the Middle East



* <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-16047709>

MARTIAL LAW

“Martial law is an extreme and rare measure used to control society during war or periods of civil unrest or chaos. According to the Supreme Court, the term martial law carries no precise meaning. However, most declarations of martial law have some common features. Generally, the institution of martial law contemplates some use of military force. To a varying extent, depending on the martial law order, government military personnel have the authority to make and enforce civil and criminal laws. Certain civil liberties may be suspended, such as the right to be free from unreasonable searches and seizures, freedom of association, and freedom of movement”

* <http://legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/Martial+Law>

GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL (GCC)

CCC is a political and economic union, which is composed by six countries: Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Kuwait, Oman and Qatar, all of which have a monarchy. Its goal is to achieve unity between those countries, because of their similar political strategy and their deep religious character, based on their Islamic beliefs.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

After the incidents in February 2011, a really controversial action has been made. In March approximately 2000 Sunni armed forces were sent in Bahrain from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, as a help in order to 'restore peace'. The troops are officially under the commands of the king, but since Saudi Arabia and Bahrain are 'bigger' powers, we cannot know if Bahrain had a strong word in this decision. This was done in the context of the GCC, which has been used for the first time in order to protect one of its members. This has been 'translated in two ways'. The Shia majority and the opposition parties believe that this was an invasion, in order to stop them from their rightful claims, when the Sunni supporters really do see this as a brotherly intervention aiming only at peace. At the same time the martial law was implemented, as a state of emergency, giving the troops the right to search houses without a warrant and actually allowing them to act freely when it came to a matter of security.

Because of the pressure that was exercised on the king and the Crown Prince Sheik Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa the state of emergency was lifted and in July 2011 a national dialogue between the government and an appointed body took place. However, after the government realized that in a case of a constitutional monarchy it would be highly outnumbered, it simply canceled the dialogue. Because of that the opposition parties submitted the "Manama Document", the first official request for the transition of the regime into a constitutional monarchy. It was practically ignored and until the June of 2012 the headquarters and the leader of Al-Wefaq, the main opposition party, were attacked in Manama, the capital of Bahrain.

The following month, the interior ministry allowed the investigation of possible violations by the police, but at the same time dissolves a Shia opposition party.

Finally, in December 2012 the Crown Prince calls for a dialogue with the opposition, which accepts it and the negotiations begin in February 2013. However, the atmosphere is quite tensed and the side of the opposition is accused of cooperating and following

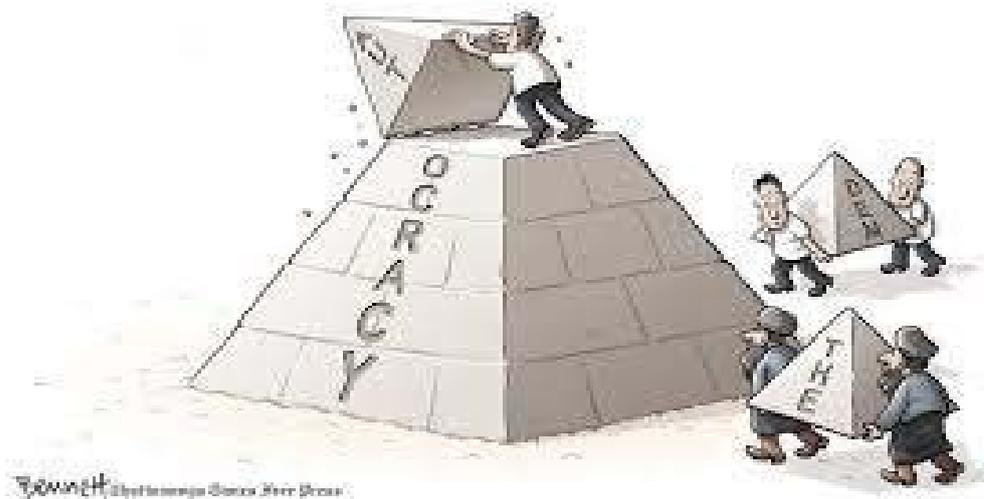
U.S. instructions and publishing information about the evolvement of the dialogue. The opposition suspends talks, because of the armed intervention of the police in a demonstration and the deaths that happened there. Finally, in January 2014 the opposition quits the dialogue. In the meanwhile, the Crown Prince is appointed as the deputy prime minister.

Just some months later, Al-Wefaq is obviously attacked with its leader being accused of leaking information, because of a meeting he had with a US diplomat and the parties actions being suspended for 3 months.

In November 2014 the elections are boycotted by Al-Wefaq and, therefore, its leader Sheik Ali Salman is arrested and charged with trying to change the regime and overthrow the royal family by force. After the trial begins, the party is being investigated with almost the same accuses. Finally, Ali Salman is found guilty and is sentenced with four years of imprisonment. U.S. is later opposed to that and calls

for the drop of his charges, because according to UN Declaration his imprisonment is 'arbitrary detention'.

In November 2015 Iran smuggled explosives and guns in Bahrain and the king 'advised' it to change its policy, since its actions are in favor of the Shia population and are aiming at strengthening their power. Therefore, it was also accused of trying to overthrow the monarchy by force and just in January 2016 Bahrain, as Saudi Arabia, cuts its diplomatic relations with Iraq.



COUNTRIES INVOLVED IN THE ISSUE

SAUDI ARABIA

Saudi Arabia as a member state of the Gulf Cooperation Council is highly involved in Bahrain. First of all it was one of the countries that in 2011 sent the dispatch of 2000 Sunni forces in order to face the Shia anti-monarchy protesters and is therefore one of Bahrain's allies. Finally, it has also cut its diplomatic relations with Iran simultaneously with Bahrain, something that was an agreed action to stop Iran from strengthening their Shia population.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

United Arab Emirates is in the same position as Saudi Arabia, when it comes to the Bahraini crisis. It was the second country which helped to the sending of the dispatch in Bahrain and as a strong GCC member it is one of the main allies of Bahrain.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

United States of America haven't had intervened or taken any drastic action concerning Bahrain. However the US Navy's Fifth Fleet is based in Bahrain and therefore, its position is not quite clear, however it is obvious that it counts Bahrain as one of its allies in the Arab world. There is the belief that the dispatch sent from the GCC had the green light of US, but since there are no evidence it can be either true or a "conspiracy theory".

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

February 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the first uprising of the Shia majority, requesting a constitutional monarchy
March 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2000 armed forces are sent in Bahrain by GCC (Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates) the martial law is implemented a leader of Al-Wefaq is imprisoned
April 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the president of the Bahrain Youth Society for Human Rights is released from prison
June 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the state of emergency is lifted
July 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a national dialogue between the government and a state appointed party the government quits the talks
October 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Manama Document" submitted by the opposition parties, officially requesting a constitutional monarchy
December 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the headquarters of Al-Wefaq in Manama are being attacked
June 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Al-Wefaq leader Sheik Ali Salman is being attacked

July 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigations into possible violations by the police are allowed • Shia political party Amal is dissolved
December 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the opposition accepts to join a dialogue/negotiation with the Prince
February 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the dialogue begins
March 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Crown Prince Sheik Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa is appointed as the deputy prime minister
April 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • tensed atmosphere in the negotiations • the opposition is accused of cooperating and following U.S. instructions and publishing information about the evolvement of the dialogue
September 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the dialogue is suspended by the opposition

November 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Al Wefaq leader is accused of conspiring against the interior ministry, imprisoned and interrogated for five hours
January 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the opposition parties quit the dialogue
July 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sheikh Ali Salman, Al Wefaq leader is suspected because of meeting with a US diplomat
October 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Al Wefaq functions are suspended for three months
November 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the elections held by the government are boycotted by Al Wefaq
December 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sheiki Ali Salman is arrested and his charge is “his attempt” to overthrowing the monarchy by force
January 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • while the trial of Ali Salman begins, he insists his charges are inaccurate
February 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Al Wefaq is being investigated
March 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sheikh Ali Salman is being sentenced with four years of imprisonment • Bahrain and 4 other GCC countries participate in the air strikes of Saudi Arabia against the Houthi rebels in Yemen

September 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iran smuggled explosives and guns in Bahrain • the king 'advised' it to change its policy
October 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Therefore Iran is accused by Bahrain of trying to overthrow the monarchy
November 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • U.S. criticizes the decision of the Court to sentence Al Wafaqs leader as according to UN Declaration his imprisonment is "arbitrary detention"
January 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bahrain and Saudi Arabia stop their diplomatic relations with Iran

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

- First of all, the only realistic way to solve this crisis is for an actual dialogue between the government and the opposition to take place. It is understood that the request of the transition of the regime not to a constitutional monarchy, but a Democratic Republic adopted by some is, at least for now, not implementable and the reason why the first dialogue failed to fulfill its purpose. However, it should be set as a goal for the future. In order for this to succeed we should first set the basis. So, the dialogue should be aiming at the establishment of a constitutional monarchy with the representation of the Royal Family by the king. Therefore, in order for a first fruitful negotiation to take place:
 - The opposition should find a way of reassuring the government that they are not trying to completely overthrow them
 - And pressure should be put on the government/ royal family to accept the dialogue
- A national council with two parts should be created. The first part will be elected by the people and the second part will be appointed by the government. The elected Chamber will propose measures, solutions and legislations, which will be reviewed by the appointed Chamber and will then be officially proposed to the government.
- The electoral districts should be reformed, so that every citizens vote counts the same. This way the discrimination between Shia and Sunni will have started ending.
- All the political prisoners, especially the opposition leaders, should be immediately released in order for this dialogue to take place in a peaceful atmosphere.

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