CHAPTER 4

Surveying Bahrain:
A Practical and Methodological Preface

The foregoing argument, first outlined theoretically and then substantiated by a qualitative survey of Bahraini politics and society, has proceeded so as to move in parallel with the prevailing *rentier* state interpretation of the Arab Gulf. As the latter suggests two primary paths by which the economic character of the region's rent-dependent nations works to influence their politics, reducing popular political involvement and thereby increasing overall regime stability, so too have we organized our analysis around these by-now familiar mechanisms of political co-option said to be available to the *rentier* state: public-sector employment and non-taxation. In so doing, we have sought to demonstrate systematically their failure, and accordingly that of the larger *rentier* state paradigm, to operate in the case of Bahrain and in the class of ethnically-contested allocative states of which Bahrain is only the best example. From this refutation one may distill a number of specific hypotheses suitable for empirical evaluation that in this way correspond precisely to the individual-level causal logic internal to the *rentier* framework. In contrast to extant attempts at quantitative testing (cf. CH. 2, 21-27), then, we shall not have need to rely upon theoretical proxies operating at the country level—rent proceeds, taxation rates, democracy levels, etc.—and interpolate from these our conclusions about the efficacy of the *rentier* logic. We can, in other words, at last offer a direct evaluation of the *rentier* state theory of Arab Gulf politics by interrogating its claim to understand the individual political behavior of Gulf Arabs.

"At last," that is, because the individual-level data required to undertake such a study is only now become available with the completion of several timely research projects, including the first wave of the Arab Democracy Barometer finished in 2008, a World Values Survey of Saudi Arabia in 2003, and my own nationally-representative survey of Bahrain in 2009. Together, these efforts capture the individual political orientations of some 10,000 ordinary citizens across

nine Arab countries, including those of three Gulf nations. As we previewed briefly in the introduction to Chapter 2, such mass survey data offer a heretofore inaccessible angle from which to analyze the efficacy of the *rentier* model of Arab Gulf politics, one that cuts out the theoretical middle-men employed in extant empirical testing and instead walks hand-in-hand as it were with the original argument laid out by Luciani and Beblawi. That we should proceed thus is all the more fitting because their argument, in contrast to other accounts of authoritarian politics that center around the behavior of rulers and elites, that describe the machinations by which these remain in power in spite of the actions of everyday citizens—contrary to such theories, that expounded by Luciani and Beblawi in 1987 makes specific predictions about the political behavior of individual citizens of *rentier* regimes according to the economic incentives given them. The *rentier* model therefore not only admits of evaluation at the individual level of analysis but indeed uniquely demands it.

The present thesis, however, entails a modification of this classic model such that its evaluation demands something in addition: a way to distinguish Sunni and Shiʿi respondents. Because our theory of ethnically-divided *rentier* societies explains that individual employment as well as individual political actions and opinions are as much a function of ethnic group membership and personal religiosity as they are of economic satisfaction, we cannot test this revised *rentier* model absent ethnic identifiers in the survey data we employ. Unfortunately, this requirement serves to rule out most all of that currently available,[1] the one notable exception being Inglehart, Moaddel, and Tessler's (2006A; 2006B; 2008A; 2008B) surveys of Iraq carried out in 2004 and 2006. But for obvious reasons—not least that Iraq differs historically, socially, and economically from the GCC states; differs no less significantly in its political institutions and mode of governance; was then largely administered by a foreign occupying force; and was playing host to an ethnic conflict that bordered on full-scale civil war—these data would not offer an unambiguous test of the present argument. They will, however, for lack of a better alternative be examined in Chapter 6 in order to further clarify and corroborate the results of the analysis to follow here—our analysis, that is, of the first-ever political survey of Bahrain.

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[1] One might wonder, then, why we were able to put these data—those from the Arab Barometer and the WVS of Saudi Arabia—to good use early in Chapter 2. Recall, though, that the purpose there was simply to evaluate the notion that popular interest and involvement in politics is less in the Gulf countries than it is elsewhere in the Arab world on account of the *rentier* political effects assumed to operate in the former class of states. While these ethnically-aggregated data were thus helpful in demonstrating the existence of a puzzle to be investigated, they can bring us little closer to solving it.

Bahrain: A Gulf Exception or the Rule?

Presenting as it does simultaneous advantages and disadvantages of a sort both practical and methodological, the choice of Bahrain as empirical testing ground for the study of ethnic conflict in the *rentier* state requires some preliminary words. Though only now do we have occasion to offer them, these of course apply equally to the foregoing qualitative discussion of Chapter 3. We may begin by considering the more important, methodological implications of our selection. Foremost among these is the dialectic implied in the title of this section between Bahrain as a model case of ethnic conflict in the *rentier* state, as the Platonic Idea of the ethnically-contested allocative economy, and Bahrain as a case that is simply *sui generis*. In the former instance, we may imagine Bahrain as an ethnically-contested *rentier* state whose internal dynamics apply in degrees to the other Gulf nations according to the levels of ethnic tension having arisen there either exogenously by chance of history or endogenously as a result of exclusionary allocative policy. The other GCC states, then, while less perfect forms than Bahrain, share its underlying potentiality and so remain of the same class of state. That Qatar thus fails to exhibit the sort of popular political agitation borne of ethnic wrangling so evident in Bahrain, for example, is so largely by the historical accident that its native population is more ethno-religiously homogenous. The central upshot of this interpretation is its admission that the insights gleaned from the case of Bahrain necessarily inform the study of other *rentier* states. At the other extreme sits the counterpoint to this argument: that little or nothing is to be gained by consideration of the Bahraini case beyond insights about Bahrain, as its exceptional historical circumstances—its native Shiʿa population conquered by foreign Sunni tribes and determined ever since to reclaim its lost political autonomy—render it unique, irreconcilably different from the region's other regimes, to say nothing of their domestic politics.

While the latter view cannot be ignored, one would like to think that the truth more closely approximates the former, more sanguine interpretation, or in any case may be found somewhere near the mean. That such hope is probably warranted we have some positive indicators. The first is our introductory analysis of the Failed States Index of overall regime stability, which indicated among other things a general gap in performance between those Gulf states with more sizable Shiʿa communities—Saudi Arabia (at 10-15% Shiʿa, with a failure total of 77.5), Bahrain (65-75%, 59.0), and Kuwait (20-25%, 63.4)—and those whose Shiʿa populations are small and non-native—Oman (5-10%, 47.2), Qatar (~10%, 51.9), and the UAE (~10%, 51.8).[2]

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[2] These estimates come from PEW FORUM ON RELIGION AND PUBLIC LIFE 2009, *op cit.*

While such a broad relationship with so few observations is hardly conclusive, and though Bahrain's outperformance of both Kuwait and Saudi Arabia reminds us of the imprecision of such aggregate measures; and that regime stability is not synonymous with political quietude, still we have in our review of this respected Index at worst no evidence in refutation of the idea that ethnic competition influences *rentier* politics in countries not called Bahrain.

Further, because one of the chief contemporary drivers of ethnic division in the Gulf, and source of fear on the part of Gulf leaders, is a militarily-powerful and regionally-meddlesome Iran, we have reason to suppose that all the Gulf regimes should be equally affected in proportion with the size of their domestic Shiʿa populations. Insofar as Sunni citizens and leaders across the Gulf—Bahraini, Saudi, and Qatari Sunnis alike—believe they have cause to fear for the national loyalty of their domestic Shiʿa populations—to the extent, as Louër says, that it is "the Sunnis who now feel under siege" from an ominous "Shiite revival"—then, again, we should expect Bahrain to be disproportionately but not uniquely subjected to the popular pressures and apprehensions that stem from Gulf geopolitics. And, in fact, if one considers for a moment the bilateral relations of Iran and its Gulf neighbors, he will easily perceive separating the region's more ethnically-heterogeneous and -homogenous countries precisely this difference: whereas the former maintain strained relations with the Islamic Republic, the latter, with the partial exception of the Emirates,[3] remain on better terms with Iran even to the annoyance of the United States. Indeed, among them only the UAE has agreed to implement the June 2010 U.S.-backed sanctions on Iran's nuclear program, and this only after considerable delay and one imagines considerable political pressure from Washington. So while there are no doubt other reasons why one might expect Iran's relations with, say, Oman to be more cordial than those with Saudi Arabia, the discrepancy in latent potential for domestic Iranian influence as a function of a state's native Shiʿa population is perhaps not the least important.

Finally, evidence that a group politics of ethnic rivalry operates in the Gulf outside of Bahrain may be found simply by reflecting on the present state of Sunni-Shiʿi relations across the region—both citizen-citizen relations and citizen-regime—which seem to have reached a nadir not seen since the immediate aftermath of the Islamic Revolution. The situation in Saudi Arabia perhaps needs no great treatment. It is aptly summarized by the title of a September 2009 report by Human Rights Watch: "Denied Dignity: Systematic Discrimination and Hostility

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[3] The case of Emirati-Iranian relations is complicated, however, by a longstanding dispute over three islands in the waters bordering the two countries claimed by the UAE but controlled by Iran.

toward Saudi Shia Citizens,"[4] which catalogues the latter's wholesale exclusion from the regime, including from the military and state apparatus. One might add simply that the now-infamous "Medina clashes" of February 2009 in which Saudi security forces sparred with Shiʿa pilgrims for five days near the gravesite of the Prophet Muḥammad—the Shiʿa practice of visiting the cemetery on the Prophet's birthday seen as idolatrous by Salafis—have, as the aforementioned report observes, "stoked the sharpest manifestation of long-standing sectarian tensions that the kingdom has experienced in years."[5] This includes in the Eastern Province, which thereafter witnessed popular demonstrations in expression of solidarity with the Medina pilgrims. When these too were met with brutal police suppression, the situation spiraled further, with one regime critic "suggest[ing] in a Friday sermon … that his coreligionists consider secession from Saudi Arabia if their rights were not respected."[6] The manhunt that followed led only to more quashed demonstrations, a tit-for-tat culminating in the formation of what is thought to be the kingdom's first full-blown opposition movement among al-Aḥsāʾ Shiʿa. Called *"khalāṣ"* ("خلاص"), its name means literally "deliverance" but also, colloquially, "enough!"[7]

Yet even prior to this recent downturn in government-Shiʿa relations in Saudi Arabia, it was clear that this supposed model of rentierism was not succeeding in achieving the social harmony implied in its title. A prescient paper by Okruhlik (1999) called "Rentier Wealth, Unruly Law, and the Rise of Opposition" argues precisely this, that the case of Saudi Arabia demonstrates how "windfall profits of petroleum exports do not translate into a politically quiescent population" (295) because rents cannot always "buy the support or loyalty of different social groups" (297), namely ethnic and religious out-groups like non-Salafi Sunnis, non-Najdīs (Najd being the tribal home of Āl Saʿūd), and of course the Saudi Shiʿa. Since the allocation of state benefits is governed "by family relations, friendship, religious branch, and regional affiliation," says Okruhlik, the regime actually creates as many enemies as friends through its biased distribution of oil rent. Thus, he concludes, "in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Bahrain opposition has arisen and with it a discrepancy between the expectations derived from the rentier framework and empirical reality." As his treatment elaborates only the first case, perhaps the present thesis can be seen as further extending this same inquiry.

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[4] See also the earlier but essentially similar paper: The International Crisis Group, 2005, "The Shiite Question in Saudi Arabia," *Middle East Report N°45*, September 19.
[5] Human Rights Watch, 2009, "Denied Dignity: Systematic Discrimination and Hostility toward Saudi Shia Citizens," September, p. 1. Available at: <http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2009/09/03/denied-dignity-0>.
[6] *Ibid.*
[7] Additional details may be found in Mai Yamani, 2009, "Saudi Shia are standing up," *The Guardian*, March 15. Available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/belief/2009/mar/11/saudiarabia-islam>.

Confessional relations in Kuwait too have recently soured, precipitated in part by an unlikely event: the assassination of a Ḥizballāh military commander, ʿImād Mughniyyah, in Damascus in February 2008. At a commemoration held in Kuwait, two Shiʿa members of parliament eulogized the man once feared in Kuwait for his association with terrorist attacks that rocked the nation throughout the 1980s. Refusing to apologize, the two were thereafter expelled from their parliamentary bloc and referred to the public prosecution. But this did little to avert mass street demonstrations and ultimately the "transformation of the campaign against the two MPs into a campaign against the Shia of Kuwait," the latter seen as having grown increasingly provocative since their co-religionists to the north assumed power after 2003.[8] Their renewed demands for additional ḥusayniyyāt (mawātim in Bahrain) and the recognition of ʿĀshūrāʾ as an official holiday even sparked an attack by young men on a Shiʿi mosque in October 2005. Much more recently in September 2010, and in a seeming show of solidarity with Bahraini leaders and their ongoing crackdown on Shiʿa activists, Kuwait stripped a prominent Shiʿi cleric of his citizenship for "inciting sectarian strife" on the very same day that Bahrain announced it was revoking the passport of Ayatallāh Ḥusayn al-Najatī, whom we know already as the main representative of Ayatallāh ʿAlī al-Sīstānī in Bahrain. Then on the following day began the trial of six men and women charged with spying for Iran in Kuwait, accused of passing information and photographs of U.S. and Kuwaiti military installations to the Revolutionary Guard.[9] All this led the head of political science at Kuwait University to say in an interview with the *Financial Times*, "You could cut the tense atmosphere and apprehension here with a knife. There is a great deal of apprehension among elites and among academics and among ordinary people who see the Iranians' imprint all over the place."[10] Kuwait's Interior Ministry thereafter moved to ban all "sectarian" meetings and demonstrations. As the Minster of Defense (and acting Prime Minister) explained, there are those "employing such difference in sectarianism [sic] in order to ignite sectarian [conflict]," seeking to "drag us into hateful strife" and to exploit a "fragility in the society which we must avert as much as possible."[11]

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[8] In Mshari al-Zaydi, 2008, "What is the Point of Kuwait?," *Al-Sharq Al-Awsaṭ English*, March 1. Available at: <http://www.aawsat.com/english/news.asp?section=2&id=11956>.

[9] On these and other episodes see D. Parvaz, 2010, "Shia Crackdowns in Middle East," *Al-Jazeera English*, September 22. Available at: <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2010/09/2010921131347921736.html>.

[10] Quoted in James Drummond, 2010, "Sunni-led Arab states on alert over Shia Iran," *Financial Times*, September 23. Available at: <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/cde302c6-c732-11df-aeb1-00144feab49a.html>.

[11] More of this speech is available in Muna Shishter and Nouri al-Osthath, 2010, "Kuwait will firmly confront anyone trying to drag it into nasty strife—Acting PM," *Kuwait News Agency (KUNA)*, September 19. Available at: <http://www.kuna.net.kw/NewsAgenciesPublicSite/ArticleDetails.aspx?Language=en&id=2111987>.

Neither has the UAE been immune from this "tense atmosphere and apprehension." In July 2010 the Emirati ambassador to the U.S. was admonished by his own Foreign Ministry after offering that the U.S. should "absolutely" use force to halt Iran's nuclear program, adding that the UAE's armed forces "wake up, dream, breathe, eat, sleep the Iranian threat. It is the only conventional military threat our military plans for, trains for, equips for."[12] And it seems this apprehension has permeated through to the civilian front. That same month Human Rights Watch published an exposé accusing the UAE of deporting without warning or appeal "at least 120 Lebanese families—all of them Shiite—since June 2009," apparently on suspicions they might be Ḥizballāh supporters.[13] Some had resided in the country for over 30 years. One of those deported, a Lebanese professor at the University of Sharjah, recounted how she was accused during questioning of "belonging to a Hezbollah 'sleeper cell,'" and that her interrogator "mocked [her Shiʿa] religious beliefs and practices."[14] In sum, even a cursory review of the Iranian-fueled anxiety currently overrunning the Gulf, afflicting Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the UAE alike, is enough to show that Bahrain is not alone in being affected by Sunni-Shiʿi tensions. One is persuaded instead to accept the conclusion of another Gulf political scientist, Mustafa Alani of Dubai's Gulf Research Centre, when he warns, "We are witnessing a major change in the perception of the average citizen of the Gulf region. Iranian interventionist policy is a major concern in the region from Lebanon to Palestine to Iraq and possibly to Yemen."[15]

The other main trade-off occasioned by the choice of Bahrain as a research subject is at once practical and methodological. This is the consideration that, in choosing to study the ideal case of ethnic conflict in the Gulf, the case that offers the most to observe, our conclusions may be susceptible to selection bias; to the criticism that we have, for those versed in such language, selected on the dependent variable. Distinct from the first point above, this concern is not about the Bahraini case per se but about the lack of one or more additional country observations to which to compare it in a structured cross-national analysis. Undertaking the latter, one could better discern what of one's country-level outcomes are attributable to the independent variable of interest—ethnic conflict—and what to the peculiarities of the individual cases themselves. Absent this, some skeptic might say, one can draw through a single point whatever regression line he likes—that is, of a single case any interpretation is equally defensible.

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[12] Quoted in *ibid.*
[13] In "UAE/Lebanon: Allow Lebanese/Palestinian Deportees to Appeal," 2010, Human Rights Watch, July 19. Available at: <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2010/07/19/uaelebanon-allow-lebanesegazan-deportees-appeal>.
[14] Quoted in *ibid.*
[15] Quoted in James Drummond, 2010, "Sunni-led Arab states on alert over Shia Iran," *Financial Times*, *op cit.*

Of course one must agree with the general conclusion of such an argument: that a more perfect methodology would have seen the replication of my Bahrain study in one or all of the remaining Gulf countries, complete with respective nationally-representative surveys of Sunni and Shiʻi citizens. In this way, not only would we gain extra statistical leverage with which to test the individual-level relationship between ethnic group identification and political action and opinion, but we could make in addition a more robust test of our larger theory here linking country-level differences in Sunni-Shiʻi tension to overall regime stability in the Gulf. Yet in that case we would also have had to contend with a much-augmented set of practical challenges that in Bahrain alone were enough to prove nearly insurmountable. To be sure, the present dearth of such quantitative studies of the GCC nations is not for lack of demand.

That said, one might still make a more spirited rebuttal independent of practicality. In the first place, recall that we will in the penultimate chapter have occasion to undertake such a cross-country analysis when we consider the case of inter-ethnic relations in Iraq. While one might have hoped, as noted earlier, for a country and context more similar to that of Bahrain, we will not on this account excuse ourselves from trying to draw some comparative insights using this the only other extant data serviceable to our ends. Secondly and more importantly, however, one must remember what are these ends, what is the impetus behind our whole inquiry, which is to execute a proper test of the dominant understanding of political life in the Arab Gulf. As such, our assessment of the *rentier* state theory is not only concerned with what it concludes about Gulf regimes themselves—that, for example, they will tend to enjoy greater stability than their non-*rentier* Arab counterparts insofar as they can more easily satisfy their populations economically—but our inquiry is interested also, indeed more so, in examining the individual-level causal mechanisms said to operate in effect of such a relationship. If the former analysis is perhaps then limited temporarily by a lack of relevant data, yet there remains the latter, more fundamental question of the political behavior of Gulf Arabs, which if it is only this we will have gone far toward answering we should not anywise be disappointed.

Let us return, finally, to the practical challenges of conducting research in Bahrain alluded to earlier, which are far from trivial. Foremost among these is the government's extreme reluctance that political research of any sort be undertaken. In a context, then, where the mere number of Sunnis and Shiʻis in the populace is a veritable state secret, having been last measured officially (i.e., revealed publically) in the nation's very first census of 1941, investigation into Bahrain's ethnic relations is encouraged even less and one may say is barely tolerated. This was

never so evident as in my dealings with the Bahrain Center for Studies and Research (BCSR), a government institution that served for almost 30 years as a research clearinghouse for various ministries and, during my stay in Bahrain, as the sponsor of my Fulbright award. Dissolved less than a month after my departure under somewhat vague circumstances,[16] the BCSR had originally agreed to administer my Bahrain survey through its own political polling center, the latter having been erected with the help of several University of Michigan trainers sent to the country by a U.S. State Department grant. But after almost a year of meetings and edits of the survey instrument to remove "sensitive" questions—by the end there remained just 65 of the 110 or so standard Arab Barometer items—it became apparent that my fellowship funding would sooner be exhausted than the BCSR actually carry out the work. At the end of the day, I was told, the Center, a state institution, could not risk administering a survey the results of which may well damage or at least earn the displeasure of the government. We arrived, at length, at a compromise whereby the BCSR would continue to sponsor my residence visa while I would organize and execute the survey alone.

In the meantime, I received frequent, unsolicited e-mails and calls from altruistic persons offering to be of service in carrying out my study. One message arrived from the director of a non-existent "National Centre for Studies," another from a worker at a government-affiliated organization suggesting that if I would only send my survey data, he may be able to assist in "analyzing" them. When I thanked the latter for his offer, noting that as yet there were no data to analyze, he replied that in any event he had a "friend" Muḥammad who would be happy to work as a field interview for the project, providing a mobile number at which I might contact him. Then, when interviewing finally commenced some months later, I received a call to come that day to the local police station, where the area police chief wished to discuss my survey project. As I stepped into his office, I saw in front of him a photocopy of the full questionnaire, which he said he obtained from one of those interviewed, who had happened to work for the undercover political police (الأمن السياسي) and was apparently alarmed at some of the questions. Sensing a genuine interest on his part and hearing that he agreed there was strictly speaking nothing illegal about such a study, I asked if he might consent to fill out a

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[16] A June 15 article in *Al-Wasaṭ* reports that the BCSR was "liquidated" by virtue of Royal Decree No. 52 of 2009, its employees being "distributed among the ministries" and its building taken over by a "Center for Strategic and Energy Studies." See ["حل مركز البحرين للدراسات والبحوث وتوزيع الموظفين على الوزارات" "The Dissolution of the Bahrain Center for Studies and Research and Distribution of the Staff amongst the Ministries"], 2009, *Al-Wasaṭ*, June 15. Available (in Arabic) at: <http://www.alwasatnews.com/2839/news/read/434786/1.html>.

questionnaire himself that I could later retrieve, seeing that no one else from the Interior Ministry would agree to meet with me as part of the elite interview portion of my research. My calls the following week, however, would go unanswered.

If the Bahraini government is thus made nervous by such a sensitive investigation,[17] the ordinary Bahraini citizens who must form the basis of it are not less so. In light of my own experience, of course, one certainly cannot blame them; yet this pervasive mutual suspicion makes the task of conducting face-to-face interviews very difficult. Compounding matters is what Fearon and Laitin (2005, 8) refer to as the island's "metrocommunity scale," which they argue is a primary reason why Bahrain so far has averted ethnic civil war. Some sense of this may be related by a conversation I overheard in Sanaʿa airport between two Yemenis bound for Bahrain. One, distinguishable by his dress as a long-time resident, asked the other if this was his first time travelling to Bahrain. When the latter replied that yes, it was, the former nodded his head, saying, "I thought so. I haven't seen you there before," words that elicited a confused expression on the face of his interlocutor. "What do you mean you haven't seen me there before?" he replied. To this day I can hear the exact words of that Yemeni-Bahraini: "البحرين مثل القرية، كل واحد يعرف الثاني": "Bahrain is like the village: everyone knows the other." As one who probably remembered well from his childhood what it was like to live in a tiny, remote village, the Yemeni traveler immediately understood.

Beyond mere suspicion, then, Bahrain features a general lack of social anonymity to an extent not seen elsewhere in the Arab world, and this sometimes uncomfortably so when one finds oneself outside of a handful of ethnically-mixed, urban areas. For Bahrain, taken as a whole to be no more than a village by our Yemeni observer, in fact is home to several dozen even more isolated village enclaves settled exclusively by Sunnis or Shiʿis. Until 30 years ago this ethnic residential separation—which Holes (2005, 60) describes as an "almost apartheid-like system of voluntary segregation"—extended across the entire island, to urban and rural areas alike. Indeed, it is only for this extreme isolation that Holes has been able to complete a comparative study of the country's Sunni Arab and Baḥārnah dialects. On this he remarks,

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[17] It must be noted that the U.S. government as represented by its embassy seemed also to share this anxiety, not only about the political implications of the execution of such a project but about those too of its likely findings. At one point after the fallout with the BCSR, in fact, it was asked whether I should be altogether proscribed from administering the mass survey. While it was decided at last that the U.S. Embassy is not in the business of blessing or striking down the academic pursuits of its citizens, and though many there showed much-appreciated support for the project, when I finally left Bahrain I was asked with keen interest about when I anticipated the results to be made publically available.

One consequence of the separation of the two communities has been the preservation, over more than two centuries, and in an area no bigger than a medium-sized English county, of a major dialectical cleavage that pervades all levels of linguistic analysis: pronunciation, word structure and vocabulary. The historical origins of this split, as is usual in cases of major communal differentiation of this kind, are geographical.

For one aiming to conduct personal interviews across the whole of the island, the upshot of all this is that field interviewers are immediately identifiable as, first, Bahraini or non-Bahraini and, second, as Sunni or Baḥrānī and perhaps, depending on the respondent's knowledge of dialect and family names, even as a resident of a particular village or region. Moreover, this information may then be translated into a perhaps stereotypical but not unreliable overview of one's likely social and political affiliations (for Sunnis, e.g., tribal vs. non-tribal, *mujannas* vs. non-naturalized; for Shiʿis, Shirāzī (and so anti-Iranian) vs. *vilāyat-e faqīh*; pro-government vs. al-Wifāq supporter vs. al-Ḥaqq supporter). One called "al-Rumayḥī" will at once be supposed a government ally perhaps hailing from the village of al-Jaw, the traditional home of the Āl Rumayḥ. One whose accent betrays him to be a resident of al-Dirāz will be branded a follower of Sh. ʿĪsā Qāsim, born in the village, and thus most likely of al-Wifāq, and may meet with a cold reception in the neighboring Shiʿa villages off al-Budayyiʿ Road such as Banī Jamrā, which has its own revered cleric in the late ranking *marjaʿ* of Bahrain, Sh. ʿAbd al-Amīr al-Jamrī.

As if not already complicated enough by this claustrophobic social atmosphere, survey work in Bahrain must also contend with the physically claustrophobic villages themselves, which are both isolated and poorly served by roads, the latter often little more than paths cut through the sand and gravel. Those roads that are paved are so narrow that one is often stuck inside one's vehicle at length when, inevitably, some other vehicle appears traveling in the opposite direction, at which point one is forced to navigate the same narrow road in reverse for several hundred feet. Village driving is so difficult, in fact, and one is so easily recognized as an outsider, that employees of the U.S. Embassy are altogether banned from visiting. One official told me with pride how he had defied this order and driven through a village adjacent his housing compound in order to observe the colorful political graffiti he had heard about. A resident of the Shiʿi village Karrānah complained bitterly that the police themselves refuse to enter unless to make an arrest or to chase away teenagers burning tires. Even in the event of a simple car accident, he explained, exasperated, the police demand that villagers themselves drag the damaged vehicles to the main road for examination, so that any facts of the incident gained by observing the wreckage or through interviewing witnesses are necessarily lost. As

a result, many of the Shiʿa villages, though the capital and most ministry headquarters be but five miles away, have learned to operate to a startling degree independently of the state, referring disputes to local religious notables, aiding poorer residents through the local village charity (صندق خيري, literally "charitable [donation] box"), and undertaking infrastructure repairs and construction.[18] Being thus largely inter-dependent upon each other for most everything save for electricity and sanitation, it is understandable why they may not immediately welcome outsiders, not to mention ones asking probing political and religious questions.[19]

It is also easy to see how this isolation, this isolated frustration, may easily erupt in the form of protests, tire-burning, and other localized violence, a final and most severe impediment to field research in the Bahraini villages. The riot police, generally loathe to intervene in these so-called "terrorist acts" out of fear for their own safety, are content to assemble in dozens of armored SUVs along a village's main access road, effectively cordoning it from the outside. In times of substantial Shiʿa-government confrontation, then, such as was the situation after the post-ʿĀshūrāʾ arrests of ʿAbd al-Hādī al-Khawājah, Ḥasan al-Mushaimaʿ, and the more than 170 other political activists, mere entry and exit is made problematic for village residents, and any interviewing is out of the question. So it was that only four months later, after the royal mass pardon of April 2009, were we able to commence surveying in these areas, and even then there remained a small number of locations where, due to continuing tension or the unease of would-be field interviewers, we were unable to conduct interviews. Indeed, among these locations were the very home villages of several of the Shiʿi field interviewers, who nonetheless refused to work there for fear of being deemed by their neighbors government spies.

Fortunately, such difficulties were limited to the mass survey portion of my Bahrain research; the other half, structured interviews with political leaders representing the various

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[18] While now is not the time to elaborate this thought, we will return to it later in our mass survey analysis.

[19] If one wondered before at the decision to oversee the survey myself after the problems with the BCSR, rather than outsource the job to another local polling institute, perhaps the foregoing may serve as an explanation. As there is no private Bahraini alternative to the BCSR, the only other options would have been two foreign-based market research companies: the Pan Arab Research Center and the Market Research Organization, the latter employed, I was told, by the U.S. Embassy for its internal Bahrain-related polling. But after communicating with the heads of both organizations, which in any case were quite back-logged with consumer survey work, I concluded that each would be ill-suited for my needs: a majority of their field interviewers were foreigners; they could not be expected to be attentive to the political sensitivities and idiosyncrasies of the various regions of Bahrain, above all in the Shiʿa villages; and finally it seemed advantageous to have a personal relationship with those conducting the interviews, which would not only afford me more control over the interviewing process but would also allow me a window into the more intimate details of the interviews by hearing individual anecdotes and experiences in the field, such as have been related already. Finally, this hands-on approach meant that I could be certain of the quality of the survey's sampling frame, about which more will be said shortly.

factions of Bahraini society, was able to progress more smoothly. The only complexity here was making the acquaintance of some of these individuals, in particular those who belong to political societies with whom the U.S. Embassy deliberately maintains no ties. This includes, most notably, the two main Sunni political societies, whose ideological bases—Salafī Islam and the Muslim Brotherhood—evidently preclude such cooperation; as well as all the Shi'a groups and movements not named al-Wifāq, presumably on the consideration that they are technically illegal. Having attended many Embassy-sponsored social events and receptions, I was struck at length by the monotony bordering on perfunctoriness of the political guest lists, which were made to include invariably several (generally lower-ranking) Āl Khalīfa bureaucrats, a familiar set of technocrat MPs from al-Wifāq, a diverse group of former Marxists-turned-"liberals," and perhaps a few Sunni "independents." The far limit of this political diversity was the presence of one particular member of al-Aṣālah—"a moderate," I was assured. Never did I observe anyone affiliated with al-Manbar or with the non-parliamentary Shi'a opposition—"the Ḥaqqīs," as Embassy officials are fond of calling them.

All the same, I was able to meet a quite representative set of individuals spanning the length of Bahrain's political continuum. These included at the time of interview: two members of parliament from al-Manbar; three from al-Wifāq; one from al-Aṣālah; one Salafī independent; the head of the liberal-socialist party Wa'ad (not then represented in parliament); the head of the liberal Progressive Tribune Society (المنبر التقدّمي, neither represented); the founder of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights; a senior leader of al-Ḥaqq; and a famous Shi'a religious personality and founder of the then recently-formed New Movement, now called al-Wafā'.[20] Most of these individuals have been referenced already. I also attended the weekly *majālis* of several parliamentarians as well as those of prominent Sunni businessmen who, judging by their speech, guests, and choice of television programming (the dull but uncontroversial BahrainTV is a sure tell), were at least nominally pro-government if essentially seeking to appear apolitical.[21]

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[20] The only political current one might consider absent is the Shi'a Islamic Action Society (العمل الإسلامي) headed by Sh. Muḥammad 'Alī al-Maḥfūdh. The direct modern descendent of the Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain well-known for its failed coup attempt of 1981, the group adheres to the Shirāzī school of theology and as such is fundamentally at odds with al-Wifāq, competing with it over popular support. After boycotting the 2002 elections, however, its candidates failed to win any seats in 2006 and is therefore seen as a relative political non-player in the category of Wa'ad or the Progressive Tribune. Moreover, the al-Khawājahs being among the most prominent of the Shirāzī families, my interview with 'Abd al-Hādī perhaps served to compensate for this omission.

[21] This was less so of the business elite of Muḥarraq, the historical seat of Bahrain's government until its move to al-Rifā' on the main island in 1923. Bahrain's second-largest city and only city-governorate other than Manama, Muḥarraq is widely acknowledged as home to "the most politically-aware" citizens—that is, Sunni citizens—in the country, as said by one of its leading merchants. In practice this means that the natives of this traditionally Sunni

Given the liberal use of these interviews in service of the argument thus far, my purpose in conducting them may already be clear. That is, namely, to complement and corroborate the secondary source material to which one must unavoidably appeal in studying the ethnic conflict of Bahrain, which whether newspaper or website is equally one-sided, abridged, and often shrouded in euphemism. If the responses obtained in my interviews may be assumed of a similar quality—though one will likely agree from the quotations visited thus far that few from either side seem to mince words—then at least they have been obtained first-hand and, since all were asked the same questions, are readily comparable. International outreach being, however, an explicit strategy adopted by Bahrain's ethnic-based political societies in shaping the domestic debate against their respective rivals,[22] one imagines that these interviews were viewed by participants in a similar light, that is, as a chance to give a clear statement of one's political positions and ideology over against those of opposing groups.

Executing the First Mass Political Survey of Bahraini Citizens

Having thus outlined the main methodological and practical difficulties occasioned by the choice of Bahrain as a subject with which to test the thesis developed here, we move now to a more detailed overview of the mass survey itself, whose data will form the basis of this empirical analysis. Though I was present in Bahrain from April 2008 to June 2009, active surveying could begin only in January 2009, following the aforementioned compromise with the BCSR, and lasted until early June. This somewhat elongated five-month timespan was a direct result of the post-ʿĀshūrāʾ disturbances discussed previously, the political situation calming only in late April. Even then, many of the more embattled Shiʿa villages would for some time remain unsuitable for interviewing. On this account we were forced to begin surveying in ethnically-mixed or Sunni-dominated areas first and expand to the rural Shiʿa districts as they became accessible. As a rule, Shiʿi fieldworkers conducted interviews in Shiʿa-dominated areas, and likewise Sunni interviewers were sent to Sunni areas, though in urban centers like Manama, Madīnat Ḥamad, Madīnat ʿĪsā, and parts of Muḥarraq, inter-ethnic interviews were inevitable. In the end, however, this was a fortunate development in that it embedded into the survey a natural experiment: one that revealed the effect on respondents of being interviewed by a member of the rival group rather than by a co-ethnic, which as we shall see is not trivial.

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stronghold are less shy than their counterparts on the main island in voicing criticism of the government and of the Āl Khalīfa, particularly on the issues of naturalization and economic management and policy.

[22] This is especially true of the Shiʿa groups, both registered and unregistered. Cf. Cʜ. 3, 75, note 46.

FIGURE 4.1. *Histogram of Sample Block Numbers*
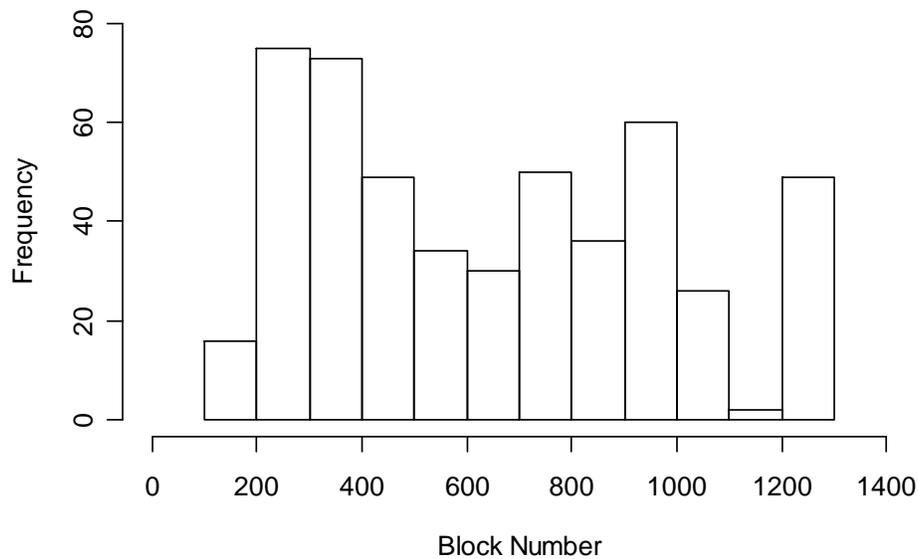
The one contribution of the BCSR to the execution of my survey, though an enormous one to be sure, was its provision of a random sample of 500 Bahraini households that it received directly from the Central Informatics Organization, which administers the nation's census and maintains this and other electronic population databases. Since Bahraini zip codes ("block numbers") correspond numerically to one of twelve geographical zones, I was able to confirm before commencing surveying that the sample was in fact reflective of Bahrain's general population distribution.[23] Indeed, it even included two addresses in the remote Ḥawār Islands, a disputed archipelago used by Bahrain as a military outpost but claimed by Qatar and situated just a few miles off its western coast. Above is a histogram showing the sample divided geographically. From this one can easily judge the representativeness of the sample by comparing the frequency of specific block numbers to the known populations of the districts to which they correspond.[24] The 100 and 200 blocks, for example, comprise the

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[23] Beyond this, the fact that the sample was destined originally for use in one of the BCSR's own, state-sponsored national surveys before being passed to me makes it very unlikely that it would have been doctored or truncated.

[24] Block numbers beginning with 100 correspond to the area of al-Ḥidd; the 200s to Muḥarraq; 300s to Manama and the island of Nabīh Ṣāliḥ; 400s to Jidd Ḥafṣ and several Shiʿa villages; 500s to the "Northern Region" dominated by Shiʿa villages; 600s to the Shiʿa stronghold of Sitra; 700s to a Shiʿa "Central Region"; 800s to Madīnat ʿĪsā (Isa Town); 900s to Āl Khalīfa tribal ally-dominated al-Rifāʿ, where Shiʿa are said to be barred from owning property, and the sparsely-populated, militarized southern two-thirds of the island; 1000s to a "Western Region" inhabited only in a few coastal villages; the 1100s to the Ḥawār Islands; and the 1200s to the ethnically-mixed Madīnat Ḥamad (Hamad Town), the country's newest urban development and home to many naturalized Sunnis. See FIGURE 4.2.

FIGURE 4.2. *Scale Map of the Five Governorates of Bahrain, with Block Numbers*

Governorate of Muḥarraq, whose citizen population was officially reported in 2007 as being 94,558, or about 17.9% of Bahrain's total 527,433.[25] A much more recent figure based on the number of voters registered for the 2010 parliamentary elections puts this proportion at 57,233 of a total 318,668, or 18.0%.[26] Computing the proportion of 100 and 200 blocks to the entire sample, then, we see that Muḥarraq households comprise 92 of the 500 total, or exactly 18.4%. When we repeat these calculations for the remaining four governorates we find that the rest of the sample contains 83 or 16.6% Capital Governorate households, 145 or 29.0% in the Central Governorate, 150 or 30.0% in the Northern, and 30 or 6.0% in the Southern. By comparison, the respective 2007 census figures are: 13.3%, 29.7%, 33.1%, and 5.9%.

More than just geographically representative in the aggregate, moreover, the BCSR sample includes, amazingly, at least one respondent from each Bahraini village, district, and city. There are indeed few areas of Bahrain signified by a proper name that are not represented in the sample. Lastly, while this 500-household sample is smaller in *magnitude* than those employed elsewhere—for example, in the other Arab Barometer surveys—yet because of Bahrain's miniscule population the *proportion* of citizens that were interviewed is easily the highest of any mass political survey administered to date in the Arab world, at 1 interview per 1,055 citizens, using the 2007 census population figure. The next highest ratio, achieved in the 750-household Arab Barometer survey of Kuwait, is 1 to 1,868.[27]

As mentioned previously, however, we were unfortunately unable to complete all of these 500 interviews on account of the ongoing political and social turmoil that lingered even after the mass pardons of late April 2009 meant to ameliorate it. Of the full sample, therefore, 87% was completed, or 435 interviews. The unfinished areas are dominated by the crowded, urban neighborhoods of Manama (19 interviews unfinished) and Muḥarraq (14); and the remainder are spread across isolated Shiʿa villages and suburbs and adjacent Sunni enclaves. These two types of areas proved particularly challenging in that field interviewers who were unfamiliar with the neighborhoods, especially females, were loath to go there as one is forced

[25] "Population of the Kingdom of Bahrain by Governorate, Nationality & Sex - July 2007," 2007, Bahrain Central Informatics Organization. Available at: <http://www.cio.gov.bh/cio_eng/SubDetailed.aspx?subcatid=295>.
[26] "المعاودة: 318668 مجموع الكتلة الانتخابية للعام 2010" ["al-Maʿāwdah: 318,668 is the Total Electoral Bloc for 2010"], 2010, *Al-Wasaṭ*, September 9. Available (in Arabic) at: <http://www.alwasatnews.com/elections/page/473874.html>. Though the pro-Shiʿa newspaper *Al-Wasaṭ* contradicts this official government count, its own estimate of 19.0% (60,906 of 321,000) is not so different. See "سادسة الجنوبية الأقل بــ770 ناخباً وأولى الشمالية الأكبر بــ16223" ["The Southern Sixth [District] is the Smallest with 770 Electors and the Northern First is the Biggest with 16,223"], 2010, *Al-Wasaṭ*, August 25. Available (in Arabic) at: <http://www.alwasatnews.com/elections/page/471405.html>.
[27] Using the July 2010 CIA *World Factbook* estimate of Kuwait's citizen population, which is 1,401,172. Available at: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ku.html>.

to wander through foreign territory from the nearest road large enough to fit a car; while those who did know the areas were equally unwilling to conduct interviews there for fear of gaining a reputation as a spy. If thus not excluded in as random a fashion as one would have preferred, these blocks at least are spread rather equally between Sunni- and Shiʿa-populated districts,[28] and even in these problem locations we often salvaged one or two interviews if households happened to be located in a less isolated position. One direct upshot of this difficulty, however, was the underrepresentation of Shiʿi females, which form only 29% of the Shiʿa sub-sample.

Finally, the survey instrument itself is the standard Arab Barometer questionnaire with only slight textual adjustments to fit the Bahraini context. The only substantive change was the inclusion of two open-ended questions at the very end of the interview. The final, 16-page questionnaire contains 106 separate instruments inclusive of demographic details, and requires approximately 30 to 45 minutes to administer. The sample containing the exact address (house number, street number, block number) of the households to visit, these were located using the now-defunct BahrainExplorer website, a searchable GIS map of the island maintained then by one of the BCSR's commercial subsidiaries, GEOMATEC.[29] This resource proved invaluable in directing field interviewers along Bahrain's labyrinthine and ill-marked roads to find equally ill-marked houses; without it, indeed, our exceptional sample would have been rendered of little use. Yet despite this aide an overall response rate of about two-thirds, even lower in predominantly Sunni areas, betrays the general ambivalence of ordinary Bahrainis to such a seemingly strange project, which at best could do them no benefit and at worst may be no more than a ploy to discover non-allegiant subjects.[30] In case of refusal or non-response,

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[28] Although the large representation of the urban Manama and Muḥarraq neighborhoods, which together account for nearly half of the uncompleted interviews, perhaps implies a slight disproportionate omission of Sunnis. For the interested reader, the un- and under-represented areas correspond to the following names and block numbers: 209 (Muḥarraq Town); 213-214 (Muḥarraq Sūq); 216 (South Muḥarraq); 301 (Manama Sūq); 306 (Raʾas Rumān); 314 (al-Nuʿaym); 318 (al-Ḥūrah); 321 (al-Guḍaybiyyah Sūq); 408 (Sanābis); 419 (Jidd Ḥafṣ); 430 and 434 (Karbābād); 433 (Jablat Ḥibshī); 436 (Seef); 526 (Barbār); 542 (al-Dirāz); 551 (al-Gharbiyyah); 555 (al-Budayyiʿ); 561 (al-Janabiyyah); 623-624 (East and West ʿAkar); 633 (Maʿāmīr); 644 (al-Nuwaidrāt); 721 (Jidd ʿAlī); 1010 and 1014 (al-Ḥamalah); and 1101 and 1103 (al-Ḥawār Islands). See Figure 4.3.

[29] The site previously existed at www.bahrainexplorer.com/bex. The BCSR's parent organization, the Central Informatics Organization, now seems to offer a similar interactive GIS map at www.bahrainlocator.gov.bh. Further information about GEOMATEC, which also produced the maps used to make Figures 4.2 through 4.5, is still available at: <http://www.bcsr.gov.bh/BCSR/En/geomatec.aspx>.

[30] It was clear that on the whole Bahrain's Shiʿa saw more to gain from participation in the survey than did Sunnis, many of whom viewed the entire project with suspicion and as an elaborate, covert test of their national loyalty. One might easily have expected the opposite, that in general the Shiʿa would have shown more distrust toward would-be field interviewers given the prevailing political climate. Though some certainly did, and asked the latter if they were sure that the information would not be passed on to the government, even more Shiʿi respondents asked whether the results of the survey would actually make any difference—that is, improve the lot of the Shiʿa

fieldworkers moved three doors to the left of the designated house, while obliging respondents (18 years and older) were selected, as in the other Arab Barometer surveys, using a Kish Table.

**An Initial Look at Bahrain's Ethnic Geography**

The last time the Government of Bahrain reported official demographic statistics on its Sunni and Shi'i communities was in its very first census in 1941, which put the percentage of Shi'a citizens at 53% of the population.[31] In the intervening 70 years, speculation about Bahrain's evolving Sunni-Shi'i balance has become both a local flash-point and a source of frustration for those attempting to study the country. This ambiguity has been complicated only further by the government's decade-long program of naturalizing Arab and non-Arab Sunnis for work in the police and military. Because Bahrain's Sunni-Shi'i balance is not simply a product of nature, in other words, there is no obvious way to estimate it based on, for example, natural birth or immigration rates. As a result, a wide range of disparate estimates put Bahraini Shi'a variously at between 60% and 75% of the current citizen population. If one would trust our direct sampling, however, such educated guesses are considerable overestimates. For Shi'i respondents comprised slightly less than 58% of those surveyed, a finding that would seem to call attention to the pace and scope of Bahrain's program of Sunni naturalization.

The results of surveying are depicted visually in FIGURE 4.3, which more fully reveals the representativeness of the 500-household sample. Here, blocks with at least one completed interview are highlighted; those not included in the sample are not highlighted; and the few cases in which a block was included in the sample but we failed to complete an interview there are shaded in gray. The latter, plainly, are well-distributed geographically. Given the quality of the sample, moreover, this FIGURE 4.3 may serve also as a basic demographic map of the country, illustrating well the overall population patterns across the island. None of these is more striking than the barrenness of the southern two-thirds of the island, which apart from the lower half of al-Rifā'; the ex-patriot enclaves of 'Awālī (945-946) and Rifā' Views (943); a few sprawling royal palace complexes; and the Sunni seaside villages of al-Zallāq (1056-57), 'Askar (950), al-Jaw (960), and al-Dūr (965), the land is uninhabited except by military personnel and foreign laborers housed in compounds spread across the desert landscape. The 13 artificial

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or of this or that village—and on the rare occasions when I was forced to accompany field interviewers to the villages to help prove that s/he was not a government agent, I was almost always implored to see that their contribution be used to somehow "improve the situation."

[31] Qubain (1955) tells that the census was taken "primarily for food control purposes."

FIGURE 4.3. *Map of Survey Interview Locations, Highlighted*

□ Muḥarraq
□ Capital
□ Central
□ Northern
□ Southern

□ Not in Sample
□ Completed
□ Not Completed
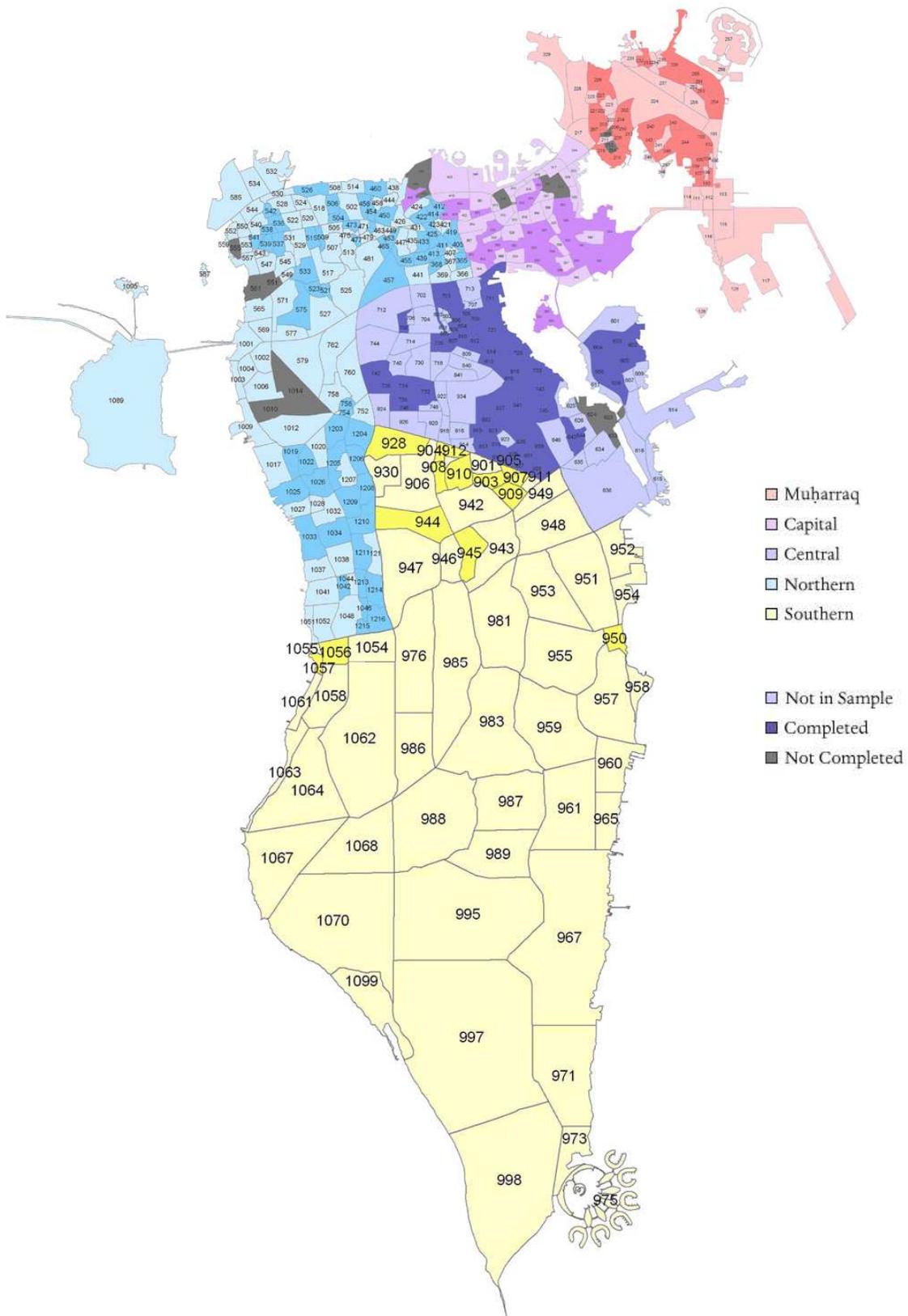
islands comprising the ex-patriot oasis of Durrat al-Bahrain (975) at the southeastern tip of the country remain unfinished and in any case are unlikely to house many Bahraini nationals.

Likewise, the large swaths of un-surveyed blocks in the north of the island largely correspond to reclaimed or uncultivated land as well as commercial and industrial areas. On the island of Muḥarraq, for example, the large, central space corresponds to Bahrain Airport, while the southeastern peninsula is in fact a network of dry-docks and warehouses known as the al-Ḥidd Industrial Area. The manmade Amwāj Islands off the northeast coast of Muḥarraq form yet another posh ex-patriot community, while its western coast is reclaimed or in any case undeveloped land, though the neighborhood of al-Busaytīn is fast encroaching in that direction. Depicted in the map as land, the un-highlighted border area connecting Muḥarraq to Manama is in fact two separate bridges. This unpopulated area stretches southward along the eastern shore of Manama, where one finds numerous spas, a large district of hotels, embassies, and government buildings known as the Diplomatic Area, the National Museum, an extensive public park, a marina, the National Library, and finally the gigantic Al-Fātiḥ Mosque. Nearby in Shiʿa-dominated Juffair sits the U.S. naval base. So too are there no private residences along the entire northern coast of the Capital Governorate, this whole region formed of reclaimed seabed and comprised, from east to west, of a 3 kilometer-long, still-unfinished Financial Harbor, some half-dozen shopping malls and supermarkets, a massive Ritz-Carlton Hotel with its own artificial harbor and beaches, and the centuries-old Bahrain Fort.

West of here in the Northern Governorate settlements follow the Budayyiʿ Highway, which straddles a dozen or so rural Shiʿa villages before terminating in the Sunni enclave of al-Budayyiʿ situated on the far northwest coast of Bahrain (blocks 552, 555, and 559). Several large, reclaimed islands being constructed to the direct north (585, 534, 532) are uninhabited, and much of the area surrounding al-Budayyiʿ proper (e.g., 544, 540) consists of expansive, privately-owned gardens. South of al-Budayyiʿ the coastline is dotted with spectacular mansions and resorts, interrupted only by the King Fahd Causeway to Saudi Arabia. The large islands connected by the causeway, Umm al-Naʿsān (1089) and Jiddah (1095), are privately-owned by Bahrain's king and prime minister, respectively. South of the causeway entrance the seaside compounds continue all the way to al-Zallāq in the Southern Governorate, interrupted, as far as I saw, by a single public beach. Caught between these private coastal plots and the extended western border of newly-constructed Hamad Town (the 1200s) are the rural Shiʿa villages of Dumistān, Karzakān, al-Mālikiyyah, Ṣadad, Shahrakān, and Dār Kulayb, among the poorest

places in Bahrain and not infrequently the sites of violent confrontation with the government. The extreme discrepancy in the apportionment of land in this western coastal region helps fuel one of Bahrain's most explosive political issues, one that unites Sunni and Shiʿi alike against the perceived excess of the Āl Khalīfa and their traditional family allies, who appear inexplicably well-endowed of premium property while ordinary citizens are suffered to make the best of the remainder—if, that is, one is lucky enough to own property at all.

The Central Governorate, finally, exhibits a similar pattern of segregated population centers. Here, though, the eastern coastline is dedicated primarily to industrial and naval use: the un-highlighted northern portion of the Sitra peninsula is a warehouse zone; the south and east regions are used by the Bahrain Petroleum Company (BAPCO) and other petro-chemical companies for refinement, storage, and distribution. Directly south of the BAPCO complex is an equally-large Aluminum Bahrain (ALBA) installation, which uses the adjacent coast for its own smelting operations. The only notable non-industrial users of this shoreline are the unfortunately-located al-Bandar Resort and neighboring Bahrain Yacht Club. The interior portion of the peninsula is divided between a half-dozen Shiʿa villages, whose residents complain bitterly of the transformation of their landscape once known for its verdure and natural springs. One villager told how two local children had recently drowned when the beach they used for swimming was unknowingly dredged for sand, creating a precipitous drop but a few feet from shore. When asked what had been done to remove the danger, he pointed to a tattered fence bearing a "Keep Out" sign erected, he said, by the responsible company. Owing perhaps to such circumstances, and to their geographical isolation, the Shiʿa of Sitra are commonly held to be the most "extreme" in their anti-government views and xenophobia, and I was met more than once with surprise and horror upon mentioning that I would travel there to assist in surveying. Also considered part of larger Sitra are the three Shiʿa villages of al-ʿAkar, Maʿāmīr, and al-Nuwaidrāt, which straddle the highway that runs through the peninsula after it reaches the mainland. The other mainland Central Governorate population is concentrated around several centers: the Shiʿa villages of Aʿālī (the 730s) and Salmabād (706, 708) to the far west and northwest; the large, ethnically-mixed Isa Town, whose suburbs span the length of the eastern interior coast; and the northern portion of al-Rifāʿ, separated from Isa Town and the mainland Sitra villages by the six-lane Istiqlāl Highway. In the remaining western third of the Central Governorate, in the lands surrounding Aʿālī, are found the Dilmūn Burial Mounds, a necropolis consisting of some 100,000 above-ground tombs believed to date to the fourth

millennium BC. Bifurcated unceremoniously by the Sh. Khalīfa bin Salmān Highway that divides the Northern and Central Governorates, these mounds also account for the large region of un-surveyed blocks situated north of Hamad Town in the Northern Governorate.
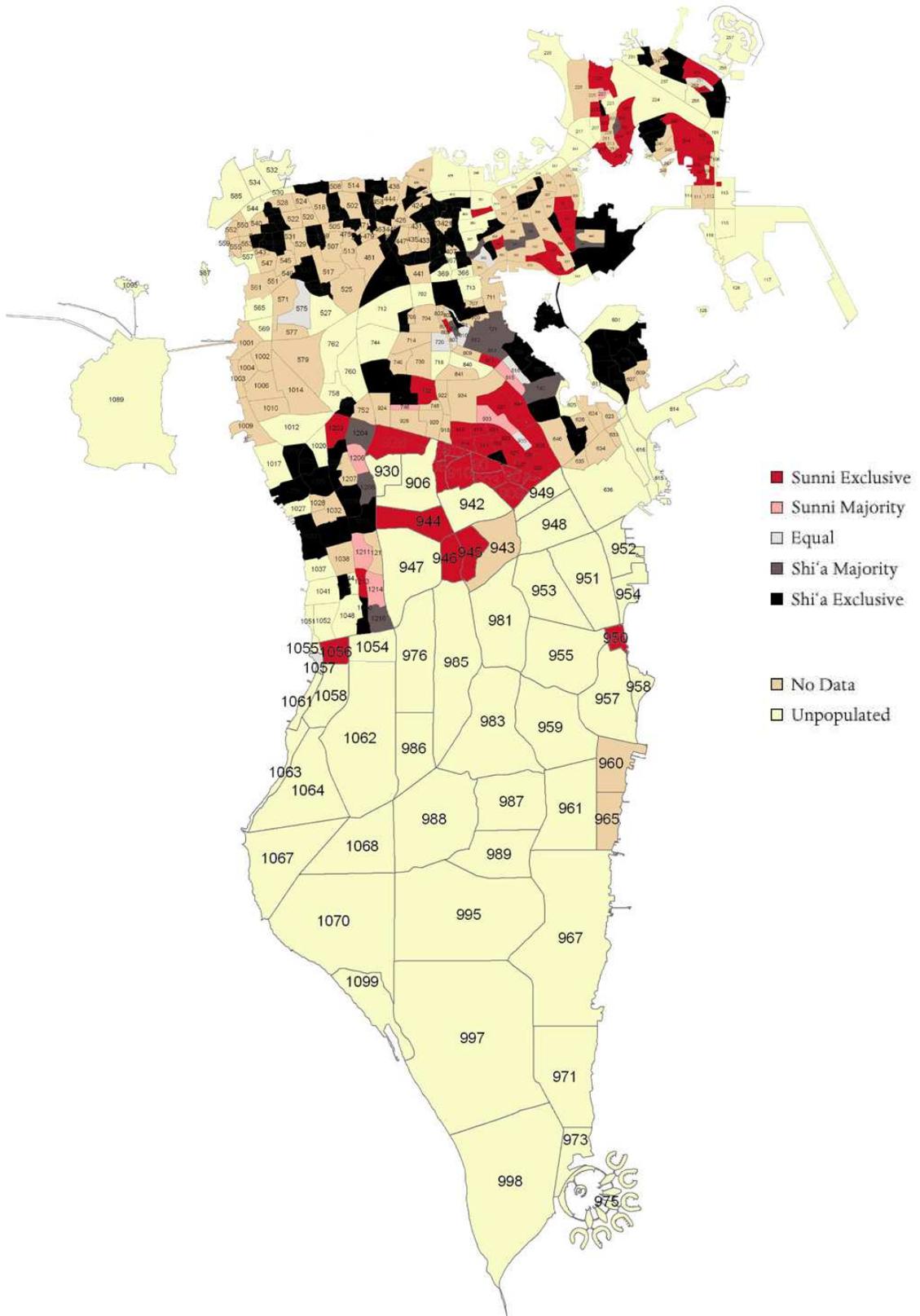
All these demographic peculiarities are summarized in FIGURE 4.4 below, which shows the ethnic composition of the areas surveyed at the level of block number. For those blocks where no surveying occurred, it is indicated whether this is for lack of data or for lack of a Bahraini population outright. Those blocks nominally populated by Bahrainis—say, the personal islands of the king and prime minister, the palace compounds around al-Rifāʿ, or the large, block-sized private compounds of the eastern shore—that in reality have no chance of appearing in the sample, are marked for our purposes as "unpopulated." If the picture that emerges from this color-coding be common enough knowledge to the average Bahraini, still I am aware of no one who has yet put it to paper, this diagram being to my knowledge the first ethnic demographic map of the country. In fact, of the two demographic maps of any sort I can find of Bahrain, both of which show only rough population density, one is published by the CIA and is based on the 1981 census,[32] the other proprietary and its source unspecified.[33] While one might have hoped to have visited more of the "no data" blocks in order to paint a more complete portrait, this ethnic map is a byproduct of the Bahrain survey rather than the goal of it. In any case, moreover, the population of many of these blocks, if not zero, yet is so sparse as to require a sample that is orders of magnitude larger than the 500 households we surveyed in order for them to appear at random. And since the government population data are reported only at the regional (pre-2002) or governorate level of aggregation for fear of giving any further ammunition to the many who decry its blatant ethnic gerrymandering of the 40 electoral districts (cf. CH. 3, 61), we are unlikely to soon have recourse to such a sample.

What we can do alternatively, however, is utilize this assumption of gerrymandered electoral districts to our advantage, as a basis upon which to construct an alternative ethnic demographic map that might at once confirm and expand upon our patchwork FIGURE 4.4. This effort is represented below in FIGURE 4.5, which assumes the ethnic composition of a given block according to the electoral district to which it belongs. Those districts carried by al-Wifāq are assumed to have a Shiʿa majority; conversely, those won by anyone else—i.e.,

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[32] "Bahrain – Population Density," 1993, *Atlas of the Middle East*, U.S. Central Intelligence Agency. Available at: <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/atlas_middle_east/bahrain_pop.jpg>.
[33] "Population Density Map of Bahrain," 2007, *Best Country Reports*, The World Trade Press. Available at: <http://www.bestcountryreports.com/Population_Map_Bahrain.html>.

FIGURE 4.4. *Map of Respondent Blocks, by Ethnicity*

Legend:
- Sunni Exclusive
- Sunni Majority
- Equal
- Shi'a Majority
- Shi'a Exclusive

- No Data
- Unpopulated

FIGURE 4.5. *Map of Bahraini Electoral Districts, by 2010 Winner*

■ Al-Wifāq

■ Other

□ Not part of a district

by Sunni Islamic candidates and pro-government "independents"—are assumed to be Sunni-majority.[34] Comparing Figures 4.4 and 4.5 we easily notice an astonishing coordination in the ethnic composition of the blocks, even in the most heavily-integrated areas of Isa Town and Hamad Town. This simplified map is not perfect of course, under-representing the Shiʿa presence in Muḥarraq and the Sunni presence in south Hamad Town and western Manama. Yet it does offer a useful estimate of what our ethnic map may have looked like had we been able to interview, say, 10,000 households, to say nothing of its rather shocking confirmation of systematic ethnic gerrymandering and disproportionate inclusion among the Sunni-majority districts of large swaths of unpopulated territory.[35] (Indeed, when we do the math, we find that the mean Shiʿi district represented 9,533 electors in 2010, the average Sunni district 6,196.[36])

A Portent of Division to Come

More notable for our purposes, however, is what Figure 4.4 says about ethnic segregation in Bahrain, which, if it perhaps no longer exactly fits Holes' description of "apartheid-like," remains glaring nonetheless. Of the 187 total block numbers visited in our survey, 119 or 64% are represented by more than one interviewee. Of these, only 30 or 25% were not exclusive either to Sunnis or Shiʿis, and of these mixed blocks a combined one-half were located either in Isa Town (11) or Hamad Town (6). Away from these two urban developments, we found just 13

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[34] These results come from the most recent 2010 parliamentary elections, in which al-Wifāq gained one seat (in a central Manama district) to increase its total to 18. Using the 2006 election results would not have substantially altered the contours of Figure 4.5, therefore. For the 2010 results, see "Bahrain's first round parliamentary election results," 2010, *Gulf News*, October 24. Available at: <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/bahrain/bahrain-s-first-round-parliamentary-election-results-1.701190>.

[35] It is a clear testament to the shrewdness of the Bahraini public relations department that the district won in 2006 and 2010 (both times unopposed) by the celebrated "first woman MP in the Gulf"—the Southern 6th—consists of the unpopulated Ḥawār Islands along with mainland blocks 998, 997, 973, 971, 967, and 965, of which only the last is home to any considerable population, and which in total accounted for just 770 registered voters in the 2010 election. See "سادسة الجنوبية الأقل بـ770 ناخباً وأولى الشمالية الأكبر بـ16223" ["The Southern Sixth [District] is the Smallest with 770 Electors and the Northern First is the Biggest with 16,223"], 2010, *Al-Wasaṭ, op cit*. For this, as for the country's 2008 appointment to the United States of the first female, Jewish ambassador of an Arab nation from among its 36-strong Jewish community—as explained by the head of the Bahrain Human Rights Society, "We always believe here that control of America is governed by the Zionist lobby. The media and the money are all in the hands of the Jews. We believe if we have a Jewish ambassador and Jews in the Shura Council, this is a positive indicator for the country"—one is impressed at the scale of its political maneuvering. See Michael Slackman, 2009, "In a Landscape of Tension, Bahrain Embraces Its Jews. All 36 of Them," *New York Times*, April 5. Available at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/06/world/middleeast/06bahrain.html>.

[36] By governorate, these voter averages are: 5,146 Shiʿi to 3,294 Sunni in the Capital; 7,182 to 7,675 in Muḥarraq; 13,107 to 7,631 in the Northern; 12,699 to 9,470 in the Central; and the average Southern Governorate district, all six of which were easily carried by Sunni MPs, contained a meager 2,913 electors in 2010.

other ethnically-mixed blocks across the remainder of the island, amounting to 11% of the 119 multiple-respondent districts. And even these proportions are likely far too conservative, as included among the 68 single-respondent blocks are doubtless many more Sunni- and Shiʻi-exclusive areas. No less than 15 of these 68, for example, correspond to Shiʻa villages in Sitra and along al-Budayyiʻ Road, where one would be surprised to find even a single Sunni. While thus ameliorated somewhat by the construction of new urban housing settlements like Madīnat ʻĪsā and the yet-expanding Madīnat Ḥamad, Bahrain's systematic ethnic self-segregation[37] shows little indication of having eased qualitatively almost since the time of the Āl Khalīfa conquest.

How far this geographical polarization reflects an underlying ethnic-based political divide among respondents, and to what extent the latter supersedes purely economic concerns in shaping the political opinions and actions of ordinary Bahrainis, of our ostensibly-quiescent Gulf *rentier* citizens, we are finally prepared to learn. This we are following the practical and methodological preface to my 2009 Bahrain mass survey, the latter portion addressing the two major questions likely to be raised about the present study. The first is whether the choice of Bahrain as a subject perhaps limits the wider applicability of any potential findings owing to the country's unique historical and socio-political circumstances; that is to say, whether the case of Bahrain perhaps lacks external validity in a way that renders the present inquiry one fundamentally about the ethnic politics of Bahrain, rather than one about the efficacy of the *rentier* state framework in the Arab Gulf. To this objection our response was three-fold: in the first place, we said, there exists some quantitative evidence in support of a general link between ethnic conflict and regime stability among the six GCC states, with the three more homogeneous states—the Emirates, Qatar, and Oman—fairing demonstrably better in the Failed States Index of regime stability than their more ethno-religiously diverse counterparts.[38] Moreover, we continued, since a common cause of Sunni-Shiʻi tension in the Gulf region is the perceived belligerence and deleterious influence of Iran, a disconcerting force acting upon all the area's regimes equally in proportion to the size of their domestic Shiʻa populations, then there exists a compelling theoretical argument to explain why the case of Bahrain should be

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[37] Though, again, many Shiʻa would say they are barred from owning property in al-Rifāʻ and parts of Muḥarraq.
[38] If one should wonder, this is not a mere artifact of the 2009 index. The same intra-GCC division exists in the 2007 iteration as well, which is the only other sample that includes all six Gulf states (previous editions were limited to failed and failing states). The 2007 totals are: Saudi Arabia (76.5), Kuwait (62.1), Bahrain (57.0), Qatar (53.6), UAE (51.6), and Oman (45.5). See "Failed States Index Scores 2007," 2007, The Fund for Peace. Available at: <http://www.fundforpeace.org/web/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=229&Itemid=366>.

generalizable in degrees to the wider Gulf. Finally, we noted, there is the present and recent state of inter-ethnic, and relatedly Shiʿa-government, relations in the Gulf, which even before the 2003 ethnic reconfiguration of Iraq gave birth to political oppositions in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Bahrain, and with them, as Okruhlik concludes as early as 1999, "a discrepancy between the expectations derived from the rentier framework and empirical reality."

The second main methodological objection we preemptively addressed concerned the lack of additional country observations to which to compare our Bahraini case in a more rigorous cross-country analysis. On this point we were obliged to make more of a concession, agreeing that it would indeed have been preferable to have replicated the Bahrain study in one or all of the remaining Gulf nations, the more ethnically-homogenous countries being particularly attractive targets from a theoretical standpoint. Yet, we said, such an expansion would have further burdened a project that as it was often seemed destined for failure even in Bahrain, whose small size, high share of citizens, and relatively free academic environment make it without doubt the most favorable to such a study of any of the Gulf countries. The many practical difficulties plaguing the execution of the mass survey we need not revisit; it is enough to mention a lack of social anonymity and trust, physical and social isolation of ethnic enclaves, and persistent citizen-government confrontation.

But even beyond such practical considerations, we argued further, there is reason for sanguinity as regards our Bahrain inquiry: for the larger purpose of understanding the role of ethnic division in influencing the political stability of *rentier* or Gulf *rentier* nations, if perhaps complicated at present by a lack of requisite data, does not sabotage the entire undertaking if not realized fully. This is because the more fundamental question remains in any case answerable, and answerable for the first time only, which is whether the individual-level causal story of the *rentier* framework, these theoretical assumptions about what motivates the political behavior of ordinary *rentier* citizens like those of the Arab Gulf, finds substantiation in the actions and opinions of actual Gulf Arabs. Besides, we noted, we will in the penultimate chapter offer a provisional cross-country analysis of the *rentier* political effects of ethnic conflict by utilizing the only other applicable mass survey data from the greater Gulf region, which come from two surveys of Iraq administered in 2004 and again in 2006. We proceed now in this direction.

Notes for Chapter 4

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