

# **Brexit and Bahrain: what does Brexit mean for the United Kingdom's (UK's) foreign policy towards Bahrain?**

## Executive summary

The matter of Brexit and its impact on the UK's policy towards Bahrain is an interesting one for a series of reasons: first, the UK is undergoing a major political upheaval; second, Brexit holds particular implications for British foreign policy; third, Bahrain is an interesting case study because of the closeness of its relationship with the UK and its location in a region of specific interest to the UK; and fourthly, it is rather unclear what the future of Bahrain will be due in part to its government's actions.

This report sets out the United Kingdom's (UK's) interests in Bahrain before then outlining how these interests are likely to be affected by Brexit:

- Trade – the UK has a relatively limited amount of trade with Bahrain indicating that trade considerations are not a determining factor;
- Energy – to an extent all Western European countries have a significant interest in oil in the Middle East meaning this is an interest for the UK regarding Bahrain;
- Security and military – Bahrain is a key ally of the United States (US) therefore meaning the US has an interest in ensuring Bahrain is stable, given the closeness of the UK and the US this means the UK also has such an interest;
- Geopolitics – Bahrain has a huge level of geopolitical importance for the UK indicating that geopolitical interests play a role in UK policy making;
- Democracy promotion – whilst the UK does have an interest in the promotion of democracy and human rights in Bahrain the government does not seem to take this view indicating that such considerations do not have a large influence on UK policy making.

The various possible permutations of Brexit and their possible consequences are as follows.

- No deal – if there is a no deal situation and if (as expected) it has a significant degree of economic consequences then the UK will become much less focused on issues relating to human rights and democracy in Bahrain.
- Deal – if a deal is reached that maintains close cooperation between the UK and the EU on foreign policy then the UK's position on human rights and democracy and Bahrain will presumably not change. If a deal is reached that does not maintain close cooperation then the UK position may change, most likely to one more aligned with the US and as such less focused on promoting human rights and democracy in Bahrain.

Impact of Brexit on the UK's interests:

- Trade – should the UK be responsible for its own trade policy post Brexit then trade will increase its influence on the decision making of the UK government. Should the UK not be responsible for its own trade policy post Brexit then this will not happen;
- Energy – it is possible (though not clear how possible) that the EU will move towards decarbonisation (and therefore be less influenced by energy concerns) the UK will not. If this happens the UK will continue to be influenced by energy concerns;
- Security and military – The EU has little foreign policy competencies meaning the consequences of Brexit on the UK's security and military concerns will be minimal;
- Geopolitics – as stated above the EU has little foreign policy competencies meaning the consequences of Brexit on the UK's geopolitical concerns will be minimal;
- Democracy promotion – the aims of the UK's post Brexit foreign policy are that the UK will be assertive in promoting its interests (such as human rights and democracy) abroad. Given this

the UK will presumably not decrease its support for democracy in countries such as Bahrain post Brexit.

Future British – Bahraini relations there is evidence that indicates that post Brexit the UK could become less inclined to express concern about human rights in Bahrain but that it could also become more inclined to do so (a brief summary of these arguments are given below). This report finds that on balance Brexit will likely decrease the UK's inclination to express concern about Human Rights in Bahrain.

Less inclined to express concern:

- Countries do not normally take significant action against ex-colonies (such as Bahrain in the UK's case);
- The UK is in a very vulnerable position regarding its trading relationships post Brexit and therefore will likely be forced to focus on trade deals not expressing concern about human rights and democracy;
- The UK government does not want Bahrain to become a democracy and therefore will not exert pressure to try and make Bahrain democratic.

Whilst there arguments that indicate that the UK may be more likely to express concern about human rights and democracy post Brexit this report finds that these reports are dependent on factors such as: political considerations (which may not materialise or if they do may be ineffective); the government not choosing to selectively apply its commitments and concerns regarding democracy and human rights; and individual (potentially opposition) MPs being able to have a meaningful influence over the government. This report therefore concludes that Brexit will likely lead to a change in the UK's foreign policy to Bahrain; this change will probably take the form of the UK decreasing its focus on human rights and democracy promotion in Bahrain.

However, it should be noted that whilst the above does seem rather negative there are indications that the situation may be more positive than it seems. This is because there are also arguments indicating that the UK will be more inclined to express concern about matters relating to human rights and democracy abroad post Brexit. A brief summary of these arguments is given below.

More inclined to express concern:

- The UK government might be forced to express greater concern about human rights and democracy in Bahrain due to political considerations;
- The UK government recently published a document stating its support for human rights defenders;
- There is significant support for this course of action among MPs.

As such, it can be seen that whilst the situation is largely negative, there are some positives aspects. Non-governmental organisations (such as SALAM) should try and exploit these aspects to ensure that the UK government does not become less inclined to express concern about democracy and human rights in Bahrain post-Brexit.

## Introduction

The subject of whether the UK's decision to leave the European Union will lead to the UK altering its foreign policy towards Bahrain is interesting for several reasons: firstly, Brexit represents arguably the biggest political crisis (in the UK) since the end of the Second World War (Matthijs, 2016), making any Brexit related subject interesting to an extent; secondly, Brexit holds particular implications for the UK's foreign policy with several former politicians (and a former head of MI6) warning that the UK's influence will decline post Brexit (Harrois, 2018), making any issue relating to the UK's foreign policy

worth researching; thirdly, Bahrain represents an interesting case study because of the close relationship between the UK and Bahrain (Willis, 2012) in a region of significant interest to the UK (House of Lords Select Committee on International Relations, 2017), as a consequence, any issue of foreign policy relating to the Middle East, or Bahrain, is interesting; fourthly, the situation in Bahrain is worthy of research because of the current situation in Bahrain. This is because at present the human rights violating, anti-democratic conduct of the Bahraini government is such that some consider to be ensuring the Bahraini government's eventual collapse (Horres, 2012). As such, it is clear that Bahrain's future is far from clear, making any subject to do with both Brexit and Bahrain's human rights situation an extremely interesting one.

Before presenting the findings of this report it is necessary to first outline what this report can and cannot seek to achieve. Accordingly, it should be noted that, as it is impossible to know what the eventual outcome of Brexit will be, it is impossible for this report to state with certainty what the consequences of Brexit will be. As a result of this, this report shall address the three different possible Brexit scenarios (no deal, deal, and further delay). Whilst it is not possible to know for certain the consequences of these scenarios, it is possible to assess what the most probable consequences are, and to make recommendations based upon these consequences; that is what this report will seek to achieve. It should also be noted that it is not the place of this report to make any comment on the likelihood of each scenario. Moreover, it is not the place of this report to comment on the desirability of each scenario; however, it will evaluate the impacts of each scenario regarding the UK's foreign policy, specifically in relation to the promotion of human rights and democracy.

This report will begin by providing an overview of the relationship between the UK and Bahrain by first giving a brief historical overview of that relationship and outlining the situation post-2011. This report will then outline the situation in Bahrain with regard to human rights and the UK's relationship with Bahrain regarding this. This report will then outline the existing interests the UK has in regard to Bahrain. After this, the report will provide a brief outline of Brexit itself and will then evaluate the possible impacts of each of the different potential Brexit scenarios on the UK's foreign policy. The report will then outline the impact of Brexit on each of the UK's interests. Finally, the report will address whether future British Bahraini relations will have a greater focus on human rights and democracy promotion.

This report will then conclude that Brexit will likely lead to a change in the UK's foreign policy towards Bahrain. This change will likely take the form of the UK's decreasing its focus on human rights and democracy promotion in Bahrain. This is because of: the tendency of countries being unwilling to act against a former colony; the UK being diplomatically vulnerable to the use of trade deals as leverage as a result of Brexit; and that it would oppose the government that may be created if it were to do. Finally, this report will outline its recommendations.

The implication of the above is that it is likely that the UK will reduce the scale of its efforts (such as they are) to protect and promote democracy and human rights in Bahrain. However, it should be noted that it is not inevitable that this implication becomes a reality. This is because this report will also highlight factors that indicate that the UK will not become less inclined to express concern about human rights and democracy issues in Bahrain. Actions can be taken to increase the chance that these factors are strengthened (such as engaging in campaigning to hold the government to its various promises regarding human rights for example). Actions such as this will increase the chance that Brexit will not lessen its commitment to advancing human rights and democracy in countries such as Bahrain and may even lead to an intensification of these efforts.

## UK Bahrain ties

## Historical relations

Bahrain has spent much of recent history as part of the UK's informal empire (Fuccaro, 2009) becoming a de facto protectorate between the years of 1880 and 1892 (Fuccaro, 2000). Despite this, the origin of the UK and Bahrain's relationship dates to early the 1800s, when the British sought to gain legitimacy in the region by eradicating the economic warfare that was being waged at the time between the various ports of the Gulf; warfare which the British viewed as piracy (Gardner, 2010). British interests at the time were largely naval, with the primary concern being to ensure that Indian trade would not be interfered with (Fisher, 1968). Bahrain at the time was (and still is) ruled by the Al-Khalifa family and they entered into the above arrangement with Britain in order to secure their control of Bahrain (CIA World Factbook, 2019). Throughout the 1800s the British exerted an increasing level of control over Bahrain such that Britain eventually came to effectively control Bahraini foreign policy (Onley, 2007) with British concerns also including port facilities, pearl production, and Bahraini imports and exports. However, despite the length of this relationship, Britain only acquired a formal military presence relatively late in its colonial relationship with Bahrain with the Royal Navy only gaining a base in Bahrain in 1935 (Razak, 2017).

Bahrain gained its effective independence in 1971 following the completion of the promise made in 1968 by Harold Wilson to withdraw from the Persian Gulf (Sato, 2009). Despite its formal withdrawal, Britain does maintain a significant degree of involvement in Bahrain. This can be seen by the fact that Britain has a close military relationship with Bahrain with Britain training a number of Bahraini military officers in Bahrain. As well as this, for a long period of time, the head of Bahrain's intelligence and security service was the ex-British colonial police officer Ian Henderson who has been accused of being complicit in torture (Leech and Gaskarth, 2015).

Bahrain experienced a significant amount of unrest in 1994 after the arrest of prominent individuals who had campaigned for the re-establishment of democratic institutions. Following the Sheikh Hamad Bin Isa Al-Khalifa's accession in 1999 it appeared as if a turning point had been reached. This was due to the fact that it appeared as if significant moves towards liberalisation were being made with: the release of political prisoners; the commitment to the goal of creating a constitutional monarchy with an elected parliament; separation of powers and an independent judiciary. This commitment was supported by voters in 2001. Unfortunately, the government's actions disappointed many with allegations of campaign restrictions and gerrymandering aimed at limiting the power of the Shiite majority, leading to many boycotting the elections held in 2002 (Freedom House, 2007). This is despite the fact that the apparent moves by Sheikh Hamad had been received somewhat positively by various countries. This can be seen by the fact that the previous policy of repression had received significant criticism from abroad (Peterson, 2009). Given that the new policy represented (or at least appeared to represent) something of a reversal from this policy, this indicates that this policy received significant support.

## Post 2011

During the Arab Spring Bahrain experienced protests beginning on February the 14th 2011. Initially, these called only for a limitation on the monarchy's powers, but these calls grew into a demand for a purely constitutional monarchy, with the more radical elements wanting the abolition of the monarchy altogether. However, these protests were crushed following a crackdown by the regime on March the 17<sup>th</sup> (Diamond, 2013) and an intervention by Saudi Arabia (Faramarzi, 2011). A series of reconciliation talks were then established but these collapsed in September 2013 following the arrest of Khalil al-Marzuq deputy leader of the Wefaq party (Middle East Institute, 2013).

Following the Arab Spring, and the mass protests that occurred in Bahrain, the Bahraini government made the surprise move of showing a degree of willingness to consider reform. This can be seen by the fact that the United Nations Human Rights Council made a series of recommendations, and several of these have been implemented (Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain, 2017). As well as this, the Bahraini constitution clearly and explicitly forbids the use of torture (Bahrain Centre for Human Rights, 2017). As such, it might be argued that Bahrain is moving towards being a functioning democracy and is building respect for human rights. The reaction to the announcement of these reforms by the UK government was positive with the Foreign Office having spent £5 million since 2012 on a programme of security and justice assistance to Bahrain (Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy, 2018).

Unfortunately, evidence indicates that the Bahraini reforms are not indicative of a move towards greater respect for human rights and democracy in Bahrain. The reason for this is that despite the above, the Bahraini government continues to engage in a series of human rights violations (Amnesty International, 2016). Furthermore, whilst the government has created a series of oversight bodies (specifically an ombudsman) that on paper appear to be effective, in reality, there are serious issues with these organisations – such as concerns regarding confidentiality, effectiveness, and independence (Amnesty international, 2016). As well as this, while the Bahraini government did establish an inquiry into the events of the Arab Spring which made a series of recommendations only three of the twenty-six recommendations have been fully implemented (Project on Middle East Democracy, 2012). As such, it is apparent that whilst in recent years Bahrain has made positive statements regarding commitments to reform, there is a large amount of evidence to indicate that in reality, little reform will actually occur. Nonetheless, it should be acknowledged that relatively speaking Bahrain is more economically diversified and socially liberal than other states in the region (though it should also be remembered how poor the other countries in the region score in such areas) (Zunes, 2013).

An example of this can be seen by the fact that following the Arab spring (in which Bahrain engaged in the brutal suppression of protests) the King of Bahrain was invited to Windsor Castle to celebrate the Queen's diamond jubilee (Davies, 2012). This indicates that Britain is prepared to effectively turn a blind eye to the matter of human rights violations. This policy continues to be the case today, as shown by the fact that the government's reaction to the various indications that little progress is currently being made, has been to state that it believes that the situation represents a mixed picture (Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 2019a). This is despite the fact that the situation is not mixed, but negative. The reason for this is that there is a wealth of challenges and few positive developments (Bell, 2018). This indicates that the UK's relationship with Bahrain regarding human rights remains one of effectively turning a blind eye to the matter.

## The UK's existing interests in Bahrain

Like all states, the UK's foreign policy decisions are affected by considerations about what the impact those decisions will have on its perceived interests. Therefore, in order to assess what the UK's foreign policy is with regards to Bahrain (and how Brexit will affect it), it is necessary to first outline the UK's current perceived interests in Bahrain. This report will refer to the following interests: trade, energy, security and military, geopolitics, and democracy promotion.

### Trade

In 2016 the UK made approximately £550 billion from exporting, of this around £600 million was made from exports to Bahrain (Office for National Statistics, 2018). This indicates that the UK is not particularly concerned by the factors relating to trade when making policy decisions regarding

Bahrain, because it has little trade to be concerned about. As such, it can be assumed that the UK is not dissuaded from promoting democracy and human rights in Bahrain because of the potential consequences on its trade with Bahrain because it has little trade to be concerned about.

### Energy

It has been argued that the primary concern of all West European countries in the Middle East is oil (Woodhouse, 2009). Given that the UK is a West European country and Bahrain is a Middle Eastern country, this indicates that the UK's primary concern in Bahrain is oil. If this is the case, then it may well be the case that the UK is unwilling to place meaningful pressure on Bahrain to improve its human rights record, because of the fear of the consequences to their energy interests should they do so.

### Security and military

Bahrain is one of the key allies of the United States (US) meaning that it has a key interest in ensuring the stability of Bahrain (Coates Ulrichsen, 2013). Given that the UK and the US are extraordinarily closely intertwined in matters of security and foreign policy (Dumbrell, 2009) this indicates that the UK also has a key interest in ensuring the stability of Bahrain. As a result, it can be argued that it is unlikely that the UK perceives it to be in its interest to engage in the serious promotion of democracy and human rights because of the risk of destabilising Bahrain.

### Geopolitics

Bahrain has a much higher level of geopolitical importance (due to its location) than is indicated by its size and wealth. This can be shown by the fact that despite having an economy that accounts for only a small proportion of the Gulf's GDP (one-sixtieth) and a population of just 1.3 million; it is critical to the protection of Gulf shipping lanes (House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, 2013). Furthermore, it is located in the geopolitically important position between both Iran and Saudi Arabia (indeed it is only 16 miles from Saudi Arabia), and finally, its population is majority Sunni but is ruled by a minority Shia government (Bhatia, 2017). As such, it is clear that Bahrain has a high level of geopolitical importance. Therefore, it is unlikely that the UK will take any significant moves to promote democracy and human rights in Bahrain.

### Democracy promotion

It can be suggested that the UK has an interest in the promotion of democracy and human rights abroad and therefore has an interest in doing so in Bahrain. However, the evidence appears to indicate that the UK government does not perceive itself as having a significant interest in the promotion of democracy and human rights. Evidence of this can be seen by the fact that the EU places a higher priority on promoting stability than on promoting democracy (Huber, 2013). Given that the UK was a member state of the EU when this trend was created, it can be assumed that the EU's policy reflects the UK's interests (otherwise the UK would not have supported the establishment of such a trend which it presumably has) indicating that the UK also prioritises stability over democracy. This leads to the conclusion that the UK does not see democracy promotion to be in its interests (or at the very least that it doesn't see it as an important interest) indicating that the UK is not likely to engage in efforts to promote democracy and human rights in Bahrain (or anywhere else for that matter).

## Brexit

### Brexit background

At this point, it is necessary to provide a degree of background context to the Brexit process. Following the decision of the June 23<sup>rd</sup> referendum to leave the EU the UK officially started the process of leaving by triggering Article 50 of the Maastricht Treaty on March the 29<sup>th</sup> 2017. Following this, the UK was meant to have left the EU by the 29<sup>th</sup> of March 2019. During the intervening two years, the UK and the EU attempted to negotiate a withdrawal agreement so as to ensure a smooth as possible withdrawal, and to provide time for a permanent relationship to be established. However, due to an inability to reach an agreement that was acceptable to the House of Commons, this deadline was extended to the 12<sup>th</sup> of April 2019 and then to the 31<sup>st</sup> of October 2019. Following this the Prime Minister Theresa May resigned and was succeeded by Boris Johnson. Boris Johnson then reached by the new Prime Minister on October the 17<sup>th</sup>. At the time of writing this deal has yet to be written into UK law by the UK Parliament. At the time of writing, the situation is such that if the deal is not approved by all relevant parties (primarily the House of Commons) the UK will sever all ties with the EU on the 31<sup>st</sup> of October 2019. There are concerns that this will lead to significant issues relating to trade and the supply of goods such as fresh food and medicine. There are also concerns that leaving (however it is done) will harm the UK in an economic manner and that it will reduce its foreign policy clout (BBC News, 2019).

### Possible outcomes and their likely consequences

#### No deal

It is widely argued that a no-deal Brexit will result in significant economic damage to the UK. Specifically, it is feared that a no-deal Brexit will result in a recession with some reports predicting a recession of 1.2% in the first year after a no-deal Brexit followed by a 1.5% recession the year after (Dow Jones Institutional News, 2018a). It is also feared that there will be significant long term economic consequences with some predictions indicating 500,000 fewer jobs and £50 billion less investment by 2030 (Dow Jones Institutional News, 2018b). There are also concerns relating to both government revenues (with some predicting a fall in tax revenues of between £8 billion and £10 billion), a rise in prices (with some predicting prices rising by 20% in the agri-food sector), aviation (some have suggested that no deal could lead to UK airlines not having a valid operational licence), and finally haulage (there are fears that UK ports will be overwhelmed by the demands for customs checks) (Blitz, 2017a).

It should, however, be acknowledged that it has been suggested by some that not only are the above predictions inaccurate and that will Brexit not be harmful to the UK economy but that it will, in fact, be beneficial. Examples of this are provided by the fact that that the following have been put forward as examples of positive impacts of Brexit: an increase in wages for UK workers; an improvement in the state of the UK's public finances; and the replacement with inappropriate regulations with better tailored national regulations. These views resulted in the concept of 'no deal is better than a bad deal' (Begg, 2017). This indicates that some argue that no deal is not a potential catastrophe but a potential lesser of two evils with potential long term benefits. It should be noted that it is by no means clear that any of these statements will prove accurate (and indeed there is a significant reason to doubt several of them). However, it should be remembered that it is not the job of this report to evaluate the possible economic consequences of a no-deal Brexit, but to evaluate Brexit's potential impact on the UK's foreign policy regarding Bahrain. With these considerations in mind, the fact remains that it is simply impossible to know for sure what the economic consequences of a no-deal Brexit are. As such, whilst it is possible that a no-deal Brexit will have significant negative economic consequences it is also possible it will have economic benefits.

As a result of the points given above it is clear that what the Brexit means for the UK's foreign policy towards Bahrain depends on if a no-deal Brexit occurs (and on what its economic consequences are). If a no-deal Brexit occurs, and if it is indeed catastrophic for the UK economy, then almost certainly the UK will become less focused on promoting democracy and human rights as a result (because the government will be forced to focus on economic considerations). Conversely, if a no-deal Brexit proves not to be an economic catastrophe then it is likely that it will have little impact on the UK's promotion of democracy and human rights in Bahrain. As such, what Brexit means for the UK's foreign policy towards Bahrain depends largely on whether or not Brexit ends up being a no-deal Brexit, and what the economic consequences of no-deal turn out to be.

### Deal

There is some evidence to indicate that should a deal of some form be made with the EU this will indicate a form of continuation with past foreign policy. This means that the UK's foreign policy will remain broadly similar to its current form. This can be shown by the fact that the UK aims to have a defence partnership with the EU that enables efforts both in regard to operations and in terms of developing capabilities (Cabinet office, 2018). This indicates that the government is planning on remaining closely aligned with the EU in areas of foreign policy, otherwise, this policy would be impractical. Therefore, this indicates that in a deal scenario, the UK's foreign policy will remain broadly similar to what it currently is. This, in turn, indicates that the government will be unlikely to either increase or decrease its promotion of democracy and human rights in Bahrain. At this point, it should be noted that the above source was written in 2018 when Theresa May was Prime Minister (PM) since then she has been replaced by Boris Johnson. Despite this, it can be assumed that the point remains broadly relevant. This is because despite a difference in both aims and methods Johnson still prefers a deal compared to no deal (Blitz, 2019) indicating that the point remains accurate.

Consequently, the consequences of Brexit for the UK's foreign policy towards Bahrain depend on if a deal is reached and what kind of deal that deal is. If a deal is reached that ensures continued cooperation between the UK and the EU on matters of foreign policy, then presumably the UK's future policy will be very similar to its current policy. If the deal that is reached is one that does not involve close foreign policy cooperation between the UK and the EU (and the UK instead aligns more closely to the US) then the UK's position on human rights and democracy promotion will change. Given the fact that the US has an extremely close relationship with Bahrain (with Bahrain being the home of the US 5<sup>th</sup> fleet (Fletcher, 2011)) this would presumably mean the UK become less focused on promoting democracy and human rights.

### Uncertainty

When assessing the challenges posed by uncertainty, it should be understood that there are effectively 3 'concentric spheres' of uncertainty. Sphere 1 is that it is unclear what the UK's desired future arrangement with the EU is. Sphere 2 is that it is unclear whether the UK will be successful in achieving its desired future arrangement with the EU. Sphere 3 is that it is unclear what the UK government's policy will be towards Bahrain post Brexit (regardless of how aligned it is with the EU).

The first 'sphere' of uncertainty that must be discussed is the uncertainty regarding what the UK's desired future relationship with the EU is (regarding the subject of foreign policy integration). This is because there are effectively three possible choices facing the UK (Whitman, 2016a). Option 1 is that the UK becomes an integrated player, whereby the UK would still participate in the EU's foreign and security policymaking infrastructure. Option 2 is that the UK becomes an associated partner whereby the UK would integrate itself with the EU on a case by case basis. Option 3 is that the UK becomes a

detached observer whereby the UK would work alongside the EU on a case by case basis. Which of these options the UK will choose is unclear. This is problematic because which of these options is chosen will have significant consequences on foreign policy. The implications of each choice can be briefly summarised thus: integrated player, in this scenario the UK's policy to Bahrain would remain broadly the same as it is now, because this represents a continuation (or as closest thing possible) of the pre-Brexit situation, indicating that policy will continue to be broadly the same; associated partner, in this scenario the UK may opt to integrate itself into the EU's policy on Bahrain or it may not, it is not clear which the UK would opt for at this time; detached observer, opting for this scenario would indicate a preference for a large scale change in foreign policy, thereby indicating that the UK wanted to take a different line on Bahrain to the EU. If this were to be the case, then this could either be towards a more human rights and democracy centric outlook or conversely to a less human rights centric outlook. As such, it can be seen that there is a range of different options facing the UK with a range of different consequences resulting. Clearly, this makes it extremely difficult to state with certainty what the UK's policy towards Bahrain and human rights will be post-Brexit.

The second 'sphere' of uncertainty that must be discussed is whether the government will be successful in achieving its desired aim. This can be highlighted by the uncertainties that the last government faced in achieving its desired aim. These difficulties were mainly that it was unclear whether the EU wanted the same scale of agreement as the UK did; it was unclear whether a deal could be reached (Whitman, 2017). It can be safely assumed that this problem continues to face the present government (because obviously for an agreement to be reached with the EU, the EU has to agree to it). As such, it is clearly difficult to judge the impact of Brexit on UK foreign policy because not only is it unclear what the UK's desired policy is, but it is unclear if the government will be successful in pursuing it.

The third and final 'sphere' of uncertainty that must be considered is that it remains unclear as to what the UK government's policy in any area will be post Brexit (it should be noted at this point that this refers to specific policy decisions – such as what the UK's policy will be regarding Bahrain – there is also uncertainty about larger more strategic issues (see above)). The extent of the problem this poses can be shown by the fact that this uncertainty even extends into the area of environmental policy. This is because it is unclear as to how the UK will replace EU environmental policies (Hepburn and Teytelboym, 2017). Given that the uncertainty caused by Brexit is so monumental that it has affected even such relatively unimportant policy areas as environmental policy, it can be assumed that it has affected more prominent areas of policy such as foreign policy. As such, it is clear that predicting the future of any area of policy faces fundamental challenges. The most challenging of these is that it is unclear as to whether the focus should be “will the UK government change its policy” or “will the UK government's policy be successful”. As such, at present, it is impossible to know with certainty whether Brexit will cause the UK government to be less inclined to express concerns about human rights in the GCC. This because it is not even possible to know if this is the correct matter to be focusing on; it is possible (though admittedly improbable) that the area that should be the main area of focus “will the UK government's increased inclination to express concern about human rights in the GCC have any impact”.

It might even be argued that what the actual resolution to Brexit is actually irrelevant. The reasoning behind this is that the arguably biggest impact of Brexit is that it has effectively displaced all non-Brexit related political matters. This can be shown by briefly looking at the list of challenges the decision to leave the EU has created: reversing half a century of diplomatic strategy; creating replacements for all of the EU's trade agreements; a realignment of defence and security policies; and reconfiguring relations with all the states that will remain, members of the EU (Whitman, 2016b). This means that it

is now significantly harder to focus on changing policy that is not Brexit related. This means that as the UK's foreign policy towards Bahrain is not significantly Brexit related it is likely that the UK's policy towards Bahrain will remain broadly similar. Consequently, it can be suggested that as a result of Brexit, the UK will be neither more nor less inclined to express concern about human rights in the GCC.

## Impact of Brexit on the UK's interests in Bahrain

Now that the subject of Brexit has been directly assessed it is necessary to examine how Brexit may affect each of the UK's interests that were examined previously.

### Trade

With regards to the potential impact of Brexit on the UK's interests regarding trade, it is hard to produce a precise prediction, it is, however possible to produce broad predictions. If a trade deal between the UK and GCC states (or if the UK remains in either the EU or the customs union and therefore is not responsible for trade negotiations) then presumably the prevalence of trade as an issue will further decline. This, in turn, would indicate that the UK would be able to focus more on democracy promotion and human rights. However, if the UK leaves the customs union and does not quickly sign a trade deal with the GCC states, then presumably the issue of trade will retain its current prevalence. As such, the UK will be unable to focus on promoting democracy and human rights in Bahrain.

### Energy

When considering the impact that Brexit will have on the UK's interests regarding energy the evidence indicates that Brexit could have a potentially significant impact. This is because the EU has an energy strategy of moving towards decarbonisation (European Commission, 2019). While the UK also has a similar policy, it announced this policy after the EU announced its policy (Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, 2019). This indicates that the EU is influencing the UK's policy which it would presumably not do post-Brexit. It is, therefore, possible that the EU will move towards decarbonisation differently to the UK. In this scenario, the UK may be more focused on protecting its energy supplies from the Gulf region and therefore will be unable to focus on the promotion of democracy and human rights in Bahrain.

### Security and military

When evaluating the potential consequences of Brexit on the UK's interests regarding security and military interests, it would appear that the consequences will be relatively minimal. This is because the EU has a minimal impact on international relations (Thomas, 2012). As such it can be assumed that the EU is not responsible for the UK's security and military policy. Consequently, leaving the EU will have no significant impact on the UK's perceived security and military interests.

### Geopolitics

With relation to Brexit, it can be seen that the potential consequences of Brexit on the UK's perceived interests are likely to be minimal. This is because, as stated above, the EU has little foreign policy competency, meaning that leaving the EU will presumably have little impact on the UK's foreign policy (and therefore geopolitical) concerns.

### Democracy promotion

It is unclear as to what impact Brexit will have on the realities of UK foreign policy, but it is possible to ascertain what the consequences of Brexit will be on the aims of UK foreign policy. The aims of UK post-Brexit foreign policy have been stated by the Foreign Office as including an aim that the UK will be assertive in standing up for its interests (House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, 2018). Given that these interests presumably include a commitment to democracy, this shows that the official policy of the UK government is that the UK will continue to focus on promoting democracy abroad. This indicates that Brexit will not result in the UK decreasing its support for democracy in countries such as Bahrain. This, in turn, indicates that Brexit will have little impact on UK foreign policy towards Bahrain.

## Future British – Bahraini relations (will the UK become less inclined to express concern about human rights issues in Bahrain?)

There are a series of arguments that indicate that in the future Britain will become less inclined to express concern about human rights in Bahrain. Some of these arguments relate specifically to Brexit some of them relate to underlying facts that will remain the same regardless of Brexit. Either way, they indicate that the UK will become less inclined to express concern about human rights in Bahrain in the future. This section of the report will first outline each of the arguments indicating that the UK will become less inclined to express concern about human rights in Bahrain post Brexit. It will also provide an evaluative point for each argument. The report will then state which of these arguments it judges to be the most convincing. Following this, the report will outline the evidence indicating that the UK might become more inclined to express concern, again providing an evaluative point for each argument. The report will again then state which of these arguments it judges to be most convincing. Next the report will reach a conclusion as to whether the UK is more likely to be less or more inclined to express concern about human rights issues in Bahrain.

### Less inclined to express concern

One argument that indicates that the UK will be less inclined to express concern about human rights issues post Brexit, is that it appears that the UK is in a very vulnerable position as a result of Brexit. Evidence of this can be provided by the example of the situation regarding Huawei's potential involvement in the construction of the UK's 5G network. This is because the Chinese government has stated that it may revoke its decision to lift a ban on importing British pork and beef if the UK does not allow Huawei to be involved in the upgrading of the telecoms network to 5G (Barker and Hymas, 2019). Moreover, the US has reportedly stated that a decision to allow Huawei to be involved in the construction of the UK's 5G network would jeopardise a US-UK trade deal (Isaac, 2019). This indicates that should the UK express concern over human rights issues in Bahrain it will be ineffective. This is because the Bahraini government will simply insist that the UK government cease such expressions if it wants to sign a trade deal. As it can be assumed that the UK will not adopt a policy that it knows will have to be reversed (especially given the political cost this reverse would presumably entail) it is clearly the case that the UK will be less inclined to express concern about human rights issues in Bahrain post-Brexit. As a result, it appears to be the case that Brexit will have an impact on the UK's foreign policy towards Bahrain.

Furthermore, it should be noted is that there is evidence to indicate that the UK would be unlikely to be successful if it did express concern over human rights concerns in Bahrain post Brexit. This is because there are clear limits to the UK's influence. An example of this is that former foreign secretary Douglas Hurd has previously remarked of how the UK was significantly limited in what it could hope to achieve when promoting human rights. Specifically, he stated that in the case of Saudi Arabia the best that could be done was to raise the rights of UK citizens in Saudi Arabia; regarding China, the UK was even more limited in that it was forced to 'hope' its requests to the Chinese government would have an impact (Gaskarth, 2013). Whilst it can be disputed as to how accurate these statements are, nonetheless, it should be remembered that the UK does have limits on its capabilities. As such, even if the UK fully focuses on attempting to improve human rights and democracy in Bahrain there is no guarantee that it would be effective. As such, it might be argued that it is in effect irrelevant whether the UK will become more or less likely to express concern about human rights issues post Brexit.

One more argument that indicates that the UK is unlikely to express concern over human rights is that it does not want countries such as Bahrain to become democracies. Evidence of this can be seen by the attitude of the occupying powers towards the possibility of elections in post-2003 Iraq. This is because following the removal of Saddam Hussein there was a widespread reluctance to the concept of allowing elections 'too early' due to a fear of losing control of the outcome (Wearing, 2014). This shows that the occupying countries (including the UK) were opposed to the concept of democracy in Iraq because of the possible consequences. Presumably, they would have the same fears about other Middle Eastern countries (such as Bahrain) becoming democracies. If this is the case, they would be highly unlikely to want to encourage these countries to become democracies. As such, it can be seen as unlikely that the UK will be more inclined to express concern about human rights issues in Bahrain, partly because it does not necessarily want these issues resolved. Therefore, it can be seen that the UK will be less inclined to express concern about human rights issues in Bahrain.

Furthermore, there is evidence that indicates that should Bahrain become a democracy it would not necessarily produce a result that would be seen as favourable by the UK government. One example of this can be seen by the matter of perceived national threats. This is because the Arab Opinion Index (which investigated various aspects of public opinion among 26,618 respondents across 14 countries) found that 25% of respondents viewed Israel as the greatest threat to their home country (Arab Centre for Research & Policy Studies, 2014). Whilst it is the case that the aforementioned 14 countries did not include Bahrain it can be assumed that the figures given above can be extrapolated (at least to a degree) to include Bahrain (this is because of the size of the sample used, the number of countries from which respondents were from, and the rigour of the sampling system used to select respondents). In contrast, a YouGov poll (of 3,574 UK adults) found that when asked 'which do you feel is the greater threat to the west' only 27% of respondents answered, 'countries like Russia, China, and North Korea' (YouGov, 2018). As it can be logically assumed that few of those who answered, 'countries like Russia, China, and North Korea' viewed Israel as the biggest threat, this shows a clear difference in the opinions of those responding to the Arab Opinion Index, and those responding to the YouGov poll. Assuming that the results of the Arab Opinion Index can indeed be extrapolated to Bahrain, this indicates a difference of views between the Bahraini public and the UK public. As the UK is a democracy, it can be assumed that the UK government broadly shares the views of the UK public (in that it does not view Israel as the biggest threat to the UK). As a result, it can be concluded that if Bahrain were to become a democracy then its (democratic) government would hold some views (and as a result presumably implement some policies) that the UK government would oppose. Therefore, it is unlikely the UK government will increase its focus on promoting human rights and democracy in Bahrain post Brexit because it would likely oppose the government that might be created as a result. As such, it can be argued that Brexit will not have a significant impact on UK foreign policy towards

Bahrain. Consequently, it is clearly the case that Brexit will not result in a change to future British Bahraini relations (or at least this change will not take the form of the UK undertaking significant efforts to move Bahrain towards democracy) because regardless of Brexit there are deeply ingrained reasons for the UK government to oppose democracy in Bahrain.

Another argument that indicates that the UK will be less inclined to express concern is the actions of the EU towards certain countries. This is because the EU does not usually take significant coercive action against countries that are ex-colonies of member states of the EU. This can be seen by the fact that the EU rarely imposes sanctions against countries that used to be colonies of member states (Kotzian et al, 2011). It can be assumed that the UK will also be unlikely to impose sanctions against its ex-colonies because if this was not the case, it would have challenged the policy when it was a member of the EU. The fact that this remains EU policy (even if it is an unofficial policy) therefore, indicates that the UK will act in a similar manner (though it may not be official policy and more of a de facto situation). Given that Bahrain is an ex-UK colony this indicates that the UK will not be prepared to impose sanctions on Bahrain. Whilst it is obviously the case that the UK would have other options other than imposing sanctions, it can also be assumed that if the UK is unwilling to implement sanctions then it is not particularly committed to attempting to promote human rights and democracy in Bahrain. As a result, it would presumably not do so. Consequently, this indicates that Brexit will not have an impact on the UK's foreign policy towards Bahrain. It should be noted at this point that after the UK's exit from the EU Bahrain will no longer be an ex-colony of an EU member state. As such, it is possible that the EU will become more likely to put pressure on Bahrain to improve its record regarding democracy and human rights.

It might be argued that the matter of whether a country is an ex-colony is largely irrelevant because the UK is unlikely to want to impose sanctions (or indeed engage in any actions that might harm relations with any foreign government) on any countries post-Brexit. This is because of the potential economic consequences of Brexit (specifically a no-deal Brexit) highlighted above. Should these predictions turn out to be even partly accurate, then this shows that the UK economy will suffer a significant degree of harm. Presumably, this will at the very least result in the UK government focusing all its efforts on the economic sphere, meaning it will be unable to focus on promoting democracy and human rights abroad. At the most, the worsening economic situation will force the government to place such a focus on correcting the economic situation that it will be willing to curtail its promotion of democracy and human rights abroad to improve the economic situation. There would be two reasons to believe this would improve the economic situation: first, government revenues could be reduced by cancelling programs aimed at promoting democracy and human rights; and secondly, curtailing its promotion of democracy and human rights might be the price demanded by countries such as Bahrain for a favourable trade deal. It can be assumed that the UK government would be desperate for such a trade deal in the hope of improving the economic situation. Whichever of these scenarios occurs (or any scenario between these two) this indicates that the UK will be likely to become less focused on promoting democracy and human rights as a result of a no-deal Brexit. This indicates that Brexit will have a significant impact on the UK's foreign policy towards Bahrain.

This report finds that the most convincing of these arguments is the one relating to the UK's diplomatic vulnerability post-Brexit. This is because there is already evidence indicating that this is a problem it can therefore be assumed that this will only increase once the UK has actually left the EU. The second most convincing is that relating to the UK judging it not to be in its interests to promote democracy in Bahrain. The reason for this is that that whilst there is evidence to indicate that this is the case it, cannot be assumed that this would not change if a new government were to be formed. The least convincing (though still relevant) argument is that relating to Bahrain being an ex-colony. This is

because this argument rests upon the assumption that UK will continue to be unwilling to act against former colonies, which may or may not be the case.

### More inclined to express concern

One other argument indicating the UK will be more inclined to express concern about human rights issues post Brexit in Bahrain is that recent government publications indicate this is the case. This is because the recent government publication 'UK support for Human Rights defenders' this document clearly and unequivocally commits the UK government to support human rights defenders (Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 2019b). Whilst it is too soon to see if this policy will be applied in Bahrain it is highly unlikely the government would publish a report committing it to the defence of human rights defenders if this attitude did not apply to all countries. This is because it is hardly logical for the government to state that it is in support of defending human rights in all countries, except for the UK's allies such as Bahrain (as well as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the UAE to name but a few). As such, it is presumably the case that post-Brexit the UK government will express concern about human rights issues in countries such as Bahrain. Therefore, it could be the case that Brexit will not lead to a change in the UK's foreign policy towards Bahrain. It should at this point be noted that whilst the government is committed to developing human rights abroad, this does not mean that this will be effective. This can be seen by the fact that the Foreign Office recently made media freedom its number one campaign priority. Despite this, there are concerns that the government's campaign is ineffective with some suggesting that too few resources have been allocated to the project (Wintour, 2019). This shows that it must be remembered that it is not merely enough for the government to have an aim to express concerns about human rights in Bahrain, but it must do so in a manner that is effective.

Moreover, this support is not limited merely to the government but is also present among key members of both the government and the opposition. Evidence of this can be provided by the results of primary research conducted by the author of this report. Specifically, this research analysed the record of Jeremy Hunt (until recently foreign secretary – Hunt's references are included as his successor, Dominic Raab, has not been in office long enough to produce a statistically meaningful record, especially given the fact that Parliament was in recess from the 25<sup>th</sup> July and he was appointed on the 24<sup>th</sup> July. Furthermore, it can be assumed that while a change of policy between this government and the last one will indeed occur, such a change is hardly going to be from support of human rights to total opposition) and Emily Thornberry (shadow foreign secretary). This research has shown that: between the 22<sup>nd</sup> of October 2018 and the 25<sup>th</sup> of June 2019 Jeremy Hunt referred to matters of human rights on 21 occasions; between the 11<sup>th</sup> of February 2019 and the 13<sup>th</sup> of June 2019 Emily Thornberry (shadow foreign secretary) referred to the matter of human rights on 22 occasions. It should be noted that whilst several of these statements were not made with reference to Bahrain, an expression of support for human rights anywhere can be seen as an expression of support for human rights in Bahrain. This is because it is illogical to support human rights in one country but to oppose them in another. Whilst it does appear to be the case that the UK government is taking this illogical position, this does not mean that Jeremy Hunt and Emily Thornberry are. In Emily Thornberry's case, this is because she is only the Shadow Foreign Secretary and therefore cannot be judged by the actions of the government, as she is not a member of the government. In Jeremy Hunt's case, this is because it is possible, he was simply unsuccessful in ensuring the government adopted his preferred policy regarding Bahrain. As such, it can still be argued that both Jeremy Hunt and Emily Thornberry are indeed committed to human rights in Bahrain, even if they were unsuccessful in making this government policy. Furthermore, Prime Minister Boris Johnson referred to the UK's commitment to

human rights abroad in his first speech after becoming Prime Minister (Johnson's references in debate in Parliament to human rights are not given, for the same reason that Dominic Raab's are not given). This indicates that both, the government, and the opposition share a commitment towards the promotion of human rights abroad. As such, it is likely that the UK will be inclined to express concern about human rights issues in Bahrain post Brexit. Consequently, it can be seen that Brexit is unlikely to change the UK's foreign policy towards Bahrain.

One more argument that indicates that the UK will be more inclined to express concern about human rights issues in Bahrain post Brexit, is that there is evidence indicating that this is a significant matter of concern for MPs. Moreover, this has been the case both before, and after the EU referendum (including immediately after and 3 years after the referendum result). Evidence showing this is provided by primary research conducted by the author of this report. This research analysed written question ministers on the matter of Bahrain and human rights. This research focused on three time periods: specifically, the 25<sup>th</sup> of May 2019 to the 25<sup>th</sup> of July 2019; the 27<sup>th</sup> of June 2016 to the 27<sup>th</sup> of August 2016; and the 15<sup>th</sup> April 2016 to the 15<sup>th</sup> of June 2016. These dates were selected to be able to show the impact of Brexit on the prevalence of Bahraini human rights both in the immediate term and in the long term. This research showed that in these time periods the matter of Bahrain and its human rights record was raised 52 times (22 times in 2019, 15 times in 2016 after the referendum, and 15 times in 2016 before the referendum). This indicates that there is a significant degree of interest in the subject of Bahrain and human rights. It should be noted that whilst there might be a degree of interest among opposition MPs this does not mean that there is any interest among the government. However, even if this is the case this is still significant because it means that the government will come under significant political pressure surrounding human rights and democracy matters. This indicates that the government may take measures to be seen to be promoting democracy and human rights abroad so as to lessen the political pressure on it. This indicates that the UK government will not be less inclined to express concern about human rights issues in Bahrain post Brexit. As a result, it might be argued that Brexit will not change the UK's foreign policy towards Bahrain.

However, it should be noted that 20/22 (90%) of references made in 2019 were made by members of the House of Lords. In contrast, 25/30 (83%) of references made in 2016 were made by members of the House of Commons. Furthermore, of the references made in 2019 19/22 (86%) were made by the same member of the House of Lords (Lord Scriven). Both of these phenomena have presumably occurred because of the increased political focus on Brexit and Brexit related matters (which does not include the matter of Bahraini human rights). This indicates that the source of the focus on Bahrain's human rights record has shifted from the elected MPs to the unelected Lords. Given that the elected MPs are able to produce greater political pressure than the unelected Lords, this indicates that the aforementioned political pressure might be less effective than it at first appears. Moreover, as most of this pressure is coming from a single Lord it is unlikely to be as effective. This could mean that the government will not be under significant political pressure to be seen as protecting human rights abroad. Consequently, the government might be less inclined to express concern about human rights issues in Bahrain post Brexit. As such, it can be suggested that Brexit might lead to a change in the UK's foreign policy towards Bahrain after Brexit.

One argument that indicates that the government might become more inclined to express concern about human rights issues in Bahrain post-Brexit is the political consequences of Brexit. The reasoning behind this point is that Brexit has had such an impact on the political landscape of the UK that it is possible, that the UK government will be forced to express concerns about human rights in Bahrain. This is because the government has committed to the creation of a 'British bill of rights'. Whilst such a bill would not explicitly include a commitment to protect human rights abroad it would indicate that

the UK public had placed an increased value on human rights. This, in turn, would presumably lead to pressure on the government to be seen to be advancing them abroad as well as at home. As the decision to leave the EU is likely to increase pressure on the government to publish a British bill of rights (Robins, 2016), it can be argued that leaving the EU will lead to the UK being more likely to raise concerns about human rights issues. As a result of this, it could be concluded that Brexit will have an impact on the UK's foreign policy towards Bahrain.

However, it appears to be the case that the above point is based on an inaccurate assumption, namely that a 'British bill of rights' would be more popular than what it would replace (the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and the Human Rights Act (HRA)). Unfortunately, there is evidence to indicate that this assumption is fundamentally inaccurate and that a 'British bill of rights' would be as unpopular as the ECHR and HRA (Kyneswood). As such, there would be no increased political pressure on the government to promote human rights and democracy abroad. Because of this, the UK government would not be more inclined to express concern over human rights issues (though this does not necessarily mean that it would be less inclined to do so). As such, it might be argued that Brexit will not lead to a change in the UK's foreign policy towards Bahrain.

This report finds that the most convincing of the arguments indicating that the UK will be more inclined to express concern about human rights issues in Bahrain in the future is that relating to the government's position. This is because it is ultimately the government that makes policy and if the government is in favour of supporting human rights then this indicates that this will be the policy in the future. The report finds that the second most convincing argument is that there is significant support among MPs for the UK being more active regarding the defence and promotion of human rights abroad. This is because whilst it is indeed the case that a large number of MPs appear to support such a course it is also the case that this does not mean it will happen because MPs cannot directly make policy. The report also finds that third most convincing argument is the one relating to political pressures developing as a result of Brexit. This is because there appears to be a significant chance that a British Bill of Rights would become as disliked as the HRA and ECHR and would therefore provide no more political pressure to defend human rights abroad.

#### Will the UK be more or less inclined to express concern about human rights issues in Bahrain?

This report has found that the arguments indicating that the UK will be less inclined to express concern about human rights issues in Bahrain. This is because the arguments indicating that the UK have been judged to have been less convincing, as they can be more easily dismissed. This is because of the following: the argument relating to the UK government being committed to promoting human rights abroad indicating that it will do so in Bahrain relies on the government not applying this policy in a selective manner; the argument relating to the political pressure being created by MPs is weakened by the fact that a large amount of this pressure appears to be coming from a single member of the House of Lords, therefore significantly reducing its impact; and the argument that UK government might be placed under political pressure to promote human rights abroad post-Brexit is undermined by the fact that it is unclear how the government would respond to this pressure. It is entirely possible that the government's response to this this pressure would not be to increase its support for human rights abroad.

Whilst this report has judged that, on balance, the arguments indicating that the UK will be less inclined to express concern about human rights in Bahrain, the arguments indicating that this might not be the case do provide an upside. This is because these arguments indicate that it is possible that this will not be the case. Non-governmental organisations (such as Salam) must do everything they can to ensure that it is not (by pressuring the government and MPs to stick to its commitments) and

to ensure that the UK does not reduce its commitments to democracy and human rights in Bahrain and elsewhere.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this report has found that Brexit will decrease the UK's inclination to express concern about human rights and democracy issues in Bahrain, and as such, Brexit will lead to a change in UK foreign policy towards Bahrain. There are a number of reasons to indicate that this is the case: first, there is evidence that the UK is diplomatically vulnerable to the use of trade deals as leverage as a result of Brexit; secondly, the UK will not engage in the promotion of democracy and human rights in Bahrain, because it would oppose the actions of a democratic Bahraini government; thirdly, countries are unlikely to take significant action against ex-colonies.

However, there is evidence that indicates that Brexit will not increase the UK's inclination to express concern about human rights and democracy issues in Bahrain. The evidence that indicates that this is the case is as follows: domestic pressures resulting from a British bill of rights might force the government to express concern about issues relating to human rights and democracy in Bahrain; secondly, the government has recently committed to supporting and assisting human rights defenders; thirdly, there is evidence indicating that Bahrain is an issue of concern across all political parties. This report has found all of these arguments to be unconvincing for the following reasons. The first argument can be dismissed because a British 'Bill of Rights' would likely become as unpopular as the ECHR and the HRA. Therefore, it would not lead to political pressure on the government to promote human rights abroad. The second argument can be dismissed because whilst there is indeed evidence indicating that the government and the opposition are committed to defending human rights, this commitment has yet to result in concrete actions. Until such actions are taken it is possible that such commitments are merely rhetoric and will never be reflected by the government's actions. The third argument can be dismissed because there is evidence that the matter of Bahraini human rights has dropped off the political agenda. This is because most questions are now made in the House of Lords by a single Lord. As such, they will have much less political impact meaning the chances of the government being pressured to promote human rights in Bahrain as a result of them are greatly reduced.

This report has also concluded that the decision to leave the EU could result in a significant indirect impact on the UK's policy. This is because there are potentially significant economic impacts that could result from Brexit. Given that, in a broad sense the UK's choices when deciding how to act in the world, is inherently affected by its national wealth (Reynolds, 2000) this means that at the very least the UK's effectiveness could be decreased as a result of Brexit. It is also probable that as a result of a severe economic shock the government would decrease its focus on promoting democracy abroad (either because of time constraints or due to economic considerations). As such, if Brexit results in a severe economic shock it can be assumed that this would result in the government becoming less inclined to express concern about issues relating to human rights and democracy in Bahrain.

## Recommendations

This report recommends that more research be conducted on the subject of the economic consequences of the various versions of Brexit. Following this, an extensive campaign to avoid the most economically harmful of these should be undertaken. This is because avoiding severe economic harm is necessary to ensure that the UK does not become less inclined to express concern about issues of human rights and democracy in Bahrain as a result of Brexit. As such, avoiding an economically harmful Brexit is of the utmost priority for those attempting to convince the UK government to express concern about human rights and democracy issues in Bahrain.

This report further calls for a concentrated campaign to ensure that the government (and the opposition) remain committed to the subject of promoting and defending human rights and democracy abroad. Furthermore, this report calls for all politicians and political parties to implement policies in line with their expressed support for human rights abroad.

This report also calls on the UK government to undertake an evaluation of the impacts that the economic consequences of Brexit will have on its various policy areas (including foreign policy). Such an evaluation is necessary because it is otherwise impossible to know for sure the full consequences of Brexit. As it is obviously impossible to prepare for the consequences of Brexit without knowing the full consequences for Brexit this makes such an evaluation critical. This report also calls for the UK government to ensure that these evaluations are made swiftly published and to ensure that these evaluations are not merely political rhetoric.

Finally, this report calls for all human rights advocacy groups analyse these publications in-depth (assuming the above recommendation is followed). This is because when lobbying the government, it is inevitably vital that the government's assumptions are understood in order for lobbying to be effective.

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