

# **ELECTRONIC DEMOCRACY STRATEGY FOR BAHRAIN**

**Mohammed A. Al Amer**

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis attempts to answer the question 'What e-democracy strategy, if any, is most suitable for Bahrain?'. Based on a qualitative case study for the country, an e-Democracy strategy is synthesised and presented in this thesis.

The literature review includes the forms, ideals and values of democracy. The researcher supports and argues for the assertion that any attempt to implement e-Democracy must not undermine the basic values and ideals of democracy. In the review on Islam and democracy, the author argues that Islam is not against democracy. However it is asserted that e-Democracy implementation must consider the cultural and religious context of Bahrain. The process of democratisation and how it is taking place in Bahrain and Gulf countries are also discussed.

A strategy formulation framework is adopted after reviewing literature on how to formulate a strategy. E-Government strategies of reading players in the e-Government are reviewed with an objective of learning lessons prior to formulating e-Democracy strategy.

The literature review on e-democracy helped to understand the theory and practice of e-Democracy elsewhere in the world and identify issues that required further investigation.

The issues identified from the literature were investigated using empirical data. Data from multiple sources were collected and analysed. The methods included interviews, focus groups and analysis of documents. The results confirm that most of the issues identified as part of the literature review are relevant to the case under investigation. However, there were issues that were not present in the literature. This includes the need to consider democracy's human, social and cultural aspects as well as factors pertaining to the political divide in Bahrain. This, if not tackled properly, may pose some challenges to the implementation of e-Democracy.

The results also disprove the assumption held by the government of Bahrain, as well as by the researcher at the beginning of the study, that e-voting is a more plausible type of e-democracy than other forms.

The author adapts and presents an e-Democracy model for Bahrain based on Chadwick and May (2003) along with the e-Democracy strategy for Bahrain. The author also argues that the model and the strategy can be tailored to use in other GCC countries.

The study fills a gap in the literature, namely the lack of e-democracy studies pertaining to the Middle East. It also provides a framework and lessons for other countries in the region for the creation of an e-democracy strategy.

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## ABBREVIATIONS AND GLOSSARY

- AGORA:** the Centre of the ancient Greek cities and towns, a marketplace and a meeting place.
- AHL ALHAL WA ALAQD:** Arabic – men who are pious and knowledgeable to exercise Ijtihad and draw verdicts
- BURKA:** Arabic - an outer garment worn by women in some Islamic traditions for the purpose of cloaking the entire body.
- CIO:** Central Informatics Organisation
- DEMOS:** Greek - people
- DEWANIYYA:** Arabic - a regular gathering of men at the homes of prominent individuals to meet socially and discuss public issues
- DMU:** De Montfort University
- ENDNOTE:** Software tool for publishing and managing bibliographies
- GCC:** Gulf Cooperation Council
- HALAL:** Arabic - Permitted/allowed
- HELIAIA:** Greek – public court
- ICT:** Information and Communication Technology
- IJMA:** Arabic – consensus
- IJTIHAD:** Arabic – independent interpretive judgment
- ISEGORIA:** Greek – speak in public
- KHALIFA:** Arabic – vicegerent and representative) of God
- KRATIA:** Greek – Rule or Authority
- MAJLS:** Arabic – a Council or a Board
- MEDINA:** Islamic city state of Medina in AD 622
- NVIVO:** analysis software tool for classifying, sorting and arranging information in qualitative research
- OECD:** Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development
- POGAR:** Programme on Governance in the Arab Region
- QURAN:** The Muslims' holy book revealed to the Prophet Mohammed
- SHARIA:** Arabic – the sovereign laws ordained by God
- SHIA:** Arabic – Islamic sect
- SHURA:** Arabic – the consultation mechanism in important political decisions made in Muslim society
- STRATEGOI:** Greek – leader of the army
- SUNNA:** Arabic – a compilation of Prophet's sayings, teachings and traditions.
- SUNNI:** Islamic sect
- TAWHEED:** Arabic – Unity of God
- UMMAH:** Arabic – population
- ZAKAT:** Arabic – charity system

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## 1. RESEARCH INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES

### 1.1. Introduction

“Bahrain ends a political debate by cancelling e-voting in the 2006 elections” was the main headline in the national and regional media during the first week of October 2006. Following a heated debate between government and opposition parties that lasted for three months, the Bahraini Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs announced that his country would not apply e-voting in the 2006 municipal and parliamentary elections.

Outlining the Government’s plan, the Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs issued a statement by saying that the government will work over the next four years to prepare the society and the political parties to make them aware of e-voting and to evolve consensus on e-voting. This – the achieving of consensus and the support of all stakeholders for e-voting in the 2010 elections, in the context of the heat, pressure and debate that has taken place around implementing e-voting in Bahrain - is easier said than done. This thesis reports on a case study inquiry into the utilisation of information and communication technology for enhancing and transforming democracy in Bahrain. The study proposes an e-democracy strategy for Bahrain that includes e-voting.

Bahrain is an archipelago of 33 low-lying islands located in the heart of the Arabian Gulf and connected to its neighbour Saudi Arabia by a manmade bridge. Bahrain has a population of 742,000, of which 62 per cent are citizens and 38 per cent are expatriates. More than 35 per cent of the total population is less than 20 years old (CIO, 2006). Bahrain’s political landscape is seemingly complex for a small country, as proponents of most political ideologies, from socialists to liberals, as well as both Sunni and Shia Islamists can be found there. The gathering pace of the nascent movement towards democracy results in diverse

political discourses, making Bahrain somewhat unique in the region (Jeffreys, 2006).

Bahrain has been populated since prehistoric times. Its strategic location between East and West, fertile lands, fresh water, and pearl diving made Bahrain a centre of urban settlement throughout history in the Persian Gulf and it has brought rule and influence from the Assyrians, Babylonians, Greeks, Persians, and finally the Arabs, under whom the island became Muslim. Bahrain was in the ancient times known as Dilmun, Tylos (its Greek given name) and Awal (Mugnier, 2007). Since the late 18th Century the Al-Khalifa family ruled the islands. In order to secure Bahrain from returning to Persian control, the Emirate entered into a treaty relationship with the United Kingdom and became a British protectorate (Lienhardt 1975, p.67). Bahrain declared its independence in 1971 (Mansfield, 1980),

Though relatively small in size and population, Bahrain has achieved a high level of social and economic development in a short period. The road networks, international airport, telecommunications, public services, medical facilities and university are well developed. Bahrain has one of the highest levels of information and communication technology in the Gulf region (Al Amer 2003, p. 4).

After inheriting the leadership of Bahrain from his father in 2000, His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa established a committee to map out a strategy for transforming the nation from an emirate to a constitutional monarchy within two years. The upshot was a National Action Charter in which the King committed to create a bicameral legislature with a directly elected legislative house and a consultative appointed house. In mid-February 2001 the Charter was presented to the people of Bahrain in the form of a national referendum. An overwhelming 98.4 per cent voted for it, thus paving the way for a more democratic form of government in the country (Jeffreys, 2006, Gulf Centre for Strategic Studies, 2002).

Exactly one year after the approval of the referendum, a new constitution was unveiled; with this, Bahrain was established as a constitutional monarchy with a bicameral legislature consisting of an elected parliament with full legislative powers and a consultative council appointed by the King (Bahrain 2008). On May 9, 2002, the Kingdom of Bahrain held its first parliamentary elections since 1973. More than half of the population turned out, and it is notable that 52 per cent of those who voted were women. Four year later, the second round of elections was conducted in 2006 with even wider participation and a greater success in democratic evolution.

Since the introduction of political reforms there have been many initiatives by the country's leadership to gain a position as a leading global player. The Economic Development Board (EDB) under the leadership of H.H. the Crown prince has initiated labour market, economic, educational and land reform programs. Similarly, under the Chairmanship of H.H. the Deputy Prime Minister, an e-government program is in place to streamline the delivery of government services. Other notable programs are an administrative reform program under the leadership of H.E. the Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs and a health sector reform program under the leadership of His Excellency the Health Minister. Each of these programmes addressing specific sectors aims to position Bahrain at the forefront of development so that it can achieve a leading position in the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries (GCC) region (EDB, 2005).

Speaking on the vision and aspirations of the nation, His Highness the Crown Prince stated: "Shaping the Future is not an easy task, there are too many intangibles in the horizon, but it is important to have a clear vision and clear goals. These goals can transform Bahrain from a regional pioneer into a genuine global player" (Lidstone, 2007).

The aforementioned referendum was the first in an Arab nation to utilise modern information and communication technology (ICT) to facilitate the voting process

(Al Amer 2003). The researcher was involved in setting up the ICT infrastructure for the referendum. The present research interest is born out of this involvement, and seeks to develop an e-democracy strategy for the Kingdom of Bahrain where democracy is the early stages of development.

Though the practice of democracy is relatively new to Bahrain variants of it have been practiced around the world for the last 2,500 years. The Greeks were the first to be interested in the various aspects of socio-political systems, and they established the first democracy. The different forms of democracy are discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis.

Over the past century, astonishing changes in technology have taken place. Whereas it used to take days, weeks, or months to travel to certain places a century ago, it is now possible to travel to most places by plane in only a matter of hours. More recently, the advent of ICT has increased the speed and lowered the cost at which social communication takes place. Indeed the Internet and new technologies allow citizens to seamlessly communicate, collaborate and exchange ideas across cities and nations without having to travel. This creates the possibility of using these technologies for democratic participation and for improving democratic systems and processes.

The capacity to communicate is central to democracy. ICT development will, in some respects, sweep away the difficulties that have arisen in recent decades by providing 24/7 access to information about government, politics and policy matters. It constitutes a two-way system of direct communication between politicians and policy developers (King, 2006).

Many governments around the world are promoting citizen awareness regarding policies, programmes and strategies on using websites, and are attempting to engage different stakeholders in participatory decision-making (U.N, 2005). Some governments such as those of the United Kingdom and Canada have opened an Internet dialogue with their constituents for the purpose of exploring the issues of

democracy and engagement in the electronic age. Coleman and Ward (2005) researched online campaigning in the 2005 UK general elections and confirmed that use of the Internet for elections has grown significantly since 2001, and there has not been any less use of the Internet for political purposes.

The Internet has thus created new forms of communication and information sharing, resulting in global citizens who want to be more engaged in the affairs of government (Riley 2004, p. 2). There are massive opportunities for the enhancement of democratic processes via electronic interaction. New technologies can enable information transfer at a marginal cost almost instantaneously, overcoming the barriers of distance and timing. The Internet and other new technologies can act as an enabler for the enhancement of existing democratic practices as well being a catalyst for democratic transformation.

According to Thornton (2002), the most promising aspects of the Internet that can rejuvenate democracy in the public sphere include:

*the ability of small interest groups to find and communicate with each other, the ability for individuals and smaller groups with fewer resources to present their points of view to a large number of people, the easy availability of a much greater range of points of view, the longevity of materials on the Internet, from journalistic, academic and private sources, the interactivity that is possible between web sites and their audiences and the formation of online communities.*

The Hansard Society's e-democracy program is a good example reflecting the aforementioned potential. It was set up by Professor Stephen Coleman with an aim to understand infrastructure requirements necessary to make the internet useful for democracy and to explore how parliament might interact with the public using the internet. The program set up some experimental online consultations that one way or other became successful. One of the most significant of these experiments was the internet consultation set up in 2002 on a piece of legislation

while it was being considered in parliament. Reports were submitted to the parliamentary committee every two weeks on discussions coming from the website. It was the success of such ventures that led to their advising role to the British government on e-democracy (Bishop et al, 2002).

On the other hand, it is argued that in spite of having a range of e-democracy tools, opportunities and possibilities and some significant experience of using them in different contexts, the penetration and adoption of e-democracy remains limited (Pratchett et al, 2006). Ward et al (2005) studied knowledge attitudes and behaviour of citizens regarding ICT as a means of political engagement. The study confirmed that although the Internet has potential to deepen public engagement in a democracy, it has attracted only a small minority of voters who are generally already politically active and privileged (Ward et al. 2005). They argued that the Internet's democratic potential will remain untapped without considerable effort by legislators to change the culture of representation.

Similarly, one of the studies conducted by Ward et al (2007, p. 14) about MPs and their use of Internet reveals that there is growing parliamentary web activity, and that email and the Internet are becoming a part of normal political life, helping to break down geographical boundaries and distance barriers between MPs and citizens. However it is argued that much online activity is an extension of MPs online presence, and that much more can be done to enhance democracy using ICT.

In this context, the address given by the Prime Minister of Bahrain to the National Council urges parliament and government to adopt technology in all walks of life including the exercise of democracy. The Prime Minister confirmed the Government's commitment to improving its performance by a high degree of transparency and affirmed that all information related to governmental activities will be easily accessible electronically. He further unveiled the Government's plans to introduce electronic government in all areas, capitalising on the kingdom's excellent telecommunication infrastructure (Government of Bahrain,

2002b). This study explores the use of technology to enhance democracy in Bahrain by further complementing the administration's advancement of e-government.

In the last few years, political parties and interest groups in most countries have maintained their own websites containing easily accessible information. Politicians and parliamentarians can be contacted using the Internet (Gibson et al, 2004). Similarly, there are possibilities for conducting voting, discussion forums and opinion polls using the Web. Some countries are experimenting with these new possibilities, and even foresee the use of ICT to set up a more direct form of democracy replacing the existing representative form.

Thus there are two postulates. One is based on the "presumption that any political use of new technologies takes place within existing institutional frameworks of parliaments, executive branches, and political parties" (Gibson, et al, 2004), and the other advocates the possibility of transforming representative forms of democracy into more direct ones.

There are, however, opposing views of prominent political theorists like Benjamin Barber who reject the use of 'innovative technologies' as a panacea for addressing the problems of modern democracies. He argues that these technologies are detrimental to democratic decision-making, as they tend to further privatise politics and replace deliberative debate in public (Barber, 1999)

This thesis attempts to study these debates further in order to explore what is suitable for Bahrain and the Gulf region. According to Riley (2004), significant human and financial resources are required to develop e-democracy programs, and he highlights further issues:

*Many leaders of government, such as former Prime Minister, Tony Blair of Great Britain, argue that the nature of democracy itself needs to be reinvigorated. This is a view held by many, arguing that while technologies*

*might contribute to the renewing and reinvigorating of democracy, in fact, what is needed is robust debate and discussion on the nature of democracy and how is it changing in a world that has seen monumental cultural, scientific, economic and legal shifts in the past two hundred years. It is already posited that technology has accelerated the pace of change but that as technology is simply an instrument of change, and not the result, then it is the resultant, emerging forces that need to be addressed (Riley 2004, p. 4)*

Furthermore, it is said that a lack of financial and human resources, concerns about social exclusion, over-representation of certain groups, concerns about an erosion of face to face relationships with citizens and a perceived lack of demand for e-democracy are barriers to a successful implementation of electronic democracy (Karakaya, 2005)

This research will address the aforementioned issues in the Bahraini context and will develop an e-democracy strategy for this country. Riley (2004, P. 6) further argues that:

*there is no single agreed-upon approach to how e-Democracy will eventually take form, but universal agreement that e-Democracy must be nurtured and developed and that it is subject to constant change as the dynamics of society change and new information and communication technologies are developed.*

The proposition that there is a universal agreement that e-democracy must be nurtured could be arguable, yet it can be maintained that information and communication technology can contribute to enhancing some aspects of democracy. Furthermore it has been stated that, while digital democracy is possible, there are wide variations in adopting and implementing practices (Kim and Holzer, 2006). Experts who spoke in the Bahrain e-Voting Forum agreed with the proposition that “there is no single agreed upon approach to the



implementation of e-Democracy” and suggested that each country must adopt what is most appropriate to its social and political climate (CIO, 2006b). During the panel discussion which marked the close of Forum, the speakers also agreed that Bahrain can learn from other countries’ e-Democracy implementations. Moreover, all of them felt that Bahrain has many pre-requisites already in place for realising e-democracy. Thus, the current research is undertaken to explore the frontiers of e-democracy in Bahrain by studying the theory and practice of e-democracy throughout the world and adapting these for the kingdom.

## 1.2. Research Questions

The researcher aims to develop an e-democracy strategy appropriate to Bahrain. The central research question is:

What e-democracy strategy, if any, is most suitable for Bahrain?

The overall approach in answering the above question is summarised in the table 1.1 below. After reviewing various definitions of strategy the strategy formulation framework by Kotler (2000) was used. The e-Democracy model by Chadwick and May (2003) was used as a theoretical basis for the study. The researcher selected qualitative case study after reviewing different approaches and methods available for the researcher. The researcher used Nvivo software to aid data analysis and Endnote for keeping track of the references used.

Table 1.1 : Summary of Research Approach and Methods

Framework	Strategy Formulation Framework (Kotler 2000)
Model	Managerial-Consultative-Participatory Model (Chadwick and May 2003)
Research Approach and Method	Qualitative Research, Case Study (Creswell 1998), (Yin 2003), (Stake 1995)
Data Collection	Documents, Interviews, Focus Groups (Yin 2003)
Software	Nvivo and Endnote

The central research question was broken down into subsidiary questions (SQs).

SQ1: What are the current e-democracy practices elsewhere in the world?

SQ2: What are the visions, dreams and aspirations of stakeholders in Bahrain with respect to democracy in general and e-democracy in particular?

SQ3: What are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats with respect to the case in Bahrain?

SQ4: What specific forms of e-democracy application are particularly relevant and achievable in Bahrain – for example e-voting, e-referendum, online opinion polls and e-consultation? (These terms are further explained in Chapter 2.)

SQ 5: What constraints must be overcome and what conditions must be met in order for e-democracy to be successful and to benefit all the people of Bahrain?

The outcome of the research is the Bahrain e-Democracy Strategy and associated processes to formulate the strategy and a model as detailed in the remaining chapters of this thesis.

### 1.3. Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is organised into eight chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the research and its background and describes the research objectives including the research and subsidiary questions. It gives a brief summary of the research design and the method used for the study.

Chapters 2 to 5 constitute the literature review. Chapter 2 is devoted to discussing the theory and practice of democracy. In this chapter various definitions, values and forms of democracy are analysed. This chapter also discusses the Islamic perspective of democracy.

Chapter 3 presents a discussion on democratisation process in the GCC countries and its wider context and it compares and contrasts the state of democracy in Bahrain and other neighbouring Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Countries. This chapter argues that Bahrain has in many occasions been in the forefront of reforms in the GCC countries.

Chapter 4 is devoted to discussing the theory and practice of electronic democracy. Different views, definitions and models of e-democracy are discussed first. The chapter then covers the e-democracy practice of some leading countries. This chapter also contains a section on e-voting. It concludes by listing lessons for Bahrain and identifying issues for investigation that are later used for collecting empirical data.

Chapter 5 discusses the concepts of strategy and aims to establish a working model and definition to be used for this research. It defines the concepts of e-government strategy and presents some case studies from leading countries.

Chapter 6 discusses different research methods and justifies the selection of case study methods for the current research. It presents the detailed research design for the study, covering all the essential elements of case study research. Finally it presents the data collection and data analysis strategy chosen for this work.

Chapter 7 records the actual data collection and analysis. It reports the analysis of the qualitative data based on the method chosen. Key themes and patterns emerging from the data are presented using descriptive and narrative approaches.

Chapter 8 presents the research synthesis. From the data analysis the e-democracy vision, strategy and goals are synthesised and presented. The chapter ends by discussing the study's contribution to existing knowledge, issues for further research, limitations of the present research and a conclusion.

## 2. DEMOCRACY DEFINITIONS, VALUES AND FORMS

The purpose of this research is to develop an e-democracy strategy for the Kingdom of Bahrain. This chapter discusses theory of democracy with respect to its definitions, forms and values. The chapter also discusses Islamic notion of democracy.

The discussion on the theory and practice of democracy helps to come up with an e-Democracy strategy that not only contributes to enhancing democracy in Bahrain but also ensures that e-Democracy implementation does not undermine any of the fundamental values of democracy.

### 2.1. Definitions

*In the case of a word like democracy not only is there no agreed definition but the attempt to make one is resisted from all sides.... The defenders of any kind of regime claim that it is a democracy, and fear that they might have to stop using the word if it were tied down to any one meaning. (Orwell, 1946).*

Democracy is a word much used and even more misused; it has many meanings (Lewis 1996). Similarly, for some people democracy is a mechanism to ensure that governments follow the general interest, for others it is a safeguard of individual liberty, for others it allows for self-government, for others again it moulds a particular and desirable cast of character (Lively 1977, p. 112)

It is difficult to accurately define the concept of democracy, and there is no consensus on any of the definitions given. The most commonly accepted meaning of democracy derives from the Greek words *demos* (people) and *kratia* (rule or authority) translating to 'rule by the people' (Davies, 1978 and Dahl, 1989).

Any attempt to clarify this definition, however, subjects it to different interpretations (Jahanbaksh 2001). For example Mayo (1960) quotes Gladstone:

*No people of a magnitude to be called a nation has ever, in strictness, governed itself; the utmost which appears to be attainable, under the conditions of human life, is that it should choose its governors, and that it should on select occasions bear directly on their action.*

Similarly, MacIver (1950) raises concerns about the definition of democracy, arguing that it is not a way of governing, but of determining who shall govern and broadly to what ends. He argues that people “do not and cannot govern”; rather “they control the government”. Mayo (1960) adds to this by stating that a political system is democratic to the extent that the decision-makers are under effective popular control.

Moreover, in the definition “rule by the people”, the term “people” was construed narrowly to mean free adult male citizens, and thus comprised a small proportion of the total population of a small state. This definition helps to distinguish democracy from other ancient political systems. Although this approach was descriptive, quite workable given the scale of operations in Athens, it is in no way feasible in a modern state. It makes sense to say that one person rules, or that a few people do, no matter how large the state; but it makes almost no sense to say that the people rule (Mayo, 1960). However, there are exceptions to this, as in the case of the use of “direct democratic devices” such as the referendum (Mayo, 1960). Given the advancement in information and communication technologies, more direct forms of democracy are becoming plausible.

Another argument is that popular participation has not been restricted to democracies only. Even autocrats have (sometimes) commanded the allegiance of an overwhelming majority. Majority rule is thus not exclusive to democracy. Similarly, “rule by the people” presupposes that these people delegate their powers to their representatives.

Furthermore, Sartori (1962) argues that it is difficult to define democracy and points out that such definitions are often misleading. It is a name for something, which does not exist (in an ideal sense). Although the word democracy literally means "rule by the people", this does not really help to understand what an actual democracy is (Sartori, 1962). On the other hand, Dahl (1956) has pointed out that in reality democracies are rather "polyarchies". These debates pertaining to the difficulty in defining the term "democracy" are valid and will continue. What is important as regards this research is to get a broader view of different arguments and pick out what is relevant for a Bahraini e-democracy strategy. In this context the researcher maintains that the theory and practice of democracy do exist, while the degree to which a regime may be called democratic varies depending on the extent to which ideal values are attained.

Continuing the debate on defining the term democracy, there are two common approaches used by different authors to define the term (Jahanbaksh 2001):

- 1 Rejai (1967) categorises definitions of democracy into four groups: a) normative or classical definitions, concerned with certain values or norms of democracy; b) empirical, describing political realities; c) definitions that are neither strictly normative nor empirical but have elements of both; and d) ideological, which differs from the first three by emphasising a collective mental outlook, on certain shared beliefs, attitudes and habits (Rejai 1967)
- 2 Huntington (1991) considers that democracy has been defined in terms of sources of governmental authority, the purposes served by government, and procedures for constituting government (Huntington 1991).

Rejai's approach fits the current study well, as it takes democratic values and ideals and practical and empirical elements as well as ideological elements of democracy into account and conforms to this author's viewpoint. Moreover, as a relatively new democracy Bahrain needs to absorb all these elements in order to build a robust democracy.

The concept of democracy is manifested through its ideals and values, yet the practice of democracy in real life may be far from these ideals. According to

Sartori (1962), the tension between fact and value is greater for democracy than for many other systems. Therefore, one way to define democracy is by considering “what it ought to be” and another by regarding “what it is”. The former definition is concerned with ideals and the latter with reality, although these are not mutually exclusive, but are rather often complementary in nature (Sartori, 1962).

Abraham Lincoln characterised democracy in his famous aphorism “government of the people, by the people, for the people” (Lincoln, 1863). This poses problems of interpretation, especially when attempting to identify exactly what is meant by “government of the people” and “government by the people”; however, the last phrase “for the people” is not ambiguous. It embodies the interests of and benefits to the people taken as a whole in a polity (for Lincoln, it did not include Native Americans). Because of its uncertainties, Lincoln’s definition cannot incontrovertibly qualify as a meaningful definition of democracy (Sartori, 1962, Jahanbaksh, 2001).

The following definitions by various authors give an idea of the difficulty involved in providing an appropriate definition to the concept of democracy:

*Bryce (1931) describes the word democracy in its stricter, classical sense, as “denoting a government in which the will of the majority of qualified citizens rules”*

*Schumpeter (1992) describes the democratic method as an “institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote”*

*According to Huntington (1991) a political system is democratic to the extent that its “most powerful collective decision makers are selected through fair, honest, and periodic elections in which candidates freely compete for votes and in which virtually all the adult population is eligible to vote”.*



*According to Mayo (1960) a political system is democratic to the extent that the decision makers are under effective popular control and the system is devoted to providing the machinery and opportunities for individuals to pursue their own private ends*

*According to Chi-Ha (1977) democracy “is an ideology opposed to silence, a system that respects a free logos and freedom of speech. It encourages the cacophony of dissent. A political system where everything is not revealed to the public is not a democracy”,*

“By democracy, I mean real control of decision making in all spheres of society, public and private, by non-elite people. This is the revolutionary democracy of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the participative system of John Stuart Mill. It is the class-, caste- and race-emancipatory projects of Marx, Gandhi and Mandela and the grassroots democracy of second-wave feminism” (Laxer 1995). This definition further relates to Rejai’s third approach to defining democracy, which is neither strictly normative nor empirical but has elements of both. The control of decision making in the hands of non-elite people relates more to practical aspects of definition, whereas “class-, caste- and race-emancipatory” values are concerned more with ideological definitions of democracy.

Another view, a discourse-oriented concept of democracy, is based on Habermas’s work. This idealises the concept of the public sphere and rational debate in democracy. In the public sphere, which is a part of social life, citizens can discuss and exchange their views on important matters, and thus public opinions can be formed for the common good. The public discussion must take the form of unemotional, rational, critical debate which focuses on substantive content. Participants must have a common interest in truth and must speak as equals. Thus, a discourse-oriented concept of democracy requires that affected stakeholders must be included in the debate, and that they have the option of interacting in a free, equal and unfettered manner without any restriction of topic (Habermas 1989).

It can be understood from the foregoing discussion that it is difficult to agree on a common definition of democracy. However, the author agrees with the viewpoint that democracy can be interpreted in terms either of the ideal and necessary values or of more empirical and procedural norms as practiced today.

## 2.2. Democracy – Ideals and Values

Democracy as a political system must have identifiable features other than the people's actually governing, to distinguish it from other methods of making public policies (Mayo 1960). For the purpose of e-democracy research in Bahrain, the researcher will review democratic values in order to ensure that the strategy that is developed does not conflict with these overarching values, and does not consequently make anti-democratic propositions. In other words, if e-democracy threatens the privacy of citizens, it must conflict with basic democratic values.

### 2.2.1. Equality

Discussion of democracy revolves around the concepts of "equality", "popular sovereignty" and "self-government (Sartori, 1962). These distinguishing features make a system democratic in both theory and practice; their absence would entail the contrary state of affairs. The first of the principles on which the theory and practice of democracy is built is the concept of human equality. It is the notion that all are equal with respect to various rights in society (Jahanbaksh, 2001). The degree of equality enjoyed in different democracies by different people is again a subject of debate. The issues discussed and some of the campaigns and conflicts governing the rights of women, minorities and disabled people in modern democracies revolve around unequal treatment in these countries or systems.

Equality among citizens with respect to their political rights is one of the paramount virtues of democracy, one which ideally provides everyone with an equal chance to participate in political affairs. It could be argued that one of the

forces which drove the development of democracy was the quest for equality. An equal right to speak for all citizens and equality before the law were assumed to be characteristics of Athenian democracy (Sealey, 1976, in Dahl, 1989). In a representative democracy the concept of equality is subject to debate, as this equality is achieved through the process of representation; and one can argue that this concept is consequently sacrificed. However it remains important to consider equality as one of the main pillars of any form of democracy.

Ross (1952) recognises equality as a democratic idea “in so far as the principle of majority rule gives to every single citizen exactly the same possibility of exercising political influence to the extent of participating in elections”. Similarly, Sartori (1962) holds the view that if there are no legal barriers to political involvement, equality of opportunity and political equality would be established. However, Dahl (1989) argues that if citizens were highly unequal with respect to resources such as income, wealth and status, it is likely that they would be politically unequal (Dahl, 1989). Lively (1977) concurs with this view, stating that “universal suffrage and the adoption of appropriate decision making mechanisms are insufficient to reach to political equality”. The different arguments here have their own merits, yet one can still argue strongly that the notion of equality is central to democratic theory.

Bryce (1931) distinguishes five different kinds of equality.

- a) Civil Equality involves each citizen’s equal right to be protected in respect of person and estate and family relations, and to appeal to the law for such protection.
- b) Political Equality means the right of each citizen to have an equal share in the government of the community, and to be equally eligible to hold any post in its service.
- c) Social Equality, in which no formal distinctions are drawn by law or custom between different ranks or classes.

- d) Natural Equality is concerned with the essential similarity that exists at birth between all human beings. They are born with the same five senses, come naked into the world possessing similar bodily organs and presumably similar mental capacities, desires, and passions.
- e) Economic Equality means the attempt to expunge all differences in wealth by allotting to every man and woman an equal share in worldly goods and providing equal opportunity.

The classification of equality and the way it is defined can be subject of debate. For instance, with respect to political equality, minors are not given equal rights in the share of government, and the voting age is not decided by them. Similarly, the issue of natural equality is brought into question when someone is born unequal – say, without one of the five senses. It can also be argued that sometimes the difference between bodily organs has been seen as a reason for different treatment of men and women in a “democracy”.

Of the above, the concept of political equality is the main point of discussion. However it must be noted that political equality cannot exist without its civil counterpart. Ensuring equal citizenship for minorities remains a contentious problem in increasingly multicultural modern democracies. In America there are concerns that African-Americans, Hispanics, and gays and lesbians are treated as second-class citizens, and there are similar concerns in Britain regarding Afro-Caribbeans, South Asians and Gypsies. Citizens who are routinely avoided, ignored, excluded, patronized and not regarded as full members of the political community are not equal citizens (Conover et al. 2004)

Thus, to be equal citizens, individuals also need civic equality or equal standing in civil society. Similarly, lack of respect for social equality, natural equality and economic equality in a society can hinder democracy. For example, economic inequality may lead to political inequality, as people having greater wealth may gain greater political influence.

Political equality is a principle that is common to both Athenian and modern democracies. In the Athenian sense, political equality is concerned with

citizenship, whereas in modern societies it is manifested in terms of the equal right to vote (Jahanbaksh 2001)

Mayo (1960) considers political equality as institutionalised in the voting process, consisting of the following features (Mayo 1960):

- a) Every adult should have the vote.
- b) One person should have one vote.
- c) Each vote should count equally.
- d) If every vote is to count equally, the corollary follows that the number of representatives elected should be directly proportional to the number of votes cast for them.

Karkow (2006) states that the “one man one vote” principle has failed in the United States. According to Banzhaf (1966) there can be significant undervaluation of the weight of a vote depending upon where the voter resides, and this causes significant inequalities in representation. Thus, in practice this institutionalised mechanism of political equality has failed in countries such as the U.S. and the U.K.

### 2.2.2. Liberty

Another key democratic ideal is the concept of liberty. The word liberty, like democracy, does not have any clear or definite meaning. *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*<sup>1</sup> defines it “as a state of freedom, especially opposed to political subjection, imprisonment or slavery”. Two categories of liberty are civil liberty (defined as “the absence of arbitrary restraint and the assurance of a body of rights”) and political liberty, which “consists of the right of individuals to participate in government by voting and by holding public office.”

Two major categories pertaining to liberty are political freedom and freedom of expression and organisation. Political freedom guarantees citizens the right to

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<sup>1</sup> *Encyclopedia Britannica*, s.v. “Liberty”.

participate freely and without fear and, include voting, standing and campaigning for office (Jahanbaksh 2001).

Political freedom entails freedom of candidates to stand for election other than for a single party, and to run for office undeterred by legal obstacles. It also include the freedom of the supporters to press their claims publicly, to put forward alternative policies and to criticise the present decision-makers and other candidates (Mayo, 1960).

Freedom of expression and organisation include many rights including freedom of speech, publication and communication of ideas through various media. It also entails a citizen's freedom to form associations and assemblies for the purpose of seeking to realise their political goals without any fear of punishment (Jahanbaksh, 2001).

Cohen divides this category of freedom into the freedom to propose and to oppose democracy, which requires its citizens to be free not only to oppose policies and candidates put forward by their community but also to propose alternative courses of action and to participate constructively (Cohen, 1972).

### 2.2.3. Majority Principle

It is difficult to understand and consequently to specify whether this should be treated as a defining value or as an instrument of democracy. On the one hand it is seemingly difficult for the majority to make all the decisions; on the other, if decision making is entrusted to a few then the rule applies not to the majority but only to this few (Jahanbaksh, 2001). Cohen (1972) discusses this ambiguity with respect to what proportion of majority is legitimate. Is it two-thirds or three-quarters? There is also confusion regarding the nature of the body within which the majority is required. Is it the majority of those who actually vote? Or is it of those who are entitled to vote? Or is it of all members (Cohen 1972)? On the other hand Mayo (1960) points out the legitimacy of the decisions made by representatives on the basis of the "consent of the governed"; he argues:

*[in an] electoral system based on equality of voting a majority of the representatives have been chosen by a majority of the voters, and hence the majority rule in the legislature yields decisions as legitimate 'as if' they had been made directly by a majority of the voters, and indeed by a majority of all the adult citizens*

The common assumption is that in an electoral system based on equality of voting, all the representatives have been chosen by a majority of the voters, and hence majority rule in the legislature yields decisions as legitimate “as if” they had been made directly by a majority of the voters, and indeed by a majority of all adult citizens. This is why this principle is sometimes called “majority rule” (Mayo, 1960).

Another aspect of the majority principle is that the minority should accept the legitimacy of a decision by the majority, and only seek to overturn the will of the majority within the rules of the system. A consequence of this, suggested by some (at least), is that any majority should try to ensure that no minority becomes excluded and disillusioned by constant unfavourable treatment: this has been used as an argument for toleration in democracies (toleration being the policy of not punishing something which is thought to be wrong or with which there is general disagreement. Thus Halal slaughter of animals for food is tolerated in the UK, even though it would violate animal welfare standards supported by a large majority if done in a non-religious context (BBC 2003)).

In fact, if governments depended for their legitimacy on this strict relation of votes to representatives, half the democratic governments of the world could at times claim no rightful authority from the “people” (Mayo 1960).

Another issue is the possibility that the representatives chosen are wildly unrepresentative of the voters as a whole. An example would be a legislature in which nearly all representatives were male or none were members of ethnic minorities. Alternatively, the majority of the representatives considering an issue might take a view different from that of the majority of the population. Hallowell (1965) argues that majority rule represents the best judgment of a society:

*The principle of majority rule is founded upon the belief that the widest possible popular discussion and participation in the formulation of policy is likely to yield wiser decisions than a discussion limited to the few. The decision recorded by majority vote may then be fairly said to represent not a portion of society but the whole people (Hallowell, 1965)*

However, one can argue that though theoretically these discussions may be possible, such discussions are not widespread in modern democracies, thereby questioning the legitimacy of decisions. Developments in ICT and the advent of e-democracy, however, open up new possibilities in this regard. A detailed discussion of e-democracy will be found in Chapter 4.

The institutional embodiment of the majority principle in modern democracies is by way of choosing the policy-makers at elections held at more or less regular intervals (Mayo 1960). However, elections can only be considered democratic to the extent that citizens have alternatives, they participate in such elections and all votes have equal weight (Haskell, 2000). Furthermore, factors such as the degree of fairness with which the alternatives are presented to the voters and the people's ability to evaluate the alternatives need to be considered as the democratic character of a given representative democracy is considered. There are thus ambiguities associated with the "majority principle", which yet remains an important and an inseparable value for any democratic system.

### 2.3. Direct and Representative Democracy

This section aims at reviewing the literature on different types of democracy, which is classified into direct and representative varieties. Electronic democracy is yet another category referring to the application of ICT to enhance or transform existing forms. Electronic democracy is introduced and discussed in Chapter 4.

#### 2.3.1. Direct Democracy

It was in the fifth century BC that the Greeks laid foundations for a transformation in the political sphere. Several city states governed by various undemocratic



rulers were transformed into a system where people could directly participate in government (Dahl, 1989). Such a model, where there is direct participation of all citizens, is referred to as direct democracy by Kakabadse et al (2003), immediate democracy by Max Weber, pure democracy by Madison and simple democracy by Paine (Sartori, 1962). It represents the highest form of participation, and it can be argued that such a form of government can serve as a standard against which all forms of government are measured (Haskell, 2000).

Citizens played an essential role in the activities of the city's institutions and simultaneously acted as both ruler and subject. The citizen made laws by taking part in public debates. Thus, when he obeyed the law, he respected and obeyed his own laws and decrees. This government of the people by the people was the Athenian democratic ideal. Summarising the Greek vision of democracy, Dahl (1989) outlined six essential requirements of a direct democratic order. They are:

- a) Citizens must be sufficiently harmonious, with no conflicting interests.
- b) Citizens must be highly homogenous so not to create political conflict.
- c) The citizen body must be small enough for them to acquire the knowledge of their city and to assemble at one place.
- d) Citizens must be able to assemble and directly decide on political matters.
- e) Citizens' participation was not limited to the assembly but also involved administration of the city.
- f) The city-state must ideally be fully autonomous.

Direct democracy was possible in Athens because it was organised within a restricted structure. Each Athenian citizen sat at the assembly (the Ecclesia), and the public court (Heliaia), to speak in public (Isegoria), to propose an amendment and to judge. Magistrates were appointed by lot. This system was regarded as most democratic of all. However it did not allow any room for the intrigues and political pressures or manoeuvres. Certain positions, like the leader of the army

(strategoí), were not remunerated and required particular competencies, and could not thus be occupied by ordinary citizens. Consequently, all reputable positions belonged to the great Athenian families (Jones 1999).

### 2.3.2. Representative Democracy

There is no current experience with direct democracy. All our democracies are indirect, wherein people participate in government through representatives. Such a system of government is therefore often called representative democracy (Sartori, 1962).

In large states, direct participation has not been sensible or even possible, and participation takes place through elected representatives, who in turn decide on policy, resulting in representative democracy. In a direct democracy it is argued that the average person does not have the resources, time, ability or inclination to become an expert on political issues. Thus, a representative democracy is where citizens within a country elect representatives to make decisions for them. The representatives are responsible to their citizens. In this way they are held accountable to them.

The differences between ancient and modern democracy lie in the nature of participation by the people in the government. In ancient Athenian democracy, the people directly participated in government and ruled themselves. In modern democracies, however, the participation of the people is indirect (Connolly and Dodge 2000), (Sartori 1962). Republican forms of government are referred to as representative democracies on the basis that they permit citizens to elect representatives who are delegated the power to legislate on their behalf. However, the extent to which a republic is democratic in its ideal sense can vary (Hague and Harrop, 2001). Indeed, although representative governments acquire a democratic character through the selection of the representatives of the people by the people via elections, it is the extent to which democratic principles and values such as equality, liberty and majority rule (as discussed in section 2.2) are adhered to that makes one system more democratic than another.

For example, ancient Roman government, although a republic, was at the lower end of the democratic continuum: it only permitted a small proportion of its citizenry to vote for the members of the Senate, the principle legislative and judicial body of Rome. Indeed, it is generally agreed that ancient Rome, although a republic, was not a democracy but more akin to an oligarchy. Thus, republicanism is not synonymous with democracy (Connolly and Dodge, 2000).

Participation in government in ancient democracies was lasting and comprehensive, consisting of joint deliberation by the physically present demos, whereas in modern democracy it is sporadic and limited to such events as demonstrations (Fuchs, 2003).

Direct democracies carried out deliberation by concurrent communication in public places like the Agora. In indirect democracies debate is through advocatory discussions by visually present representatives and journalists and subsequent communication with peers and family members. Another important difference lies in the nature of opinion-building. In modern democracies, on account of the scale involved, no joint deliberation by the citizens occurs (Fuchs, 2003). Given the advancement in technology, more avenues for joint deliberations are available. This is discussed in the section on e-democracy.

#### 2.4. Islamic Democracy

Articles 1 and 2 of the Bahrain Constitution (2002) state that the Religion of Bahrain is Islam and the Islamic Sharia is 'a' principal source for legislation. Therefore, it is important to investigate the Islamic concept of democracy as the Bahrain E-democracy strategy is developed. The analysis in this chapter is guided by the researcher's knowledge of Islam and his religious education, in addition to the literature that has been reviewed.

It has been argued that Islam is incompatible with democracy. From a non-Muslim perspective, allegations of terrorism and the wars and destruction in the Middle East and around the Muslim world are some reasons why people regard Islam as anti-democratic (Qadri, 2004, Jillani, 2006). It must be noted that Islam is often considered as anti-West rather than anti-democratic. Lewis (1996) states that one can discern elements in Islamic law and tradition that can assist the development of one or another form of democracy. The intent of the literature review is to help gain an understanding of those elements in Islam that support democracy.

Asad (1961), in his attempt to scope the principles of State and Government in Islam, asks whether Islam really demands of its followers a definite course of political and communal action, or whether it leaves, as some other religions do, all political action to be decided by the people themselves according to current circumstances. In other words, he is asking whether the mixing of religion with politics is a genuine postulate in Islam. Furthermore, it is argued that “there exists a diversity of viewpoints ranging on one hand from those who view democracy as a value-neutral operational mechanism on the basis of which a modern Islamic state can be constructed, to those who see democracy as a value-laden concept that tries to elevate human reason above divine revelation and is hence seen as being tantamount to kufr (disbelief in Islam)”(CSID 2001).

In deciding whether mixing religion and politics is an Islamic postulate or not, Asad (1961) argues that Islam covers all aspects of human life, be it spiritual, physical, individual, social, economic or political, and urges scholars and leaders to build an Islamic state based on underlying Islamic political concepts. One can differ with Asad here on the extent to which his vision of an Islamic state is pragmatic, yet one can discern that some of Asad’s arguments tie in with the ideals of a modern democratic system as discussed below.

Islam is a system that encompasses all aspects of life including the social, economic, cultural and political dimensions. The Holy Quran and the Sunna are

the two primary sources of knowledge in Islam, although there are varying interpretations of these sources by different schools of thought – for instance, among Sunnis and Shiites. The Quran is the Holy Scripture revealed to the Prophet Mohammed and the Sunna is a compilation of Prophet's sayings, teachings and traditions. Islam as a system of life provides clear guidance for political life, though the structure and form of political institutions is not well articulated. Rather, it is left to be decided by the people of a particular time and place in accordance with Sharia, the Islamic legal system.

Leading scholars like Sayyid Abul A'la Maududi, Ismail Raji Farouqi and Allama Iqbal agree that the political system of Islam is primarily based on the principles of *Tawheed* i.e. Unity of God (Voll and Esposito 1994). This central core of the Islamic political concept is driven by the sovereignty of God's will as revealed through the Quran – the Muslims' holy book – as opposed to the sovereignty of the people, which is the central core of western democratic thought. British constitutional theory gives sovereignty to the monarchy, but still gives full scope for democracy, and one could argue that a parallel can be drawn with the Islamic situation. This is in fact impossible, however, given the fact that the fundamental laws are ordained by divine law in Islam. It therefore differs from western concepts of democracy. Furthermore, concepts of consultation (*shura*), consensus (*ijma*), and independent interpretive judgment (*ijtihad*) have a key role in the development of Islamic democracy. Man is considered a vicegerent and representative of God and is tasked with running affairs of state according to Sharia using consultation, consensus and independent interpretive judgment. These concepts are explained below.

#### 2.4.1 Islam and Democracy - Principles

The institution of Shura is the mechanism by which public participation in important political decisions made by Muslim society is ensured. The Prophet Mohammed was ordered by God to conduct Shura among his companions in

matters where there was no clear revelation, as specified in the following verse (Osman 2000)

*“so pass over [Their (Companions) faults], and ask for (God's) forgiveness for them (companions); and consult them in affairs (of moment). Then, when thou hast taken a decision put thy trust in God. For God loves those who put their trust (in Him)” (The Holy Quran, 3: 159)*

The concept of Shura is intimately related to obedience to God, as mentioned in Quran:

*“Their [i.e. the Believers'] communal business [amr] is to be [transacted in] consultation among themselves.” (The Holy Quran, 42: 38)*

*“O ye who believe! Obey Allah, and obey the Messenger, and those charged with authority among you. If ye differ in anything among yourselves, refer it to Allah and His Messenger, if ye do believe in Allah and the Last Day: That is best and most suitable for final determination” (The Holy Quran, 4: 59)*

Islam advocates the application of Shura in all matters and at all levels, and urges people to consult each other even in the day to day affairs of family life. The Prophet had actively consulted his companions on many occasions and it is even argued that Shura was an obligatory duty even on the Prophet (Beekun and Badawi 1999; Osman 2000; Engineer 2003). Shura plays a very important role in decision making, stressing consensus building and providing a restraint on power and authority (Beekun and Badawi 1999). It must be noted that the concept of Shura is applicable to matters not explicitly covered by revelations. Commentators argue that Shura is the appropriate mechanism by which to decide upon secular themes, including political life.

It is not clear however whom to consult, scholars, relatives or the whole “Ummah” (population) (Khan, 2008). In traditional terms, this consultation should be limited to “Ahl Alhal wa Alaqd” (men who are pious and knowledgeable to exercise *ijtihad* and draw verdicts) (Al-Sharawi 1980, p. 39). Unlike traditionalists, modernists use the term ‘Ahl Alhal wa Alaqd’ as well, but to mean representatives who are to be publicly elected by the whole “Umma”, including non-Muslims (Nehnah, 1999, p. 54). Their argument is that it is impossible to deal with current related juridical and ethical issues without consulting the experts in various disciplines not just theologians.

The principle of Shura thus parallels the majority principle and the practice of public participation in modern democracy. However, in matters of faith, ethics and the discrimination between right and wrong, the majority principle is not applicable, as people do not necessarily follow the right path as ordained by religion (Osman 2000).

The concepts of consultation in Islam and modern day representative democracy may not correspond exactly. However, the idea of modern democracy and the Quranic injunction to consult other people is the same in spirit. The Quranic verse 4:59 in conjunction with the verses 3:159 and 42:38 quoted above imply that one has to submit to properly and democratically constituted authority in Islam (Engineer 2003).

The second principle, *Ijtihad*, means to derive religious opinions about subjects not mentioned in Islamic sources, in a manner that maintains the spirit and the overall framework of Islam. Thus, *Ijtihad* is the area in which Islam is silent, and in which one must therefore use one’s common sense, intellect and experience to arrive at an opinion that should be in conformity with the spirit of Islam (Asad 1961; Osman 2000).

Another concept that has a strong bearing on democracy is 'Ijma' meaning consensus. Ijma is considered a source of law in Islamic legal theory, and only the two textual sources, the Quran and the Sunna, have priority over it. It refers to the consensus of either the entire Muslim community or the scholars of a given era (CSID 2001). Thus, the concept of 'Ijma' is yet another fundamental democratic principle in Islam.

The relationship between Shura, Ijtihad and Ijma is explained by Asad (1961) in the following:

*The Sharia refrains deliberately from providing detailed regulations for all the manifold, changing requirements of our social existence. The need for continuous, temporal legislation is, therefore, self-evident. In an Islamic state, this legislation would relate to the many problems of administration not touched upon by the Sharia at all, as well as the problems with regard to which the Sharia has provided general principles but no detailed laws. In either instance it is up to the community to evolve the relevant, detailed legislation through an exercise of independent reasoning (Ijtihad) in consonance with the spirit of Islamic Law and the best interests of the nation. It goes without saying that in matters affecting the communal side of our life no legislative ijihad decisions can possibly be left to the discretion of individuals: they must be based on a definite consensus (ijma) of the whole community*

Asad argues that the Quranic injunction "*Their [the Believers'] communal business [amr] is to be [transacted in] consultation among themselves.*" (*The Holy Quran* 42:38) is the fundamental operative clause for statecraft and points out that it reaches into almost every department of political life. The word *amr* in this injunction refers to all affairs of a communal nature and therefore also to the manner in which the government of an Islamic state is to be established: that is, to the elective principle underlying all governmental authority. This injunction also demands that the transaction of all political business be strictly based on



consultation, indicating that the legislative powers of the state must be vested in an assembly chosen by the community. Such an assembly must be truly representative of the entire community - both men and women – and can be achieved only through free and general elections by means of the widest possible suffrage, including both men and women (Asad 1961). Therefore, when Islamic political concepts are broadened, the need for elective assembly emerges, paralleling democratic forms of government.

#### 2.4.2 The City of Medina

Historically, the first government in Islam, in city state of Medina in AD 622, was founded on democratic principles (Qadri 2004). The first constitution during the Prophet Mohammed's life was the Charter of Medina. This ordained that the tribes be organised into a federation. It was a pact signed by the Prophet and the main non-Muslim tribes, including Christians and Jews. The charter contains "the germ of the Islamic State" (Levy, 1957).

This charter became a way of life for the people of Medina. The charter included: a) the right to equality for all before the law; b) due process of law, which forbade punishment by association; c) the conferral of advantage on anyone when executing punishment on the grounds of the person's rank or degree of influence; d) freedom of speech; e) a Bill of Rights wherein a covenant was signed by the Prophet to protect the weak and to ensure fair conduct in business dealings; f) the right to vote, including for women as a minority; g) the development of a socio-economic structure to maintain equality through the zakat (charity) system, where 2.5 per cent of total savings went towards helping the needy and improving the standard of living for all; and h) the right to religious freedom, whereby Jewish tribes were allowed to live according to their own rules and were not required to follow the rules of Islam (Qadri, 2004). The Charter provided for a federal structure with centralised authority, with the various tribes in various districts constituting a unit and enjoying autonomy in social, cultural and religious matters (Ahmad, 2007).

The Medina Charter was thus promulgated by the Prophet Muhammad for people of all religions in Medina. It was truly remarkable political-constitutional document. Indeed, it is claimed that the Charter was the first written constitution in the world (Ahmad 2007).

Similarly, after the Prophet's death the four Caliphs were elected using the principles of consultation and voting. For example, Abu Bakr was the first elected Khalifa. (Qadri, 2004). The consensus of scholars rather than the commands of the Caliphs provided the basis for formal Islamic law. No ruler was recognized as being above the law, and all rulers would be judged by that law (Voll and Esposito, 1994).

From the foregoing discussion and the arguments presented by (Qadri, 2004), (Engineer, 2003), (Ahmed, 2000) and (Asad, 1961) it appears that Islamic political doctrine can be summarised into the following points:

- 1 Sovereignty belongs to God, who has ordained the sovereign laws called Sharia.
- 2 Islam's guidance as ordained by God is absolute, universal and eternal. It has been left to the Ummah to develop different forms, institutions and mechanisms suitable to different socio-historic conditions.
- 3 Man is a *Khalifa* (vicegerent and representative) of God, and all men are equal before the Lord and subject to the same Law that God has ordained.
- 4 The mode of decision-making has been described as "Shura", which means consultation. Public affairs are conducted by consultation among people in accordance with Sharia as equal members of the society. No ruler is above the law.
- 5 The people have right to freedom of speech, discussion, dissent and participation, including the right to disagree and criticise those in authority.
- 6 There is respect for human rights and contractual obligations in respect to the people in general and to minorities in particular.

7 The judiciary must be separated from the executive and be totally independent at all levels.

From this, it can be inferred that Islam is not anti-democratic, but rather that it upholds many democratic values discussed in Section 2.2. For instance, the concepts of equality, liberty and public participation and the majority principle in modern democratic theory is unequivocally advocated by Islam within the ultimate legislative framework of Sharia, according to which humans cannot alter any of the fundamental laws of life. Similarly, individual rights are fundamental to the functioning of any democracy. Freedom of conscience and freedom of speech have never been denied by the Quran or the Prophet. The Prophet never suppressed individual freedom or discouraged differences of opinion. Similarly, contrary to widespread belief, The Quran promotes the equal status of women. With respect to pluralism, the Quran recognises the validity of other faiths and makes it incumbent on Muslims to respect all religions and all past prophets. The early Islamic societies were far more pluralistic than any others throughout the medieval period. (Engineer, 2003).

Thus, it can be argued that Islamic political principles are not incompatible with democracy, though there are differences. Two fundamental issues highlight the whole dichotomy of Islam and democracy: sovereignty and legislation. Many Islamists today adhere to the notion that in a state where Islamic rule is established no human legislation could be possible. Therefore, democracy where the people are sovereign and supreme, is incompatible with Islam (CSID, 2001). The Islamic state is different from a democracy, as it opposes the concept of the sovereignty of the people. Yet there is no incompatibility between Islam and a truly democratic system based on the people's participation and power-sharing (Ahmed, 2000). Because people have been given the power to act, according to the principle of consultation and consensus, Islamic political structure is close to that of modern democracy. Also, the absence of a prescription in the Quran for the constitution of a democratic society shows that its intent is not to provide a

single, universally applicable model, but that it should always be constructed according to democratic principles (Engineer, 2003).

The commandments which are enshrined in the Quran and in prophetic practice are interpreted through the use of human reason. The community is required to legislate on matters that are not clearly expressed or even mentioned in Sharia, and to use its intellectual capabilities to understand and implement explicit commandments (CSID, 2001).

It can thus be inferred that Islam provides the spirit for a democratic system as well as its boundaries; however it does not specify forms and structures, which are left to individual societies to decide. This research takes the position that in Islam the spirit of and foundation for political life remains the same irrespective of advancement in science and technology and is very much compatible with the objectives of a modern democratic society. The form and the structure are flexible and subject to change; it is left to the people to decide. The fundamental principles allow Muslims to adopt either representative or direct model democracy or any combination thereof. This flexibility is particularly relevant at a time where new possibilities such as electronic democracy are on the horizon. This stand considers democracy as more of an operational mechanism rather than an ideology in itself. The author believes that democracy itself has its ideological component, yet when examined, these ideals turn out to stem from the socio-cultural, religious and spiritual experiences of mankind. A detailed discussion of this debate is outside the scope of the current research.

## 2.5. The Continuum of Democracy

From the foregoing discussions it can be inferred that democracy as a social political concept can be defined in many ways. One can look at it as a theoretical and ideological construct, as well as examining its current practice in various countries.

On the state of democratic system Sen (1999) remarks:

*While democracy is not yet universally practiced, nor indeed uniformly accepted, in the general climate of world opinion, democratic governance has now achieved the status of being taken to be generally right. The ball is very much in the court of those who want to rubbish democracy to provide justification for that rejection*

One political system can be called more democratic than another based on the extent to which its principles and values are adhered to. The existence of democracy becomes a matter of the degree to which its principles are applied (Mayo 1960). Thus, it can be argued that there exists a continuum of democracy, ranging from less democratic to an ideal democracy. In the words of Richard Swift:

*Of course, a perfect democracy is probably not possible. Democracy is, in a sense, a constant horizon we must strive to reach. Undemocratic concentrations of power will always form and need dissolving. Civil-service empires will need to be deconstructed. The economy today exerts a constant pull that is used to 'discipline' democracy with what is 'realistic', to keep some in poverty and others in villas, BMWs and stock options. Even if the essential element of democracy is built into the economy, accumulations of privilege will continue to be an anti-democratic irritant. Replacing our passive consumerist democracy with a reinvigorated polity will provide us with a platform to fight for fairness and equal rights against the blinkered technocrats and market globalizers. Democracy may always be unfinished business. But it is our business. Let's take it back (Swift 2000).*

When constructing an e-democracy strategy, the principles fundamental to democratic order must be considered. Further issues arising from the use of technology also need to be addressed. This is where the challenge Chen (2007)

makes on the assumptions on democracy and technology becomes an important consideration. He states that people tend to make the implicit assumptions while discussing the impact of technology. The assumptions are that both internet and democracy are completed projects. However, it is argued that both evolution of technology and democracy remain incomplete.

## 2.6. Chapter Summary

e-Democracy implementation must take into consideration the values and principles of Democracy. The e-Democracy strategy and implementation must not undermine these values: rather it must contribute to realisation of the democratic ideals.

There is no universally agreed definition for democracy. It is very challenging and potentially confusing to define democracy in simple terms. Equality, liberty and majority principles are overarching values of democracy.

There are two primary categorizations within democracy. That is direct democracy and representative democracy. In direct democracy people participate directly in the affairs of government where as in the indirect democracy the participation is ensured through elected representatives. There is no current experience with direct democracy and all our democracies as they exist today are one way or other way indirect.

Islamic law is principal source for legislation in Bahrain. Therefore it is important to make sure that the democratisation process and the implementation of e-Democracy is not at odds with religious and cultural factors. The researcher argues that Islam is not against democracy and with some changes the Islamic principles of state and political life is fully in alignment with democratic values.

Electronic democracy is an emerging discipline that aims to exploit information and communication technology for enhancing democracy. The researcher takes

the stand that the implementation of electronic democracy can help Bahrain leapfrog in its domestication process.

### 3. DEMOCRATISATION IN BAHRAIN AND OTHER GCC COUNTRIES

This chapter first describes the concept of democratisation in the wider context and provides a summary of the state of democratisation in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Countries with a particular emphasis to Bahrain. This chapter compares and contrasts the system of government in GCC Countries. The quest for the e-democracy strategy takes place in the regional GCC context, where democracy has been gathering pace in recent years. The analysis is pursued with an objective of describing the context of the current research and to further support one of the central arguments of this thesis that e-Democracy, if implemented properly, can contribute to the democratisation process in Bahrain and neighbouring GCC countries. Thus, the key assumption revolves around the research stance that the e-democracy tools and techniques can contribute to enhance the existing form of democracy in these countries. However, it is considered apt to discuss the issue of democratisation briefly as the formulation and implementation of the e-democracy strategy must take place taking into consideration, the development in the larger political landscape.

#### 3.1. Democratisation

The transition to democracy has taken place in many places around the world. Democratisation is a very important concept and trend in the history of political science. On one level, it is the simple idea of establishing a democratic political regime. However, on a more practical level democratisation is neither easy to understand nor easy to achieve (Hauss, 2003). The term democratisation is used to describe what is happening with respect to the journey towards democracy (Pridham and Vanhanen, 1994).

According to Pridham and Vanhanen (1994), it is the process of regime change that includes the transition to democracy as well as its consolidation. The democratic transition leads to the collapse of totalitarian rule and a move towards



a constitution. Democratic structures get routinized and the political elites adjust their behaviour to democratic norms. On the other hand, democratic consolidation involves the gradual removal of uncertainties that surround the democratic transition and then the full institutionalisation of the new democracy and internalisation of democratic rules and procedures along with wider dissemination of democratic values.

Hauss (2003) states that there is an agreement that democratisation is the process whereby a country adopts a democratic regime; however he argues that there is less agreement among scholars on how this process occurs. This also applies to what criteria should be used in deciding whether democratisation has taken place or not.

There are two main theoretical approaches to the democratic transition. The functionalist approach focuses more on long-term socio economic structural changes. On the other hand, the genetic approach of democratic transition focuses on the short-term issues that determine the transition process (Pridham and Vanhanen, 1994).

It took a long period to develop democracies in the Western Europe and North America. It took over hundred years in the United States and Great Britain to fully develop all democratic institutions and practices. In France, Germany and Italy democratic regimes collapsed and were replaced by totalitarian regimes, with democracy being later restored. It is said that democratisation can take place faster today. However, it is not an overnight phenomenon and it takes time as it requires the development of new institutions and widespread trust in these institutions (Hauss, 2003)

Huntington (1991) has defined three waves of democratisation that have taken place throughout history. The first one brought democracy to Western Europe and Northern America in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This was followed by a rise of dictatorships. The second wave began after World War II and lost its momentum between 1962 and the mid-1970s. The last wave began in 1974 and is

continuing. Democratisation of Latin America and Eastern Europe is part of this third wave.

The rise of the Third Wave is derived from five main factors that cause the change. They are first; loss of legitimacy of authoritarian regimes due to reasons such as increased popular expectation, regular elections and/or poor economic performance or military failure. Second; growth in global economic output that unleashes a host of social forces with the organisational capacity and education to press for democratic governance. Third; changes in the Catholic Church that emphasised individual rights and opposition to authoritarian rule. Fourth; regional contingency factor or Snowball effect that happens when success of democracy in one country causes other countries to democratise. Fifth; external factors that include the efforts to spread democracy by the European Union and the United States (Huntington, 1991).

The concept of democratisation is important because of the notion of democratic peace. This widely accepted concept states that democracies do not wage war with other democracies. However, there is no agreement about why the democratic peace exists. Some point to the direction of cultural norms of trust and tolerance that exists and underlies in democracies. Other reasons include the existence of institutions used for nonviolent conflict resolution such as elections and legislatures. Also, the cultural and economic relations are said to be the reasons that tie wealthy democracies to each other (Hauss, 2003).

The transition theory has been criticised for it renders paramount emphasis to the elites in the transition without duly acknowledging the role of masses. Also it is argued that domestic forces assume the primary role and international influences are secondary. The transition theory has also been criticised for neglect of historical explanations as all transitions are impacted by the nature and influences of the past regimes (Pridham and Vanhanen, 1994). One can argue that these issues are relevant to the democratisation process in Bahrain and other GCC countries. For example the role of masses in the democratisation

process may be limited as we can see from the discussion in section 3.2 in the regional context. Similarly, the international development and outside forces play a major impetus in the road towards democracy. The American push towards democracy in Middle East is a very good example. Thirdly, the democratisation in Bahrain and GCC is inextricably linked with its history and culture. Also, we can see that the pressure for democracy from the civil society is weak as discussed in section 3.2. The explanation for lack of democracy as discussed in the next section is not simple and straightforward. Many theories have been put forward that include, culturally, international, socio economic and historical factors that are impeding democracy in the region. Therefore, adopting the East European or Estonian model for democratization or for that matter any models elsewhere will not come in as a ready-made solution.

It is argued that several lessons can be learned from these experiences from other countries. Regarding the democratisation in Eastern Europe, Pridham and Vanhanen (1994) state that there is no straightforward and simple transition to liberal democracy and that this must be understood first. They also note that though there are many similarities between the democratic transition in Southern and Eastern Europe, one must also acknowledge that there are crucial differences. This is also applicable to the current initiatives that are taking place in Bahrain and neighbouring GCC countries.

In understanding the democratisation process in Eastern Europe, one must consider the structural, historic, political and international factors as determinants that contribute to the process and pace of democratisation (Pridham and Vanhanen, 1994). When it comes to Bahrain and the GCC countries, we must also consider each region's religious and cultural factors along with the influence of the process of economic development that has been taking place since the emergence of the oil economy.

### 3.2. The Road to Democracy in GCC Countries

There is a notion that Arab world has not been able to respond to the need and challenge of democratisation. Referring to this, Hassouna (2001) argues that there is no uniformity among Arab states; passing one-sided judgement is not appropriate with respect to democracy. He asserts that some countries like Egypt, Iraq, Syria and Yemen were centres of great civilizations in the past, while other countries became only independent after the Second World War. Similarly, in these countries there are different political setups that range from monarchies to republics with established parliaments. However, most of the Arab countries share a common thread of cultural religious and language affiliations. One must note that the six GCC countries, of which Bahrain is a member, share many common characteristics as will be discussed later in this chapter.

There have been many debates and discussions on the democratisation process in the GCC countries and in the wider Arab world. The theoretical explanations regarding the absence of democracy in the region fall into four categories that include 'cultural, socio-economic, structural preconditional and international factors' (Usul, 2004)

It is argued that cultural reasons are at the root cause for the Middle East failing to democratise its political structures. This includes factors related to religion and socio cultural aspects that stand against democratisation, a process that has some linear relationship with the state of development (Hinnebusch, 2006). The cultural explanation centers on the culture or the political culture peculiar to Middle East. According to this view point religion primarily constitutes the core of the political culture in the region and therefore it is not possible to notice democratic developments in the region (Usul, 2004).

The debates over the relationship between cultural authenticity and democracy are still live. As noted above, central to the issue of this debate is the notion that democracy is an alien concept to Islam. However, there is no reason to think that the religion in the Arab region is a major barrier to the democratic transformation

(Richards, 2005). The Quran asserts the concept of Shura, or consultation, that requires that the leaders consult their followers and rule with their consent. This is a basic principle in the political theory of Islam. However, it can be argued that even if Muslim leaders have not always adhered to this principle, no one can claim that Islam is anti-democratic. (Hassouna, 2001). Additionally, there is a growing recognition and acceptance that Islam is not anti-democratic. See a detailed discussion in section 2.4 of this thesis.

Another argument is that the European powers were unable to create viable democratic institutions in the Arab region back in colonial times. The colonial powers left the region with border disputes. It seems that the imperial powers deliberately created this situation in order to hold a strategic grip on the region and on this its oil wealth. The colonial powers mostly neglected the people in the region who were the majority but seemed to rely upon the leaders. For this reason, the development of a foundation for a successful democracy had to be accomplished only after these new independent Arab states could develop their political cultures.(Hassouna, 2001).

One of the discussions regarding the lack of democracy relates to the process of development and modernisation. According to this theory it is argued that here is a direct correlation between democracy and the state of development in terms of economic growth, the rise of industry and income, the decline of agriculture, urbanization and rising literacy and education (Usul, 2004). However it is also argued, that it is not reasonable to question the readiness of the Arab countries for democracy with respect to the correlation of democratisation and economic development. When we notice that Arab countries are much more developed than India (the world's largest democracy) at the time it opted for democracy in 1946 (Richards, 2005).

Another force that comes into play is the initiative by the United States to support democracy in the region. Dalacoura (2005) argues that people can see two patterns of US action and Arab reaction with regard to the promotion of

democracy in individual Arab countries. In the first pattern, the U.S.A. is a friend and a key ally. In the second, it is one of enmity and hatred. The U.S. has put pressure on its allies in the Middle East by pressing them about their lack of democratic reform and encouraging them to undertake it. Accordingly, some of the Arab regimes have initiated reforms in a limited and controlled manner. Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, Algeria and Morocco, at various times and to various degrees, have improved civil rights and have allowed greater political participation through the use of elections.

Another fear that is of great concern is that the religious groups could capture power if a free and fair election is held in the Middle East. This concern is in part a result of the failure of secular Arab nationalist regimes to deliver on their promises. Partly, this is also, a reassertion of perceived Middle Eastern cultural authenticity that acts as an impediment to democracy (Neep, 2004)

Thus, some have stated that there is a fear that those who win elections may be antidemocratic and anti-American. This concern, dreaded by U.S. policy makers, relates to worsening the status quo, if the people are given a choice to freely elect their leaders. This reflects a fear that Islamists may gain control of power as happened in some cases. For example, in 1990 elections, the Islamic Salvation Front was poised to gain control of the government in Algeria. Another example is the case in Palestine when Hamas was elected; subsequently the Americans and other allies boycotted the Hamas government in Palestine.(Windsor, 2003).

Another issue related to democratisation in the region is the allegation of double standards from Americans. Though the Bush administration vehemently stated that the establishment of a democratic government in Iraq could be a model for political reform in the Islamic world, one must also note that the United States has done little to address undemocratic practices nearly everywhere else in the region. For instance, other countries, like Turkey, Pakistan, Morocco, Kuwait, Bahrain and Egypt offer more fertile ground for reform with important elements of democratic culture and politics already in place (New York Times, 2002).

Thus, it is also alleged that the U.S. initiative offers an ambiguous answer to Arab political reforms. On the one hand, the advancement of political pluralism and expansion of the information space facilitate the invigoration of radical opposition forces; on the other hand the United States is apparently not interested in strengthening the opposition forces. Instead, it is said that the U.S. is taking the side of the ruling regimes in countering these forces (Pavlov and Alekseeva, 2007). This view advocates that international factors are the reason for not having democracy in the region. The democracy problem in the region is due to geographical and geopolitical position of the Middle East and it is not because of Muslim factors (Stepan and Robertson, 2003 in Usul 2004). Considering the geographical and geopolitical reasons, especially with respect to oil, security of Israel and the region it is for the interest of many that authoritarian rule remain (Usul, 2004)

Enterline and Greig (2005) studied the policy agenda on Iraq by U.S and explored to what extent it helped to achieve the policy objectives. American and British policy makers advocated that a democratic Iraq will bring with stability and prosperity for Iraqis and a peaceful foreign policy towards its neighbours. It also advocated that the imposition of democracy would lead to several beneficial outcomes that include reduction in interstate hostility and it will become a catalyst force that will push the democratic reforms in the region (Enterline and Greig, 2005).

Based on the results of the above empirical study Enterline and Greig (2005) presented the likely impact of their findings on the Iraq:

“On the positive side, if Iraq emerges as a bright democratic beacon, there exists a chance for greater regional peace and prosperity. Such an achievement in a region racked by recurring, high-intensity conflict would without a doubt be a favorable development. However, the road to a fully

functioning democracy on the order of Germany or Japan, i.e., quintessential bright democratic beacons, is likely to be difficult, given Iraq's ethnic and religious cleavages, near absence of a democratic tradition, the impact of the American occupation, and the potential hostility of Iraq's neighbors. Under conditions of a dimly lit democratic beacon in Iraq, our analysis suggests that regional peace, prosperity, and democracy are unlikely to follow in the Middle East"

One can discern that the imposed democracy in Iraq is rising serious questions on its intended policy rhetoric and its realisation in contributing to democracy, peace and prosperity in Iraq and in the region. On a different note, Usul (2004) argues that, Middle East region with its rich oil fields and geopolitical importance, it is not in the interest of great powers for a genuine democracy to take its roots and it is argued that to keep their stake in the strategic projects the great powers must let the current rulers rule the region and they should not allow democratization.

Moreover, it is argued that U.S policies are inconsistent and it has undermined the reforms rather than supporting it. The U.S. lacks a strategic vision with respect to the democratization agenda and often relies on initiatives that are ad hoc and therefore ineffective (<http://www.carnegieendowment.org>, 2005)

The lack of having an active civil society is another theory that explains lack of democracy in the Middle East (Usul, 2004). According to (Diamond, 1994 in Usul, 2004), a strong civil society can contribute to democracy and democratisation in eight different ways. They are (1) limits and monitors the state's powers, (2) it can stimulate political participation, (3) it helps to inculcate key democratic and civic values such as tolerance, trust, moderation, compromise and it accommodates regulation of disputes and conflicts, (4) it creates ways of expressing, consolidating and representing interests outside of political parties, (5) it moderates or reduces conflict by having competing or overlapping interests, (6) it recruits and trains new political leaders, (7) it improves democratic processes



through monitoring of elections, human rights, corruption and disseminates alternative and independent information and (8) it enhances democratic legitimacy by extending the 'borders of accountability and inclusiveness'.

Agreeing on the need and pointing to the potential of civil society involvement Hudson (2008) suggests public opinion and mass politics plays minor role in the Gulf states. The ruling families and elites along with the youth have the ability to initiate substantial reforms.

Thus, it is often required for citizens to have a bigger say in politics, however, the pressure for democracy from the wider public is surprisingly weak in Gulf countries. It is argued that the Gulf's people accept their rulers because they have been getting a pretty good deal as a result of the oil wealth that has created a tax-free economy where states generously take care of their people in most of these countries. This has given rise to the strong citizen patronage with the rulers (Economist, 2002). What adds to this line of thinking is the argument that "oil impedes democracy". That is the rich rulers use the tax free regime to relieve the pressure for democracy. Also, the oil revenues make the state very strong against its societies that retards the development of democracy. Similarly since the economic growth is driven by the oil money, social, cultural and political modernisation is out of question (Beblawi, 1987 in Usul 2004). Such an explanation is often referred to as "political economy" approach as against the "political culture" approach (Usul, 2004).

In this context, one must also note that the biggest strides towards popular participation have been taken by the rulers themselves as a reaction to the democracy promotion initiatives. Qatar, Oman, U.A.E and Bahrain all have initiated reforms towards democracy. Bahrain is noted as the star reformer given the reforms initiated by the King since he ascended the throne in 1999. King Hamad initiated his program by freeing prisoners, allowing greater freedom for the press, inviting more than 1,000 exiles to come home and giving jobs to the unemployed. The King won over a 98% approval for a charter of reform in a credible referendum that was held in 2000 (Economist, 2002).

The other side of the argument tends to support the view that in the great majority of these countries reform has not led to a reduction of the leaders' powers. The changes do not necessarily equate to the diffusion of power from the ruling family to the masses. More often elections cannot really be won by the opposition parties. It is also argued that in cases where more fundamental change has taken place, such as in Bahrain and Qatar, reforms have been said to be often retracted (Dalacoura, 2005).

"Movement towards greater liberalism and greater democracy has been very limited because the ruling elites in the GCC countries have been more open to modest liberalisation than to democratization" (Hudson, 2008). The same view is supported by Dakhil (2008) who argues the "idea of reform in the Gulf is still ruled with slogans and scattered achievements".

One can discern that on the Freedom House index that has ranking of 1 (freest) to 7 (least free), the GCC states score very poor. Saudi Arabia gets 6.5 and the highest rank goes to Kuwait with rank of 4.0. Limited political and civil rights makes Saudi Arabia scores the worst score whereas Kuwait gets it highest score among the GCC countries due freely contested elections and the freedom of expression. However, even in the Kuwait the primacy of the royal family is not challenged (Seznec, 2008).

However, the argument that the democracy reforms are not real is not completely true. The situation has changed over the many years as it is discussed in section 3.2.1 to 3.2.6. The respective regimes have started opening up the corridors of power for more political participation.

The results of the second Bahrain' election held in 2007 is testimony. In this election the opposition parties captured almost 50% of the seats. The following quote supports this argument:

*There is nothing more beautiful than watching people get to vote in a free election for the first time -- particularly in the Arab world, where elections have been so rare. That's what happened in Bahrain Thursday, as this tiny island nation off the east coast of Saudi Arabia voted for a parliament that will, for the first time, get to share some decision-making with Bahrain's progressive king, Sheik Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa. As I visited polling stations, what struck me most was the number of elderly women who voted, many covered from head to toe in black burka-like robes. Many of them illiterate, they would check the picture of the candidate they wanted to vote for and then stuff the ballot in the box -- voting less for a politician than for their own empowerment. One appeared to have her grandchildren with her. As she voted, her grandson, who looked about age 10 and wore a soccer outfit, tried to explain to his little sisters what a voting booth was. Thus are the seeds of democracy planted (Friedman, 2002).*

Thus, Bahrain is often held up as a model of reform and democratisation. Some of the opposition parties argue for a wider and more drastic reform. It can be inferred that the democratisation process has gained momentum under what can be called a gradual and controlled reform (Fattah, 2006).

The path towards democracy has been evolving. Considerable progress has been made in adopting more participatory forms of governance in many Arab countries. This is mainly because of the changes in the international political and strategic environments rather than as a response to domestic demands for democracy (Neep, 2004). Thus, it would be a mistake to claim that there have been no reforms in the Arab world. Since the end of the 1990-91 Gulf War (in which Iraq attacked Kuwait), a number of authoritarian states in the Middle East have undertaken programs of selective political reform. Takeyh (2004) argues that such changes are more or less an end in themselves without any move towards real democracy. The author takes the view that in the GCC countries, democratisation is an indisputable reality, yet acknowledges the fact that it is

slow. However, a slow and smooth process may be much more suited given the special socio-political context that exists today. Based on the discussion in section 3.1, it must also be noted that there is no agreement on how much time democratisation – the transition and consolidation – takes. For instance, it has taken several years in many countries for the democratization to mature. The implementation of e-democracy is going to bring about further momentum to the ongoing efforts to embark on democracy.

Thus, the Arab world is rapidly moving on the path to democracy despite the weight of the aforementioned challenges. Most Arab states have included structural adjustments and economic liberalization to their agendas. There is increasing respect for human rights, for freedom of speech, and for an active civil society. The global wave of democratisation is helping the process of opening up Arab politics (Hassouna, 2001).

However, it must be noted that the Arab world needs to overcome many challenges before it can successfully democratise. The colonial legacy, the Arab-Israeli conflict, socio-economic factors, and fundamentalism are all major obstacles to democratisation. Most democratic societies have evolved over time, often having faced formidable hurdles along the way (Hassouna, 2001). Though there are many challenges it is also argued that “there are no insurmountable cultural or structural obstacles on the democratic transitions in the region” and any country can regardless of religion or culture can embark on democratic transition (Usul, 2004)”

This research contributes to helping the neighbouring GCC countries as they plan to reform their governance structures. The following sub sections describe and compare political structures in the GCC countries (where Bahrain is also a member). Such an analysis gives an account of a wider geo-political context where Bahrain e-democracy strategy is proposed, as part of this research. It also gives an indication of the extent to which Bahrain is typical and whether the current study is useful for these countries.

### 3.2.1. Kuwait

Kuwait is a nominal constitutional monarchy whose constitution dates from 1962. Judicial power is administered by the Judicial Council and vested in the courts, which operate in the name of the Amir within the limits of the constitution (POGAR, 2006). The legal system is based on a civil law system with Islamic law being significant in personal matters (CIA, 2005). Kuwait has not accepted compulsory International Court of Justice (ICJ) jurisdiction. Executive powers are vested in the Amir, who appoints the Prime Minister and, in consultation with him, appoints and dismisses other ministers (POGAR, 2006). The legislative branch consists of a unicameral National Assembly “Majlis Al-Ummah” with 50 seats whose members are elected by popular vote to serve four-year terms and include 15 ministers who are not elected as members of Parliament but who sit as ex-officio members (POGAR, 2006).

Kuwait is argued to be special in three ways: it is a city-state, a monarchy and wealthy. Wealth gives Kuwait’s rulers significant autonomy and power. It also gives people economic resources that could be combined with the other available resources to create their spheres of autonomy. The monarchies find it easier than other authoritarian systems to adopt adaptive strategies without risk of being overthrown (Nonneman, 1999). The author of this thesis argues that this holds true for Qatar as well as Bahrain to some extent although Bahrain is relatively less oil rich.

In Kuwait, home and the mosque are seen as having their roles in mobilizing political resources. More specifically, Kuwait’s institution of the diwaniyya (a regular gathering of men at the homes of prominent individuals to meet socially and discuss public issues) is an important part of politics; it was very largely instrumental in the democracy movement in the emirate in 1989 and 1990 (Nonneman, 1999).

In Kuwait, there are several different ideologies and strategies for democratisation. Each group uses its own perspectives about the meanings of

different terms such as Kuwait, tradition, democracy and citizenship (Nonneman, 1999).

In Kuwait, there have been some political problems over the last few years. Most Kuwaitis take pride in their nation's democratic traditions. In fact, the ruling Sabah family acquired their position as rulers through an agreement among the coastal traders in the mid-18th century yet it was not through a conquest. After Kuwait gained independence in 1961, the Amir approved a written constitution that sharply limited his power in relation to Parliament (Worth, 2008).

*If democracy has ever had friends in the Arab-speaking countries it has been among the monarchs of Kuwait. In 1752, when the age of enlightened absolutism was just dawning in Europe, a man by the name of Sabah bin Jaber became the Amir of a Bedouin population known as the al-Utoob. It was not murder, revolution, or warfare that brought him to power. He got elected. His descendants, the Al Sabah, continue to rule Kuwait to this day and have preserved a noteworthy weakness for letting their people vote. The country elected its first legislative assembly in 1938. After independence in 1961 it elected a constitutional council. Following their liberation from Iraqi occupation in 1991 the Kuwaitis elected a new national assembly. Two years ago women were for the first time granted the right to vote. The members of the national assembly are sometimes not in office for very long. Not for reasons of incompetence mind you. More often than not it is because the executive government sees them as being too competent: The national assembly in Kuwait has sole responsibility for passing legislation. It determines how much the Amir is paid. And it has the right to question and dismiss ministers, a privilege that makes extensive use of Kuwait as the most democratic country in the Arab world (Steinvorth and Zand, 2008).*

Kuwait is home to one of only two natural ports in the Arabian Gulf. In contrast to Saudi Arabia, the country has been a commercial and cosmopolitan center for hundreds of years. Kuwait has been historically open to outside influences.

Its constitution guarantees the equality of all citizens. Its ruling family holds a substantial number of the government's ministerial portfolios and tends to be Western-educated, enlightened, and generally progressive (Berkowitz, 2003).

Though the royal family had suspended Parliament in the late 1970s and in the late 1980s, the country has grown steadily more democratic. More recently, popular pressure forced a change in the electoral district law, making it harder to buy votes; hence women gained the right to vote and run for elections. In 2008, when the government tried to pass a law restricting public gatherings, there were popular protests and the government had to back down (Worth, 2008).

On 17<sup>th</sup> of May 2008, the Amir of Kuwait called an election following a political blockade in which he dissolved the parliament. A lively election campaign ensued. Voting districts were redrawn to avoid electoral fraud or any influence on voting behaviour by tribal leaders. There was detailed television and newspaper coverage of the candidates who ran for office; this included 27 women. It was reported by the international observers that the elections were free and fair. However, it is argued that most of the seats were won by the Islamists as in the case of most of the elections that have been held in recent years between Cairo and Riyadh. Though for decades Kuwait was the most attractive of the Gulf states, it is alleged that Kuwait has lost ground politically and economically and there are many who take the view that democracy has been a major factor in this fallout (Steinvorth and Zand, 2008).

It is argued that Kuwaiti's are frustrated with democratic and civic freedom reforms due to lack of sufficient business and investment opportunities. The democracy reforms are holding Kuwait back from achieving economic progress of Kuwait (Worth, 2008).

### 3.2.2. Oman

Oman is a monarchy. The Basic Law was promulgated by the royal decree issued on 6th November 1996 (POGAR, 2006). The Basic Law Decree is

considered by the government to be a constitution and clarifies the issues of the royal succession and the appointment of a prime minister. It also guarantees basic civil liberties for the citizens and establishes a bicameral legislature (CIA, 2005). Judicial power is administered by the Ministry of Legal Affairs (POGAR, 2006). The court system is based on English common law and Islamic law along with a provision for ultimate appeal to the monarch (CIA, 2005). Executive power is vested in the Sultan who is also the Prime Minister and presides over the Council of Ministers (POGAR, 2006). Legislative power resides with the bicameral Parliament, consisting of an upper chamber "Majlis ad-Dawla" with 48 members appointed by the Sultan, and a lower chamber "Majlis ash-Shura" with 82 members elected for three-year terms (POGAR, 2006). Both chambers have advisory powers, while the lower chamber has limited power to propose legislation (CIA, 2005).

Oman has experienced a deliberate and steady progression towards the realization of popular participation in the government's decision making process. In the 1990s the Council of Oman was established comprising an elected "Majls A'Shura" and an appointed "Majls A'Dawlah". The Council of Oman is of purely advisory in nature. More recently, Sultan Qaboos has introduced new measures to expand democratic participation among Omanis. Prior to elections in 2003, the Sultan granted universal suffrage to all male and female Omani adults for the Majls A'Shura. The election in 2003 resulted in election of more than 50 first-time members and the first woman serving on any elected national institutions in the Gulf. These are encouraging democratic developments in Oman (IRI, 2008)

Although Oman has progressed on many fronts, the government remains autocratic. The sultan makes all the important decisions and holds the positions of Prime Minister, Defence Minister, Finance Minister, Foreign Minister, and Governor of the Central Bank. It is argued that council members are frustrated because the government rarely follows their advice. The government also does not credit the council for the few ideas it accepts. A former female member has alleged that the council lost power over time. The council is just informed rather than consulted (Carpenter and Henderson, 2007).



There are great challenges for Oman as it continues its movement from autocracy to democracy. At a time other regional players have embarked on democratic change, Oman faces the difficult prospect of substantive constitutional reform of bringing in real democracy as voters may soon realise the futility of current elections and voting (Carpenter and Henderson, 2007). This note of dissent is supported by the observation made by Srasar (2006) as below:

“While the Council of Oman—consisting of an elected consultation council and an appointed state council—may be considered an important move toward democratisation, the royal office controls Oman's internal and external affairs and decides all intelligence and security matters. While many Omanis and outside observers may consider Qaboos forward-thinking and progressive, the absence of democratic infrastructure combined with the lack of a clear successor, make the lack of reform dangerous.”

Thus, Oman is also moving in the democratic direction but on a path that is slow. It is expected that the development in the GCC and the wider Arab region will push the democratisation further in the near future.

### 3.2.3. Qatar

Qatar is another major player in the region which is pushing towards democracy. Almost immediately after the start of his rein, the Amir of Qatar abolished the Ministry of Information indicating that this decision was meant to convey abolition of government censorship of the press. In November 1995, the Amir announced his intention to hold general elections for membership in the Central Municipal council. All Qatari males over the age of 18 were allowed to vote for the 29 members that compose the Council (Bahry, 1999).

The journey thus began after accession to the throne has now transformed Qatar to a constitutional monarchy with ratified by public referendum and endorsed by

the monarch in 2004 (CIA, 2005). The constitution establishes a separation of executive, legislative and judicial powers. Judicial power is administered by the High Judicial Council, whose members are appointed by the Amir (POGAR, 2006). The legal system is based on a discretionary system of law controlled by the monarch. Qatar has implemented civil codes; however Islamic law dominates family and personal matters. Executive power is vested in the Amir. The Prime Minister, who is the head of the government, along with other ministers, is appointed by the Amir. Legislative power is exercised by the unicameral Advisory Council with 35 appointed members. However, the new constitution provides for a 45-member Consultative Council, two-thirds of whose members will be elected by the public. The remaining one third is appointed by the Amir. In April 2003, Qatar held its second national elections to elect 29 members for the Central Municipal Council (CMC). The CMC has consultative powers which is aimed at improving the provision of municipal services (CIA, 2005).

Thus, in Qatar, H.H. Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani, the Amir, has restructured the administrative and political apparatus of the country. His reforms are aimed to create wider avenues of public participation in national decision-making. It also aims to bolster the role of people in managing public affairs hand in hand with deepening the Shura (consultation) approach and consolidating the principles of freedom (Zaman, 2008).

One can easily see that Qatar is also on its path towards democratic reform. On 28<sup>th</sup> of October 2008, Qatar launched the Qatar National Vision Program 2030, with the objective of developing a national strategy for development. The state intends to develop a national strategy and plan by involving all the stakeholders. This initiative will give a further push to the reform that is already set in place. This strengthens the argument that GCC countries often compete and compliment each other in coming up with their reform programs. As noted in other sections of this thesis Bahrain has been the first to initiate such changes on many fronts.

### 3.2.4. Saudi Arabia

The Saudi Arabian monarchy is governed according to Islamic law. The Basic Law introduced in 1993 specifies the government's rights and responsibilities. The King combines executive and legislative functions, and is the ultimate source of judicial power. This power is administered by the Supreme Judicial Council, which is empowered to appoint, promote and transfer judges (POGAR 2006). The legal system is based on Islamic law; however several secular codes have been introduced. Executive power is vested in the Monarch who presides the Council of Ministers. The ministers are appointed by the Monarch. In October 2003 the Council of Ministers announced its intent to introduce elections for half of the members of local and provincial assemblies and a third of the members of the national Consultative Council over a period of four to five years. Partial municipal council elections were held nationwide from February to April 2005 (CIA, 2005).

The Saudi monarchy is indeed on a course of political reform; however not showing a willingness to go as far as making itself the kind of constitutional monarchies that exist in Europe, where the real power lies in parliament, but providing its subjects with more input in local affairs. The monarchy is under pressure from conservative clerics and some of their followers and therefore there is a need to keep reforms in step with changes in public attitude (CIA. 2007).

The challenges in Saudi Arabia are more complex than one can imagine. The pressure from the vast royal family, the clerics and conservative leaders as well as from the business community is quite challenging on one side. On the other side there is mounting international pressure along with the recent challenges posed by extremists. Saudi Arabia also has been demanding to play a role in the region as well as in the larger Muslim world. One can argue that the signs of reform are there on the horizon and things will take a more concrete and better shape in the days to come.

### 3.2.5. United Arab Emirates (UAE)

The UAE is a federation of seven emirates. Its interim constitution was issued in 1971 and was made permanent in 1996. The Federal Supreme Council (FSC), composed of the rulers of the seven emirates, is the country's highest legislative, executive, and constitutional authority, with certain powers delegated to the federal government and other powers reserved to member emirates. The president and vice president are elected by the Federal Supreme Council for five-year terms (CIA, 2005). The constitution provides for an independent judiciary. Judges are appointed by the President (POGAR, 2006). Judicial power is backed by a federal court system and applies to all emirates except Dubai and Ras al Khaymah, which are not fully integrated into the federal judicial system. All emirates have secular courts to adjudicate criminal, civil, and commercial matters and Islamic courts to review family and religious disputes (CIA, 2005). Executive power is vested in the President, who is the head of state. The head of the government is the Prime Minister. Ministers are appointed by the President (CIA, 2005). Legislative power is vested in the unicameral Federal National Council "Majlis al-Ittihad al-Watani" with 40 members appointed by the rulers of the seven emirates to serve two-year terms (POGAR, 2006). Elections for half of the consultative Federal National Council were announced by the newly appointed UAE president in a speech marking the UAE's National Day (BBC, 2005). Elections took place beginning of 2007 and Bahrain's e-voting system and expertise were used as part of the GCC inter-government cooperation (CIO, 2006b).

Thus, one can infer that the journey towards democracy has begun in U.A.E as well. It is expected that the reform may further pace owing to international pressures and competition from neighbouring GCC countries.

### 3.2.6. Bahrain

Bahrain won independence from Britain in 1971. In 1972 a constituent assembly was formed. A constitution was published in June 1973 and an election for a national assembly was held in December 1973, in which voters chose 30 members for the 44 available seats. The remaining 14 seats were allocated to members of the cabinet. The assembly existed for two years, and was dissolved by the Amir because of political unrest. The Amir's rule continued until 2001 when major political reforms were initiated by the son of the late Amir, when he ascended to the throne.

Through a national referendum in February 2001, an overwhelming 98.4 per cent of the people of Bahrain voted in favour of a National Charter, which brought democracy to the country. The referendum was put to the people by His Majesty the King of the Kingdom of Bahrain in line with the second chapter of the National Action Charter and established a constitutional monarchy with a legislative system consisting of two chambers – a parliament with full legislative powers, elected in October 2002, and a Consultative Council appointed by the King. Thus, Bahrain is in transition from a monarchy to being a democratic country. The constitution decentralises municipal authority and establishes elected councils for local government municipal bodies in order to ensure their independence under State direction and supervision. The law will ensure that municipal bodies can administer and oversee local services.

The constitution further calls for the separation of legislative, executive and judicial powers. While legislative authority is vested in the National Assembly, executive authority with the Council of Ministers, and judicial rulings are issued by a separate legislative authority (Bahrain-Constitution, 2002).

The Constitution gives equal political rights to men and women. Both are entitled to vote and to stand for elections. Cooperation and mutual respect provide a firm bond among citizens. Freedom, equality, security, trust, knowledge, social

solidarity and equality of opportunity for citizens are the basis for justice and equality in society (Bahrain-Constitution, 2002).

The constitutional reform initiated by the leadership was accompanied by other measures such as the repeal of the state security laws that allowed the government the right to hold prisoners for years without charge and the declaration of an amnesty for all political prisoners and an invitation for exiles to return to their country. These measures have indeed contributed to restoring the political stability in the country, which witnessed political unrest in the early 1990s due to the disaffection of the majority community, which felt excluded from exercising its rights (Jeffreys, 2006).

It has been argued that the present and proposed reforms are not enough, as legislative power remains with the King who enjoys the right to veto legislation proposed by parliament, and even to dissolve parliament by decree. The opposition is also critical of the equal numeric and legislative powers given to the appointed Consultative Council of the bicameral parliament. Electoral boundaries and the naturalisation of non-Bahrainis have also been criticized widely by the opposition. These criticisms have an effect on democratic practices such as majority rule and equality (See Chapter 2). It is expected that these concerns will be addressed as Bahrain evolves into a fully-fledged democracy.

Despite opposition and boycotts by four parties, a 53 per cent turnout was achieved in 2002, of which more than 50 per cent were women. Some parties again boycotted the 2004 elections, but they participated in the 2006 parliamentary and municipal elections, in which the leading opposition party, AlWefaq, won 17 out of 40 seats in the Legislative Council.

The data for this research was gathered around that election time, when the country was most politically active. This research will propose an e-democracy strategy that will compliment the democratic system in Bahrain.

### 3.3. GCC Political Structures and Forms of Government.

As noted from the aforementioned discussion, GCC countries consist of the United Arab Emirates, the Kingdom of Bahrain, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Sultanate of Oman, the State of Qatar and the State of Kuwait, all situated on the Arabian Gulf and forming part of the larger Arab region. Saudi Arabia is significantly larger than the rest while Oman and the UAE occupy an intermediate position with respect to size, but their economic, demographic and social structures are all similar (Khalaf and Luciani 2006). The GCC aims to create coordination, integration and inter-connection among the member states in all fields in order to achieve unity (GCC, 1981).

Richards (2005), citing Arab Human Development Reports, argues that there is a democracy and good-governance deficit in the Arab region. On the other hand, following the 9/11 attacks, the toppling of Saddam Hussein and the external calls for democratic change, many entities in the region including governments and NGOs have initiated political reform agendas (Yacoubian, 2005).

The GCC countries contain a predominantly Arab Muslim population, with Arabic as the official language. Though each country has its distinct and independent political status, their societies are more homogeneous and traditional compared to neighbouring countries such as Iraq and Iran (Peterson, 2001). As mentioned earlier, the forms of government range from monarchies to constitutional monarchies. A monarchy is a form of government wherein a state is ruled by a single absolute hereditary ruler. A constitutional monarchy, on the other hand, is

a state headed by a sovereign who rules according to a constitution specifying the rights, duties and responsibilities of the monarch (Bogdanor, 1997).

Nearly every Arab government has promoted some type of political reform package. These government-sponsored initiatives vary significantly in scope and intent from country to country (Yacoubian, 2005). Similarly, the degree of participation and citizen involvement in these six countries may also vary; yet there are reforms underway to modernise the governments in countries like Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Oman and the UAE are expected to follow suit in one way or another. The political structures and forms of the government of GCC countries are summarised in table 3.1.

Table 3.1 : GCC Countries political structures and forms of government

<b>Country</b>	<b>Type of government</b>	<b>Executive branch</b>	<b>Legislative branch</b>	<b>Judicial branch</b>
<b><u>Bahrain</u></b>	Constitutional monarchy	Prime minister and council of ministers appointed by the King. Local: Five municipal councils, each has a ten- popularly elected members.	Bicameral Parliament Upper House (Shura Council):40 members appointed by the King) Lower House (Council of Representatives): 40 members directly elected.	High Judicial Council
<b><u>Kuwait</u></b>	Constitutional monarchy	Prime Minister and Council of Ministers appointed by the prime minister and approved by the Amir A municipal council: 16 members, 10 elected and 6 appointed by the Amir	Unicameral National Assembly or Majlis al-Umma (50 seats; members elected by popular vote to serve four-year terms).	High Court of Appeal
<b><u>Oman</u></b>	Monarchy	Sultan is the Prime Minister. Cabinet appointed by the Sultan	Bicameral Majlis Oman consists of an upper chamber (Majlis al-Dawla): 58 seats;	Supreme Court



Country	Type of government	Executive branch	Legislative branch	Judicial branch
			members appointed by the Sultan; and lower chamber (Majlis al-Shura): 83 members elected by universal suffrage.	
<b><u>Qatar</u></b>	Constitutional monarchy	Prime Minister and Council of Ministers appointed by the Amir	Unicameral Advisory Council (Majlis al-Shura). 35 members appointed by Amir. the new constitution provides for a 45-member Consultative Council (Majlis al-Shura): 30 members to be elected by public, 15 to be appointed by the Amir.	Court of Appeal
<b><u>Saudi Arabia</u></b>	Monarchy	King is the Prime Minister. Council of Ministers is appointed by the King. Partial municipal council elections held in 2005	Consultative Council (Majlis al-Shura): 120 members appointed by the King for Elections to be introduced for half of the members of local and provincial assemblies and a third of the members of the national Consultative Council (Majlis al-Shura), incrementally over a period of four to five years;	Supreme Council of Justice
<b><u>United Arab Emirates</u></b>	Federation with specified powers delegated to the federal government and some to member emirates	Prime Minister and Council of Ministers appointed by the president	Unicameral Federal National Council (Majlis al-Ittihad al-Watani ): 40 members appointed by the rulers of the emirates.	Federal Supreme Court

From the table above one can discern the similarities and differences on how these countries are structured with respect to the form of Government. Sarsar (2006) measures and compares democracy in the Arab world using the Status of Democracy Index (SDI) that he had developed. This index quantifies democracy through multiple variables. Four of these variables address how heads of state and members of the legislature are selected, as well as political party development, suffrage, and the maturity of political rights and civil liberties. The other variables are media freedom, religious liberty, and observance of human rights, extent of human development and the economic freedom. The SDI assigns each of these nine variables 2 points for a total of 18 points. Each score ranges from 0 to 2, with 0 being nonexistent and 2 being the highest measurement.

The table below presents SDI's for the GCC countries and individual scores for each of the nine variables

Table 3.2 : State of Democracy Index for GCC Countries for 2005  
(Adapted from Sarsar, 2006)

GCC Country	Free Election Head of State	Free Election Legislature/National Council	Political Parties	Suffrage	Media Freedom	Religious Freedom	Human Rights	Human Development	Economic Freedom	Total SDI	% SDI	SDI Ranking
Kuwait	0	1	0	1	1	1	0.5	2	2	8.5	47	1
Bahrain	0	0.5	0	0.5	0	1	0.5	2	2	6.5	36	2
Qatar	0	0.5	0	1	0	1	0.5	2	1	6	33	3
UAE	0	0.5	0	0	0	1	0.5	2	2	6	33	3
Oman	0	1	0	1	0	0.5	0.5	1	1	5	28	4
K.S.A	0	0.5	0	0.5	0	0	0	1	2	4	22	5

Based on the data above it can be inferred that the GCC countries have a range of 4 to 8.5 points in an 18 point index, Kuwait being the most democratic and Bahrain scoring the second highest. Saudi Arabia is the least democratic of all

according to the above quantification. A similar ranking can also be seen from the analysis on the level of democracy present in various countries by Freedom House. Table 3.3 lists the scores for GCC Countries.

Table 3.3: Levels of Democracy in GCC Countries (Source: <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=21&year=2008>)

<b>Country</b>	<b>political freedom</b>	<b>Civil liberties</b>	<b>Status</b>
Kuwait	4	4	Partly Free
Bahrain	5	5	Partly Free
Qatar	6	5	Not Free
Oman	6	5	Not Free
UAE	6	5	Not Free
Saudi Arabia	7	6	Not Free

One can object to the information in the above tables and argue that some of the information is not correct. For example, regarding Bahrain and some of the other countries, where it is mentioned that there are no political parties, the reality is that they do have political parties often called the name of political societies. For example, Bahrain has about 17 licensed political societies (parties) according to Akhbar Alkjaleej Newspaper (2008) representing leftists, Islamists and people supporting other factions (Toumi, 2006). One must also acknowledge that like democracy in Bahrain, the political party setup and its maturity is gradually evolving.

Sarsar (2006) argues by comparing values of SDI for 1996 and 2005 the state of democracy has not improved much in most of the Arab countries. Though the challenges raised by the protagonists who argue that the Arab world is making sweeping progress in the road towards democracy, he points to the fact that in many countries the SDI has come down. However, he acknowledges that seven countries including Bahrain, Qatar and Saudi Arabia have marginally improved the SDI scores since 1999. It must be noted that overall, Bahrain scores second in the SDI. The researcher takes the position that Bahrain is leading the wave of democracy in the GCC countries especially in the context in which the Kuwaitis

are having some trouble in their political setup as discussed in the section on Kuwait above.

From the foregoing discussion, it can be argued that the six GCC countries share many aspects of forms of government and political governance. This similarity leads to the argument that the result of this e-democracy strategy research could be useful for all GCC nations, with further work as necessary for each particular jurisdiction.

### 3.4. Chapter Summary

The concept of democratisation and its wider context is discussed in this chapter along with a section on the state of democratisation in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. Democratisation is the process of establishing a democratic regime in a country. There is no agreed upon approach to describe democratisation. It is argued that democratisation includes not only the transition to democracy but also the consolidation. It is inferred that there are different views on how democratisation takes place. It could happen as the result of internal or external factors. The factors that cause faster democratisation are multifarious and complex. It can also happen as a parallel phenomenon to economic and market reforms.

The move towards democracy in the Arab world in general and in the GCC countries in particular is the subject of academic interest. It is perceived that the Arab world is undemocratic and unable to adapt to the global challenges of moving to a democratic form of government. There are many views about why democracy has not taken its roots in the Arab world. It is said that the culture and religion are impacting the process. Another view is that it is the lack of initiative from the wider public; the masses are not interested and are not asking enough for democratisation. External influences such as the colonial past and the American double standards towards democratisation are also said to be reasons.

However, it is discerned that in many countries, initiatives are in place to move towards democracy. The changes are very visible one way or another in the Gulf Cooperation Council countries of which Bahrain is also a member. Even if the extent of the democratisation initiative may vary from country to country there are a lot of similarities in the way the process is initiated and pushed forward.

There is also an argument that in most of these countries the initiatives have not resulted in the reduction of power of the rulers. The changes have not led to the diffusion of powers. Also, it is argued that some places, where basic reforms took place, there was a tendency to go back to the original state by compromising democratic principles.

The author takes the view that in GCC countries the process of change has started taking place such as the existence of elections in these countries. The pace of democratisation may not be as fast as one would like. The implementation of e-democracy may contribute to enhancing the pace of democratisation in many ways.

## 4. ELECTRONIC DEMOCRACY

The purpose of this research is to formulate an e-democracy strategy for the Kingdom of Bahrain. This chapter aims to review the current literature on the subject and to provide a brief overview of key ideas in the theory and practice of e-democracy. This chapter compares and contrasts various views and models of e-Democracy. It also discusses various e-Democracy options including e-Voting. Lessons for Bahrain are listed at the end along with the issues for further investigation.

### 4.1. The Definition and Nature of e-Democracy

There is a growing interest in the application of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to re-structure democracy. This interest manifests itself through information portals, interaction between government and citizen, the introduction of electronic voting systems, and web campaigns by political parties.

“There are massive opportunities for the enhancement of democratic processes via electronic interaction. It is perceived as an enabler for the enhancement of existing democratic practices as well being a catalyst for democratic transformation” (FCO, 2001). It can be argued that the ICT can not only enhance existing democratic practices but also can pave the way for democratic transformation by means of the direct participation of all citizens.

Thus two ideas emerge with respect to the application of ICT to democracy. One is based on the “presumption that any political use of new technologies takes place within existing institutional frameworks of parliaments, executive branches and political parties” (Gibson et al, 2004), and the other advocates the transformation of representative forms of democracy into more direct forms (Westen, 2000).

Like any tool, technology may also be used to suppress democracy. For instance it may create a divide between people who have access to technology and those

who do not, thereby creating an inequality which is against the fundamental principles of democracy. Similarly some technological tools could be used for hacking and attacking e-democracy systems with viruses. There is also a counterargument made by prominent political theorists like Barber who reject the use of “innovative technologies” as being a panacea for the problems of modern democracies; arguing that these technologies are detrimental to democratic decision-making, as they tend to further privatise politics and replace deliberative debate in public (Barber in (Gibson et al, 2004)

In a speech delivered at the first World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC) in Buenos Aires (1994), the then US Vice-President Al Gore introduced the term Global Information Infrastructure (later adapted as Global Information Society in the final official declaration of the conference) and talked about the democratic possibilities for ICT:

*The Global Information Infrastructure (GII) will not only be a metaphor for a functioning democracy, it will in fact promote the functioning of democracy by greatly enhancing the participation of citizens in decision-making. The Internet and other new technologies help citizens to remove the barriers of time and space. They let citizens seamlessly communicate, collaborate and exchange ideas across cities, continents and countries. This opens up the possibility of using these technologies for democratic participation (Gore, 1994).*

According to Weston (2000), the rapid emergence of interactive communication technologies and growing frustrations with institutions of representative government will transform democracy. "This change will involve deep, structural, even seismic shifts that will move the country [the USA] away from its traditional reliance on representative democracy towards the emerging form of direct democracy" (Westen, 2000).

Electronic democracy can thus be understood as the capacity of the new communications environment to enhance the degree and quality of public participation in government. For example, the Internet could enable certain

citizens (namely, those with access to IT) to vote electronically in elections and referendums. The Internet can also facilitate opinion polling similar to the one used for taking customer feedback (e.g. [http://www.virtualsurveys.com/customer\\_research/](http://www.virtualsurveys.com/customer_research/)). Therefore, it has the potential to strengthen interaction between the government and its citizens and between political candidates and voters, and to affect the changing nature of democratic governance (Edwards, 1995). The technological innovations that make these activities possible include increasingly sophisticated computer chips, lasers, fibre-optics, low-power television, digital recording, fax, and public and commercial satellite access (Kakabadse et al, 2003).

Defining e-democracy is as challenging as defining democracy itself (Mejias 2004, see also chapter 2 above); therefore, the definitions of e-democracy presented in the literature vary. For example, Whyte and Macintosh (2002) define e-democracy as the use of ICT to enable and support political participation and the democratic decision-making process. Grönlund (2002) similarly defines e-democracy as the use of information technology (IT) in democratic processes. However, Watson et al (1999) define electronic democracy in terms of the deployment of information technology (IT) to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of democracy.

According to Coleman, e-Democracy is defined as “using new digital technology to enhance the process of democratic relationship between government and governed, representative and represented” (Coleman in Cross, 2003).

Clift (2003) defines e-democracy as the use of ICTs and strategies by democratic sectors (governments, international government organisations, elected officials, the media, political parties and non-government organisations) in all political processes of political entities at local, regional and international levels.

According to Nugent (2001), e-democracy specifically consists of the carrying out of political processes over the Internet (e.g. communications that take place between citizens and elected officials). Notably, Nugent distinguishes between e-



democracy and e-government. E-government, Nugent asserts, consists of the online delivery of government functions and services normally reserved for bricks-and-mortar institutions such as state legislatures and motor vehicle bureaus.

Many government officials maintain that ICT and the Internet in particular stand to fundamentally alter the workings of democracy by increasing participation, thereby bringing it more into line with the ideals of direct democracy. There are some who believe that modern cities are in transition from occasional to continuous democracies, in which the input of citizens is uninterrupted (Milliard, 2004). On the other hand, it is also argued that e-democracy is not a new form of governance and that the enthusiasm for e-democracy is analogous to the expectation of an Internet based “new economy” which would supposedly lead to a paradigm shift that would result in a fundamental alteration in the nature of economies (OECD, 2004). Arguably, such an alteration never materialised. It is likewise argued that e-democracy will not result in a new form of governance identical or akin to direct democracy, and that in order for such a democracy to become a reality, it must first be established off-line (OECD, 2004). On the one hand, we cannot fully reject the aforementioned idea of economic and democratic transformation becoming a reality, but on the other, it would be wise to consider a balanced approach and consider what is plausible given the situation in Bahrain.

The ICTs that facilitate democracy could also be used for such activities as filtering and surveillance that may in fact suppress rather than enhance it (Shane 2004). Similarly, it is argued that the fulfilment of the promise of e-democracy is contingent upon universal access to technology, often referred as the issue of the “digital divide”. This is the gap between those who have access to technology and those who do not, and exists between individuals at different levels of income, education, gender and age as well as between households, businesses and geographic areas and entire countries (OECD 2001). The ultimate aim of bringing e-democracy to the entire population can only be achieved if an integrated ICT infrastructure is available to all. Until such time, electronic

democracy will be limited to areas which are fortunate enough to have such an infrastructure (Meyer, 2005)

Therefore, if citizens do not have equal access to ICT, e-democracy's potential will be diminished. In order for its promise to be fulfilled, the digital divide must first be bridged. Furthermore, any process that seeks to engage citizens, be it e-voting or e-participation, must ensure that those who do not have access to technology are included, and if the citizens do not wish to be part of the process, they must have the opportunity to join in when they choose (Riley, 2004, p. 3-4). As was noted in Chapter 2, one of the main tenets of democracy is the principle of equality. Ward, et al (2005) points to the danger of accentuating the divide:

*The danger remains that e-politics will simply exacerbate existing participation and engagement gaps by amplifying those voices that are already prominent in the parliamentary system. Simply adding new electronic channels of communication to pre-existing structures or putting information online will not automatically produce a democratic nirvana. Nevertheless, we should not write off new technologies as being of no consequence for representative institutions.*

Therefore, the digital divide, if not addressed effectively, may lead to inequality, and all the efforts to advance e-democracy may become anti-democratic.

One example cited that could potentially challenge the democratic nature of a function is e-Democracy websites as noted by Coleman (2003). He criticized the parliamentary website stating that it is deeply unsatisfactory. The site works well for people who know exactly what they want to find. According to him there are two kinds of people who seek information who have needs. Those who cannot find what they know they want and those who cannot find what they might need but they do not even know it is there. If the websites are not catering to the second category of people then, according to Coleman, it is not performing a democratic function (Coleman, 2003). The author agrees with this assertion. It supports one of the key arguments that any e-Democracy ideas and efforts must enhance the democratic ideals and values rather than undermining it. The same

comment applies to the Bahrain's Council of Representatives as well as most of the sites are static. Weblogs and interactive websites are very essential elements of the e-democracy website design in order to build a relationship and a bond with the site visitors rather having a static one way website design.

The use of technology raises many questions including equality of access, ability to utilise technology, the capacity to process the information to develop appropriate responses, whether or not technology can motivate members of the public to re-engage, and whether or not existing institutions of government are appropriate in an electronic world (King, 2006).

Lack of an adequate technology infrastructure is one aspect of the digital divide. The quality of this infrastructure such as bandwidth and availability also contributes to this disparity in access to IT. There is also the issue of information overload and the lack of time for understanding the discussions underway (King, 2006).

Hence, e-democracy is not simply contingent upon technology but is impacted on by economic and cultural factors. Clearly, if e-participation depends on the ability of citizens to afford the associated technologies, the potential of e-democracy could be compromised. Cultural resistance to the technologies associated with e-democracy can also impede its implementation (OECD, 2004).

One of the themes that emerged from the discussion in the Bahrain e-Voting Forum was that the realisation of e-voting or e-democracy is not about technology, but about social and cultural factors. Technology is only an enabler; it is political will and the proper handling of non-technological issues that will help the implementation of e-democracy (Bahrain e-Voting Forum, 2006). This view confirms the following remarks:

*The use of new media for democratic purposes has more to do with political motivation, design and cultural acceptance than inherent technical*

*affordances. But the relationship is dialectical: at any one time, the structure, regulation and uses of specific technologies are the subject of competing interpretive battles involving diverse actors, including producers, managers, users and commentators (Coleman and Kaposi, 2006)*

Similarly, the OECD report on e-democracy in 2003 highlights the fact that the most of the barriers to the engagement of citizens online relates to cultural, organisational and constitutional factors rather than to technology (OECD, 2003). Similarly, Shane (2004) argues that the “economic and cultural forces, public policy, democratic design, and grass root design and grassroots initiative will all have a role in framing the future of electronic democracy” (Shane, 2004) . Therefore, research must take into consideration both the promises and the challenges in applying ICT to democratic transformations; these factors should not be limited to technological ones.

#### 4.2. E-Democracy – Practice and Theory

In order to develop a plausible e-democracy model for Bahrain, it is important to examine the different models of e-democracy that are already in place or under discussion in other parts of the world and how these are applied in different countries. The countries discussed below were selected from the Top Ten countries list who are changing the world of the internet and politics published by [www.politicsonline.com](http://www.politicsonline.com).

##### 4.2.1. *E-Democracy Practice in Leading Countries*

The UK

In 2002 the UK government published a document titled “In the Service of Democracy – A consultation paper on a policy for electronic democracy”, that outlined a possible e-democracy policy. The stated aim of the policy was to

encourage people to participate in the democratic process and take advantage of the new ICT potential. The policy aimed to encourage people not only to take part in elections by giving them more choices on how to vote, but also to interact with government between elections by way of allowing them to raise topics they wanted discussed in order to influence policymaking (UK-Government, 2002).

The e-democracy policy was initiated in the context of wider constitutional and political reforms aiming to devolve power, extend citizens' rights and improve the transparency and accountability of government (UK-Government 2002). What is notable is that the policy document itself was offered for consultation and comment. The policy identified e-participation and e-voting as two distinct aspects of e-democracy. It must be noted that it failed somewhat to consider the interaction between these two by separating the policy into two distinct parts.

The stated objectives of the policy were to facilitate better participation by way of providing and collecting information, forming groups on political issues and rendering electronic voting, to increase participation through new channels of communication, and to strengthen participation by creating a closer link between citizens and representatives. Fairweather (2002) issued a response to the consultation document and raised concerns over some issues. For example, while fully supporting the program, he argued that the initiative ignored possibilities for a fully direct democracy and measures for wider participation (Fairweather 2002).

The Cabinet Office website claimed that e-democracy was already at work even at that date, on both local and national levels by citing various examples that include election pilot schemes for e-voting, Camden Council's website designed to engage young people and the facility to send e-petitions to the Prime Minister's Office (UK-Government, 2002).

The 2003 pilot schemes explored innovative ways of remote electronic voting using a range of technologies including mobile phones, local digital television, on-line Internet voting using home computers, terminals in local libraries and council-run information kiosks (Norris, 2005). In June 2004 all-postal pilot elections were

held for the European Parliament and some local government elections (Electoral Commission 2004).

Though these pilots are important steps in the reform, there were criticisms, mainly of their security flaws. "I have seen most, if not all of the pilot schemes demonstrated, and have spotted substantial flaws with some of them, including one system which violated its own security model" (Fairweather, 2003).

Following the 2002 consultation paper the UK launched the National E-Democracy Project funded by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, and forming part of its wider e-government program that aims to achieve an average 98 per cent e-enablement of all government services (UK-Government, 2002).

"E-Government is not an end in itself. It is at the heart of the drive to modernise government. Modernising local government is about enhancing the quality of local services and effectiveness of local democracy" (UK-Government, 2002).

The UK National E-Democracy Project aimed to develop an e-democracy environment, address the democratic deficit, evaluate e-democracy and produce e-democracy products including online petitioning, tools for learning about democracy, tools for e-consultations and e-panels (Jeffry, 2006).

Thus, according to the government documents reviewed, the UK e-democracy strategy is closely linked to its e-government strategy, and aims to lead to the use of ICT to facilitate and enhance existing forms of representative democracy, to energise the democratic and political life of the nation, and to hold an e-enabled multi channel general election in the near future (Jeffry, 2006).

The Local e-Democracy e-Participation strategy focuses on participation outside elections to enhance, but not to replace, existing representative democracy. It aims to employ user-friendly technologies used in e-government and e-voting, as befits a modern lifestyle (Jeffry, 2006).

It must be noted that many of these government-sponsored initiatives are open to some criticism. For instance, there is no conclusive evidence that e-voting can

increase voter turnout (Trechsel, 2006). E-voting is vulnerable to security and audit trail issues (Grahame and Richard, 2003), and it seems to make elections less fair by creating inequality between wealthy people who can afford technology and those less well-off, especially when there are no significant efforts to make voting easier for the poor (Fairweather and Rogerson, 2002).

There are other examples conducted outside the government. Hansard Society's online consultation on behalf of the All Party Group on Domestic Violence as early as March 2000 is one example. About thousand messages of evidence were received from women survivors of domestic violence. This included voices that were never heard otherwise (Hansard Society, 2001).

More recently, there have been initiatives such as 'Public Whip' and 'They Work for You' set up to enhance the democratic experience of citizens in the UK. The 'Public Whip' is an independent, non-governmental project to monitor MPs, so that citizens can better understand and influence their voting patterns. It helps to find out how any MP or Lord votes on an issue, searches for votes in parliament on a subject of interest and tests an MP or Lord against the policies of one's choice ([www.publicwhip.org.uk](http://www.publicwhip.org.uk)). Similarly, 'They Work For You' helps people to find out more about MPs, to search debates, written answers, and statements since 2001 on search criteria such as MP, peer, constituency, or date, and to comment on recent debates and written answers ([www.theyworkforyou.com](http://www.theyworkforyou.com)).

As part of the work to encourage more people to vote in local elections, Rushmoor Borough Council offered an early voting pilot scheme in May 2006 in which voters were able to vote before election day at one of four centrally located early voting locations. The scheme also included assistance terminals designed to facilitate voting for disabled electors and for those voters with English as their second language (Rushmoor Borough Council, 2006). The Election Commission Evaluation Report on the Rushmoor Pilot stated that that the early voting scheme had a positive impact on convenience for a significant number of voters. Nearly 6 per cent of all votes (i.e. more than 1,200) were cast in the town centre locations

prior to polling day. The assistance terminals were used by too small a number of people for the pilot to be able to determine its potential value (Electoral Commission, 2004).

Pratchett, et al. (2006) conducted an analysis to establish the gap between the rhetoric and practice of e-democracy in the UK. The analysis investigated various components of democracy that might be offered through a website and included maintenance and navigability, information, elected members, information about elections, political management processes, links to other bodies, consultations and online discussion forums. The analysis concluded that many governments provide e-democracy features via their websites, but that the potential of the Internet for local democracy is not fully exploited (Pratchett et al, 2006).

## **Estonia**

According to [www.politicsonline.com](http://www.politicsonline.com) Estonia is one of the top 10 countries who are changing the world of the internet and politics. It has also been ranked near the top of the list of countries putting the Internet to practical use, second in Internet banking and third in e-government in the recent World Economic Forum report ([www.politicsonline.com](http://www.politicsonline.com)). The Estonian e-democracy strategy comes from the priorities established by its overall information technology policy, which urges the development of e-services for citizens, business and government using ICT and ID card applications (<http://www.riso.ee/en/>). Estonia, with nearly 1.3 million inhabitants, is leading its way to build an e-state. It wants to use ICT to increase administrative capacity and ensure a creative and efficient living environment for its citizens. In 2002 the Estonian Parliament approved Internet voting for 2005 local elections and for 2007 national Parliamentary elections (<http://www.ria.ee/index.php>).

Following Parliament's approval remote e-voting was successfully conducted in the 2005 elections. Nearly 10,000 voters representing almost 1 per cent of total



electorate voted using this mechanism. The whole process went very smoothly, both politically and technically (Tallo, 2006).

Thus, Estonia is the first country to have legally binding general elections using the Internet as a means of casting the vote. These elections were declared a success by the Estonian election officials. In 2007 Estonia held its – and the world's – first national Internet election. Voting was available from February 26 to 28. A total of 30,275 citizens (3.4 per cent) used Internet voting (Information Week, 2007).

### **Other Leading Countries**

Some other examples of online engagement and participation are:

The New Zealand Government's "Participate in Government" feature, (<http://www.govt.nz/participate/>), with the tagline "Get involved with government and have your say" helps the citizens to have their views expressed (U.N, 2005).

Online government consultations in The Netherlands have established an ongoing discussion with the Ministers (<http://www.rogervanboxtel.nl/>). The discussion is facilitated by the Dutch Centre for Civic Education, a clear response mechanism and a time frame within which to ensure prompt replies to citizens' comments and questions. The facilitator has guaranteed access to the Minister so as to develop responses on controversial issues.

The Republic of Korea offers a formal e-consultation facility through its site <http://www.egov.go.kr>, where users can submit their views and opinions on specific government policies and proposals (U.N 2005).

Many governments guarantee feedback within a specified number of days. The U.S. Government's portal feedback mechanism ([http://answers.firstgov.gov/cgi-bin/gsa\\_ict.cfg/php/enduser/ask.php](http://answers.firstgov.gov/cgi-bin/gsa_ict.cfg/php/enduser/ask.php)) assures a response within two business days, and the Canadian National site (<http://canada.gc.ca/comments/forme.html>) provides for a reply within one

business day. On the other hand the Health Canada site ([http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/home-accueil/contact/general\\_e.html](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/home-accueil/contact/general_e.html)) requires 10 days, and obtaining a reply from the UK's HM Treasury ([http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/contact/contact\\_index.cfm](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/contact/contact_index.cfm)) requires 15 working days.

From this review it can be argued that e-democracy practices cover e-information, e-consultation, e-participation and e-voting, and that they can be considered as a logical extension of implementations of e-government initiatives. They also point towards democratic transformation, paving ways for more direct forms of democracy. This relates to the discussion in section 4.1 where two main possibilities for e-democracy emerged, one idea focusing on enhancing existing democracy, and the other on a transformation to more direct forms of democratic government.

Furthermore, most research shows that various government initiatives employ the Internet and ICT to provide services and information. The interactive democratic potential of the technology is yet to be fully utilised; the true potential for e-democracy lies in the exploitation of Internet for interactivity between government and citizens (Weber and Murray, 2004), citing research by Alexander (1999), Musso, Weare and Hale (2000), Steyaert (2000) and Watson and Mundy (2001)). Similarly, there is a line of argument by Witsche (2004) stating that the empirical studies conducted on online deliberation in an e-democracy context do not provide enough grounds from which to draw solid conclusions. There is a need to look beyond what is found in the Internet through more quantitative content analysis or through more qualitative discourse analysis and ethnographic approaches, so that the democratic potential of the Internet can be fully grasped (Witschge, 2004). Also, Ward, et al (2005) states that there has been a growing amount of research looking at party and political websites and considerably less evidence coming from a grass-roots public perspective (Ward, Gibson et al. 2005). This points to the need for further research to advance the theory and practice of e-democracy.

In addition to the practices mentioned above, the literature also presents different views and models of e-Democracy as discussed in the next section. It must be noted that the researcher believes in and agrees with argument that 'one size, fits all' approach does not apply to a project like e-Democracy. Therefore, the researcher has decided not to adopt any one single model or strategy 'as is' from any of the leading countries for the current study. However, the lessons from leading countries will be used as basis to further develop a regional approach to e-Democracy.

#### 4.2.2. Views and Models of e-Democracy

Views on e-democracy tend to fall within three general categories: utopian, pessimistic and utilitarian. The utopian is the most optimistic view of the extent to which fundamental social change can be effected via ICT. The pessimistic view, on the other hand, holds that e-democracy threatens to undermine processes associated with traditional democracy (Hall, 1999)

The utilitarian perspective recognizes the potential of ICT to expand and facilitate citizen empowerment and participation in decision-making processes, particularly for the marginalised. Advocates of this view hold that ICT can do several things in this regard, including providing information, measuring preferences through such mechanisms as e-voting, online forums and surveys, providing a space in which debate and activism can take place. This participatory view dominates the literature regarding e-democracy (Hall, 1999)

In addition to these three general categories, Hoff, Löfgren and Torpe (2003) have identified the consumer, demo-elitist, neo-republican, and cyberdemocratic models. This categorisation resulted from their analysis of numerous case studies of technologically mediated innovations in political practices (TMIPP's) in the UK, Netherlands and Denmark. Chadwick and May (2003) researched the democratic possibilities of the Internet focusing on U.S, British and European Union e-government initiatives and outlined three models (managerial, consultative and

participatory) of how e-government could re-configure citizen-state relations. Kakabdse et al. (2003) classified e-democracy in terms of electronic bureaucracy, information management, populist and civil society variants of e-democracy. Table 4.1 compares and contrasts these models.

Table 4.1 : Models of e-Democracy

Author	Model name	Actors/Approach	Information flow	ICT Components	Core of Political participation
Hoff, Löfgren and Torpe (2003)	Consumer Model	Considers citizen as a consumer of public services	Focus on efficient flow of information	One stop shops, citizen cards, Choice of databases etc	Choice of public services
	Demo-Elitist	Expert discourse acts as political nexus	Focuses on vertical flow of information between representatives and voters, government and interest organisation etc	Web sites, Direct mails etc	Consensus creation, lobbying
	Neo Republican	Active citizenship	Focuses on vertical flow of information between representatives and voters, government and interest organisation etc	Moderated discussion groups	Public debates, associations
	Cyber democracy	Radical democratic & electronic discussions	Multi directional information flow	Virtual communities / self organised discussion groups	Virtual debates, virtual and real actions

Author	Model name	Actors/Approach	Information flow	ICT Components	Core of Political participation
Chadwick A. & May C (2003)	Managerial	Considers citizen as customers of government services	Unilinear from Government to customers or from customers to government. With a main focus on improving the flow of information within the government	One stop shops, Online tax return, benefit claims,	Electronic and more efficient Service delivery
	Consultative	Better policy provision to citizen and users	Unilinear from Government to customers or from customers to government.	e-Voting, Instant opinion polling, advisory referendums, electronic town meeting etc	e-Voting, Instant opinion polling, advisory referendums, electronic town meeting etc
	Participatory	Voluntary associations and interest groups spontaneously interacting in cyberspace and deliberately influencing the government	Discursive and complex: Citizen to Citizens, Citizens to Government and Government to Citizens	Discussion lists, use nets. Peer-to-peer interactions	Deliberation

Author	Model name	Actors/Approach	Information flow	ICT Components	Core of Political participation
Kakabadse et. al. (2003)	Electronic bureaucracy	Electronic Delivery of services	Focus on efficient flow of information at reduced cost	One stop shops	-
	Information management model	Effective communication between bridging individual citizens and decision makers.	Two way communication between decision makers and citizens	Electronic public services and information at the point of use such as touch screen kiosks etc	Interaction and information exchange through public access points, touch screens etc
	Populist	Enables citizens to register their views on current issues	Un-mediated communication	Electronic meetings	Direct, quick, interactive and inclusive participation
	Civil Society	Transformation of political culture to exploit the full potential of ICT	Multi directional	Robust and autonomous system for public debate  Interactive online system for everyday use	Public Debate

The consumer model holds that such phenomena as elections, parties, parliamentary institutions are the bases of democracy. This model specifically focuses on the needs of citizens for public sector services, to which citizens have a legal right (Tops et al, 2000). This model is similar to the managerial model proposed by Chadwick and May (2003) as well as Kakabadse et al (2003) electronic bureaucracy model. The core of these models is the proposition that ICT can foster and enhance the efficient dissemination of information and public service delivery (Chadwick and May 2003). Here there is greater emphasis on efficiency and reducing the costs of providing government services. There is an impulse towards improved communication between citizens and government, which is seen to foster e-government. The democratic possibilities of technology are thus not fully utilised and explored in these models. The obvious emphasis of the consumer, managerial and electronic bureaucracy models is on the delivery of information and services by electronic means. Australia's "Government Online" and the "one-stop shops" – offices that handle multiple government agencies are examples of these (Kakabadse et al, 2003).

The demo-elitist model (Hoff et al, 2003) is slightly different from the consumer model. In the former the relationship between government and citizen is more like a producer-consumer relationship. In the demo-elitist model the citizen assigns experts and representatives of interest organisations an important role in attempting to satisfy his or her expectations of public policies. This model focuses on the vertical flow of information between representatives and voters, government and other interest organisations (Tops et al, 2000).

The neo-republican model (Hoff,et al, 2003) assumes citizen activism at the local and micro levels and focuses on the quality of their participation. The advocates of this model hold that ICT can help bring an increasing number of citizens into the decision-making process (Bellamy 2000). Increasing participation and quality of political discussions are characteristics of this model (Tops et al, 2000).



Similarly to the neo-republican model, the consultative (Chadwick and May 2003) and information management (Kakabadse, Kakabadse et al. 2003) models regard information as a resource to be used for better policy administration. Here, technology facilitates the direct communication to government, unmediated by representation, of citizens' opinions. These models are placed along a continuum running from a low level of information gathering to more deliberate and active interaction and consultation. This constitutes a greater level of democratic participation and represents many necessary elements of a fully developed e-democracy (Chadwick and May, 2003).

Both participatory and populist models perceive a more complex, horizontal and multidirectional interaction between government and citizen. The flow of information is "discursive and complex – citizen to citizens, citizen to government, government to citizens" (Chadwick and May, 2003). The principal focus in the participatory model is on voluntary association and the development of new communities of interest manifested through the proliferation of such vehicles as Usenet, bulletin boards, chat rooms, file-sharing and peer-to-peer networking. The populist model enables citizens to register their views on current issues. It is most often equated with direct democracy. The model's profile was raised when Ross Perot popularised the term "electronic town hall" in his 1992 presidential campaign, attempting to recreate the spirited gatherings of New England townspeople on a national scale through the medium of interactive technology (London 1994).

Finally, parallels can be drawn between the cyberdemocratic (Hoff, Löfgren et al. 2003) and civil society (Kakabadse et al, 2003) models. These hold that ICT should become the basis of democracy, rather than remaining a supplement to normal communication channels bridging government and citizen. They are concerned with the transformation of political culture, and can be appreciated only within the context of the broader revolution brought about by communication technology. ICT's goal in this model is to strengthen connections between citizens and promote a robust and autonomous site for public debate (Kakabadse et al, 2003). The cyberdemocratic model does not view traditional processes and

institutions such as voting, elections, and parliaments as a necessary condition for democracy. Indeed, it is maintained that the emergence of virtual communities is stimulated by ICT. These communities consist of autonomous networks. Those who subscribe to the cyberdemocratic view maintain that ICT not only facilitates communication but also releases it from obvious constraints. As a result, individuals become more empowered, pluralisation and diversity is encouraged and democracy is advanced (Hoff et al, 2000)

The approach suggested by Chadwick and May has been taken as a theoretical framework for the current study. This model shares many common characteristics with other models while clearly and concisely distinguishing three categories: managerial, consultative and participatory. These factors add reliability and validity to the study. The other models are not rejected; rather the model proposed by Chadwick and May covers a wider scope while incorporating the principles of the models by Hoff, Löfgren and Torpe (2003) and Kakabadse et. al. (2003) This model is also similar to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) framework for Citizen-State interaction.

The OECD (2001) defines information, consultation and active participation as three types of interaction that together constitute e-democratic interaction between the state and the citizens. Information is a one-way relationship in which the government produces and delivers information for use by its citizens. It covers both passive accesses to information upon demand, delivering information for use by citizens, and active measures by government to disseminate information to citizens. The emphasis of Chadwick & May's model is on government services in addition to disseminating information, yet both consider citizens as consumers of government. Consultation is a two-way relationship in which citizens provide feedback to government. It is based on the prior definition of information. Governments define the issues for consultation, set the questions and manage the process, while citizens are invited to contribute their views and opinions. Active participation, on the other hand, is a relationship based on partnership with the government in which citizens actively engage in defining the process and content of policy-making. It acknowledges equal standing for citizens in setting

the agenda, proposing policy options and shaping the policy dialogue, although the responsibility for the final decision or policy formulation rests with the government.

It is apparent from this discussion that many argue for the potential of ICT to breathe new life into democracy, while others maintain that ICT is insufficient. Indeed, it has been argued that what is needed is a vigorous debate regarding the fundamental nature of democracy and the impact that new technologies will have on its growth and development (Nugent, 2001). One of the recommendations of the Bahrain e-Voting Forum expert panel discussion was to set up an advisory panel with representatives of all major stakeholders to initiate this discussion and create the political will and the popular inclination to realise the full benefit of ICT for Bahrain (CIO, 2006b)

#### 4.3. E-Voting

Amongst the various approaches and models that contribute to the theory and practice of e-democracy, one widely discussed component is e-voting. This is generally defined as any type of voting that involves the use of electronic means. E-voting can take one of two forms (Svensson and Leenes, 2003). The first is electronic machine voting (eMV), which refers to the use of any electronic apparatus to record and count votes in a fixed public place. eMV uses a specialised voting machine in a voting booth or a stand-alone PC adapted or built for this particular purpose. The second type, electronic distance voting (eDV), is the process of voting using technology remotely, not necessarily from a voting booth. It implies electronic voter registration and the gathering and counting of votes cast in different locations. Most notably, it allows the voter to use a more generic technology such as interactive digital TV, telephone, Short Message Service (SMS) or the Internet from a standard PC, to cast his or her vote from anywhere, be it from the home or the office or any other remote location, to be stored in another remote computer (Svensson and Leenes, 2003).

The introduction of eMV entails many risks, the most important concerns being user proficiency, system reliability and official manipulation of the result. In

addition to these dangers, eDV is also prone to risks associated with the probability of intentional attacks, intrusion, denial of service and virus attacks. (IPI Report, 2001 in Svensson and Leenes, 2003). The advocates of e-voting assert that voters can trust the e-voting machines and the software because they have been certified for use by competent officials. However, many computer scientists have questioned the validity of these certifications (Kibrick, 2004). For example electronic voting fraud and inaccessible e-voting systems can prevent citizens from exercising their basic democratic rights. Though voting irregularities have long existed, e-voting has the potential for fraud that is imperceptible to most of the general public (Oravec, 2005).

E-voting may also raise other issues associated with moving the voting process from a public to a private place. The nature of e-voting could also pose fundamental threats to existing representative democracy – or, as the IPI (2001) report puts it, “E-voting in the long run could lead to referendums and threaten the deliberative nature of the political system and the protection of the minority”. e-Voting must only be introduced to bolster the integrity of voting processes and systems, not to undermine it. Information technology professionals can actively work to protect their own rights to vote and aid in designing more accessible and user-friendly systems (Oravec, 2005). Therefore any attempts to implement e-voting must take consideration of democratic principles such as equality, liberty and freedom as discussed in Chapter 2, and by ensuring security, secrecy and privacy to the voters.

In addition to the concern that the state will attempt to identify individual voting patterns there is also the fear of access to such information by others who are not legitimately entitled to it, such as political parties, family members and employers (Fairweather and Rogerson, 2002). The design of the system must include adequate measures to take account of the full range of security, secrecy and privacy issues.

There are many technical measures that minimise the threats concerning security, privacy and secrecy, including encryptions, biometrics and audit trails.

Fairweather and Rogerson (2002) state that “if biometrics form part of the preventative measure there may be privacy, and health and safety issues relating to individual voters then design must include a full risk analysis of biometrics in the application, if they are used”.

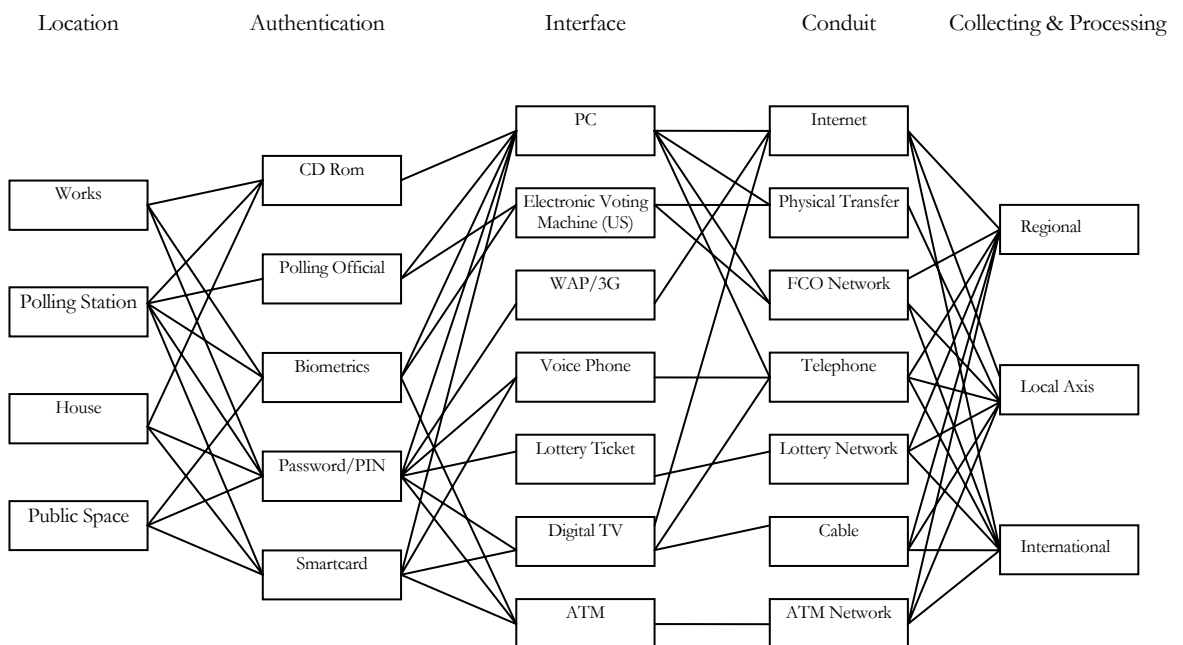
Similarly, in any e-voting system there needs to be audit procedures to check that the results are accurate and are the result of correct procedures. The audit mechanisms must also address problems related to connections, system failure and attempts to abuse the system which are not necessarily related to the integrity of vote tallying (Fairweather and Rogerson 2002).

In 2002 the US passed the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA) which sets out to secure individual voting rights, set national standards for an acceptable voting machinery, and enhance voting opportunities for members of the military and persons with disabilities (Fail, 2006). HAVA focuses on defining standards that all the different voting systems including e-Voting must meet. Accordingly, voting systems used in federal elections must permit voters to verify ballot choices, provide for a manual audit, have accessible voting for the disabled, meet federal language accessibility requirements and meet Federal Election Commission standards for error rates (Yang and Gaines, 2004). From this it is argued that the need for a user-verifiable audit trail is central to any voting system.

The concerns related to audit relate to the possibility of capturing voter profiles during the audit process and the conflict of interest between audit and citizens. This is crucial when it is related to the concerns of certain minority groups. Therefore an audit must take secrecy into account in order to ensure voter privacy when defining and implementing an appropriate audit trail during system development, as well as when implementing operational audit procedures. It is also important to ensure that the design, testing and implementation of voting system addresses concerns related to audit effectiveness (Fairweather, 2002).

In their discussion of different technology options for implementing electronic voting, Fairweather and Rogerson (2002) identify five elements of the technology enablers for electronic voting: location, authentication type, interface, conduit and collector/processor. The location determines the degree of control over the voting process and the security of the interface. The authentication type refers to the means for confirming voter identity. The interface enables citizens to access the electronic voting system, and the conduit is used to transfer the data. The collector/processor cumulates, counts and reports the voting outcome. Various combinations of enablers using these five elements are possible, as illustrated in the following diagram.

Figure 4.1 : E-Voting Technology Components (Source: Fairweather and Rogerson, 2002, P. 17)



They also identified the following as generic requirements for e-voting (Fairweather and Rogerson, 2002):

- a) Security, which refers to protection from hacker attacks, publicity seekers, hostile regimes, members of an existing political party, terrorists groups,

threats from within the system, disruption from strikes, commercial contract disputes related to the voting system supply, attacks from various geographic locations whose IP addresses are concealed, vulnerabilities such as virus and malware, hacking into servers, physical disruption, attacks on privacy and confidence attacks.

- b) Simplicity of the voting process means to make it simple in terms of time, cost, likelihood of using, making mistakes and abandoning, as well as equity of access to the system.
- c) Reliability, which should be of the utmost as a protection against system failure, taking into account the sensitive business of voting.
- d) Voter anonymity, according to treaties and international conventions.
- e) Secrecy of the ballot against those with an illicit interest in the outcome of an election and in learning of individual voters' preferences.
- f) Integrity, meaning the correct counting of results.
- g) Auditing of results for numerical and procedural correctness.
- h) Protection against multiple voting
- i) Prevention of impersonation.
- j) Equity of access to the vote for all.

Another issue not included above but very much present by implication (and discussed by Fairweather and Rogerson (2002)) is the problem of trust. Concern about the loss of trust in governments is a popular theme in academic literature and in government reports, according to Thomas (2007). He argues that that one must talk in terms of a "trust deficit" rather than "trust crisis". This is in fact more accurate as well as less alarmist, but focused intervention is still needed to address the gap (Thomas 2007).

However, there is one opportunity that lies in leveraging the young people's generally strong uptake of the Internet for democratic involvement. This can address young people's current dissatisfaction and apathy towards politics (Coleman et al, 2001b). The youth has a tendency to trust the latest technology and use it for many online transactions that include money. The policy makers can leverage this opportunity for democratic purposes.

Coleman (2005b) while commenting on the decline on the public engagement attitudes related to trust and efficacy argues that insights from economics may assist as some economists have addressed issues related to institutions, trust, and efficacy/efficiency. Also, a more recent research by Coleman et al (2008) suggests that formation of political efficacy is in part a consequence of experiential engagement with authority. They argue that these experiential engagements are often very mundane and localised and are combined with mediated experiences and narratives of political authority where direct experience of engagements are limited. The author argues that this research gives a very good example of a pilot engagement that the government in Bahrain and other parts of the region can replicate on a larger scale to build an e-Democracy roadmap.

Thomas (2007) further reports that the “prevailing approach to solving the trust deficit by adding oversight and accountability mechanisms may end deepening the distrust it seeks to remedy. The traditional, informal relationships of trust have been found wanting. They are being replaced by an ever expanding web of rules, procedures, and oversight bodies intended to deter and to deal with incidents of wrongdoing, inefficiencies, performance failures and a perceived lack of accountability”.

The present research investigated issues pertinent to the above generic requirements with the object of incorporating them into an overall Bahrain-specific e-democracy strategy.

It can be inferred from the analysis of various e-democracy models that information dissemination, interaction, online services, e-voting, e-participation, e-politics, online forums, e-referendum are some of the constituents of e-democracy.



Furthermore, the Electronic Democracy: Breakout Group of the FCO seminar (2001) reported that, whatever form democracy takes, there are constraints on its electronic implementation. These might include the lack of a truly universal supporting infrastructure, varying levels of literacy and technological skills, the lack of a national language interface, and of public awareness and of system legitimacy, government control and censorship and the lack of a culture of transparency. The scope of this research addresses these issues in detail so that the challenges and constraints identified do not impede the implementation of the proposed strategy in Bahrain. The literature identified the following issues as the major concerns needing investigation by the collection of empirical data.

- a) User proficiency and skill level
- b) System reliability
- c) Insider manipulation
- d) Security
- e) Simplicity of the voting process
- f) Anonymity of voters
- g) Secrecy of ballots
- h) Equity of access
- i) Arabic interface
- j) Lack of awareness
- k) Government control
- l) Audit

The findings of the case study investigation is reported in Chapters 7 & 8

#### 4.4. E-Democracy Options

The e-democracy matrix in Table 4.2, presented by Alexander Trechsel during the Bahrain e-Voting Forum (2006), reveals a link between the e-democracy practices and the theoretical views and models on e-democracy that are discussed in this chapter.

Table 4.2 : E-Democracy Matrix (Trechsel 2006)

E-TECHNIQUES	ASPECTS OF DEMOCRACY PROMOTED			
		INCREASING TRANSPAERENCEY	INCREASING PARTICIPATION	INCREASING DELIBERATION
	e-Access	X		
	e-Consultation		X	
	e-Petition		X	
	e-Voting		X	
e-Forums			X	

Similarly, the OECD Handbook (OECD, 2003) lists the following tools for online engagement of citizens at each stage of policy making:

Table 4.3 : Tools for online engagement for each stage of policy making

Stage in policy making cycle	Information	Consultation	Participation
Agenda Setting	Site specific search engine Email alerts for each policy issues Translation support for several languages Style checkers to remove jargons	Online surveys for opinion polls Discussion forums Monitoring emails Bulletin boards Frequently asked questions (FAQ)	E-community E-petitions E-referenda
Analysis	Translation support for ethnic languages Style checkers to remove jargon	Evidence managed facilities Expert profiling	Electronic citizen juries E-communities
Formulation	Advanced style checking to help interpret technical and legal terms	Discussion forms Online citizen juries E-community tools	E-petition E-reference, amending legislation
Implementation	Natural language style checkers E-mail news letter	Discussion forums Online citizen juries E-community tools	E-mail distribution lists for target groups
Monitoring	Online feedback Online publication of annual report	Online surveys and opinion polls Discussion forums Monitoring emails Bulletin boards Frequently asked questions (FAQs)	E-petition E-referenda

Source : Macintosh A “Using information and communication technologies to enhance citizen engagement in the policy process”

Similar to the desired early involvement of customers in the product life cycle, it is argued that it is best to involve the citizens at each stage of the policy making cycle. The earlier the involvement of citizens, the better the ability to influence the policy outcomes. The Hansard Society highlights five reasons for governments to come up with a mechanism for promoting public deliberation and embedding it within the constitutional process. Such a mechanism will demonstrate real links between public input and policy outcomes. The five reasons include (1) improving the quality of policy by making use wider expertise (2) preparing for greater and faster interactions

demanded by information society; (3) integrating public input into policy making; (4) responding to calls for transparency and accountability and (5) strengthening trust in government (Coleman, 2002).

While discussing the design criteria for technology solutions to be considered in e-democracy, Noveck (2004) outlines the factors necessary to an ideal e-deliberation set up (Noveck, 2004). They are:

- a. Accessibility: every citizen should have equal and convenient access to the conversation, and the space for deliberation must be aesthetically as well as technically usable.
- b. No Censorship: there should be no censorship on conversation, which should be allowed to take place freely and independently. There should be appropriate mechanisms to moderate the different type of discussions and to prevent spam and other intrusions that negate the usefulness of the system.
- c. Autonomy: participants in the online deliberation must be autonomous citizens with a controlling role in the process.
- d. Accountability: participants must be accountable and must only engage in reasoned public discourse.
- e. Transparency: participants and those setting the agenda must be visible to all parties.
- f. Equality: participants must have equal opportunity, access and voice.
- g. Pluralism: Options for the viewpoints of the broad spectrum of people to be heard must be available.
- h. Inclusiveness: A deliberative forum must be inclusive and open to all.
- i. Staying informed: Participants should have the opportunity to take time to stay informed in order to provide a firm basis for their judgment.
- j. Public nature: The dialogue must be open, accessible and overtly dedicated to the interests of the group engaged in discussing a particular issue or topic.
- k. Facilitation: The deliberation must be effectively facilitated.

One can notice elements of tension in the above “factors necessary for an ideal e-deliberation set up”. For example one can discern the apparent friction that may occur between ‘facilitation’ and ‘no censorship’.

It is noted that many citizens have a keen interest to participate in policy deliberation and often feel their views or experiences are not taken into account by policy-makers. While the participation must be guaranteed by clear standards and balancing the citizens rights and expectations. At the same time participating citizens must also be required to acquire deliberative skills and accept civic responsibilities. There is also a need for online policy deliberation to use simple and jargon-free language, and the process must be humanised and made user-friendly (Coleman et al, 2001b).

From the foregoing discussion, it can be argued the concept of e-democracy indeed presents the promise for a better democratic future, but that there are many policy, technological, political and cultural issues that need to be addressed for democracy to benefit from ICT.

For example, to what extent are the results of an online dialogue representative of the population? This raises a major objection to e-Engagement, that not enough citizens will become involved in such initiatives. This will give government the possibility of using self-selected comments rather than a result that is representative, sometimes leading to a situation where an active minority achieves an influence far beyond their number. Thus, any e-engagement initiative must be seen as just one way to engage citizens, and there is a compelling need to ensure multiple channels and to fully integrate the results with offline contributions (Coleman et al, 2001b).

Another issue relates to the participation of wider public and the question of their meaningful participation and their capability to do so. There are also concerns that this could lead to errors in judgment and bad policy decisions. However it can be argued that the dividing line between experts and the public is false and

fading. Considerable expertise resides within the public and the one must find innovative ways to draw upon this expertise for the benefit of existing bureaucratized decision-making process. The citizen must be provided the required information about policy issues and it is important to cultivate 'critical and deliberative political culture' in the civil society. This will help to utilise the experience and expertise of the public in enhancing the quality of policy making (Coleman et al, 2001b).

One can argue that the above issues link to the basic democratic principles discussed in Chapter 2; in fact, they can be seen as an elaboration of these principles in order to suit the electronic context. As Riley (2003) notes, research as to the basic principles of democracy remains fundamental to further analysis of e-democracy and what form it will take in the 21st century. Thus the debate about what e-democracy actually looks like in practice will continue as various stakeholders address the fundamental question of what societal values are important and how they wish to live. The debate will continue to evolve as technology and social values take further shape. Meanwhile, various projects and activities geared towards the implementation of e-Democracy are emerging (King 2006).

Also, as Coleman argues, the debate must not be and it is not about direct versus representative democracy. It is about the changing nature of representation. There is a need to think in terms of more collaborative forms of representation and he further argues for a mature political debate that recognizes the importance of representative institutions, parties and concerning all issues that are part of liberal democracy (Coleman in [Bishop et al, 2002](#)). When implementing e-Democracy the policy makers must draw attention to changing nature of representation that will create new demand and responsibilities both on representatives and citizens as noted earlier.

The researcher also agrees with the notion and the results of this study further confirms that any initiative to implement e-Democracy must enhance the ideals

and values of traditional democracy and it must not undermine it for instance with unequal access to ICT.

#### 4.5. E-Democracy in the Bahrain Context

It is important that the Bahrain e-democracy strategy be specific and tailored to fit the Bahrain context. This is because the democratic experience is relatively new to Bahrain, and is therefore different from those other countries' implementations of e-democracy described earlier; and their cultural context differs from that of Bahrain.

Another factor that needs consideration is the population of the Kingdom of Bahrain which is relatively small (less than one million). Bahrain has also achieved a high level of social and economic development in a comparatively short period of time, primarily through petroleum processing and refining, by becoming an international banking centre and by offering services not available in neighbouring Saudi Arabia (Jeffreys, 2006).

Bahrain's citizens have more freedom than any of their GCC neighbours. According to the Heritage Foundation Annual Index of Economic Freedom Bahrain ranks the nineteenth in the world and the freest in the Arab world (Heritage Foundation, 2008)

Bahrain's telecommunications system, road network, international airport, public services, universities and medical facilities are well advanced and are often favourably compared to their international equivalents. Bahrain ranked 46th in the UN Global E-Governance Readiness Report of 2004 with 0.532 index points (U.N, 2004).

Bahrainis enjoy the highest ICT use in the Arab World according to the ICT Use Index report issued by Madar Research. The Use Index covers four areas of ICT use (Madar Research Journal, July 2006).

Similarly, PC penetration in Bahrain is very high. According to the results of the Household Expenditure and Income Survey (2005-2006), approximately 70 per cent of households have one or more personal computers and approximately 14.6 per cent of all households have at least one laptop or notebook computer at home. Almost all households (98.3 per cent) have at least one television (CIO 2007b). Bahrain was the first country in the region to liberalise the telecoms sector. Bahrain has already granted 22 Internet Service Provider (ISP) licenses, two National Fixed Wireless Service (NFWS) licenses, two Internet Exchange (IX) licenses and eight National Fixed Service licenses (TRA, 2007)

The Central Informatics Organisation (CIO) is charged with planning and implementing IT in Government. In 1981, the government instituted the Government Data Network (GDN). This network allows for secure and efficient communication between the various government ministries and directorates. Through this network, any ministry or directorate can, upon receiving proper authorisation, access the data and applications of any Ministry (Al Amer, 2003).

Thus such factors as the population's literacy, social and educational development and ICT infrastructure may have a positive bearing as Bahrain embarks on the e-democracy route, yet it is still important to investigate the issues further in order to produce the most plausible e-democracy strategy for Bahrain. The lessons learned from other countries could be used as guides to empirical investigation.

#### 4.6. Bahrain e-Voting Forum

The researcher participated in the Bahrain e-Voting Forum in order to discover the views and opinions of the various stakeholders. The forum was jointly organised by the Directorate of Elections and Referendum, the Government of Bahrain and the Bahrain Information Technology Society (BITS).

The forum made the following twelve recommendations:



- (i) It has been proved beyond any doubt that technology exists to effectively enable and run e-voting.
- (ii) e-Voting is practicable and has many benefits which include enabling security, increasing accuracy, saving cost, enabling wider participation and catering for people with special needs like frequent travellers and disabled citizens.
- (iii) The Kingdom of Bahrain enjoys many advantages over other countries for the successful implementation of e-voting, including a solid communication and IT infrastructure and a highly educated population.
- (iv) The success of e-voting depends on the involvement of all stakeholders (the public, Government, societies, professionals and political parties).
- (v) Governments have a vital role to play in the e-voting process as facilitators, enablers, promoters, legislators and organizers.
- (vi) Increasing awareness, especially amongst the public, is one of the key factors in any successful implementation of e-voting, in order to gain the trust of all parties concerned.
- (vii) The Kingdom of Bahrain's Smart Card project is eminently suited to e-voting due to its secure and transparent features.
- (viii) The Forum highly commends the initiative of the organisers of the upcoming Bahrain Youth Parliament in implementing e-voting technology.
- (ix) The Forum highly commends the Government's initiative in forming an advisory panel of experts from all relevant stakeholders including relevant external entities such as UN and independents to discuss and steer the e-voting initiative for Bahrain. This will also be a step in further establishing e-democracy.
- (x) Implementation of e-voting should not eliminate traditional methods. Voters should have a choice of voting method.
- (xi) The establishment of an independent auditing body consisting of members of Government, the private sector, political parties and professionals is recommended in order to increase trust in and the credibility of the entire process.

- (xii) The forum shall state clearly that there is no completely risk-free voting system, whether traditional or modern. However, there are many proven ways and means of reducing such risks to an acceptable level (CIO, 2006b).

Some of the above recommendations, including the conclusion regarding the existence of effective e-voting technology, have been criticised. Some computer scientists still see fundamental theoretical barriers in current technology which prevent the proper implementation of secure and anonymous e-voting systems (Kitcat, 2006). For example Bruce Schneier (2001) states, "Building a secure Internet-based voting system is a very hard problem, harder than all the other computer security problems we have attempted and failed at. I believe that the risks to democracy are too great to attempt it" (Schneier 2001). Similarly Rubin (2004) and others argue that remote e-voting in particular is not possible with current technology, and concludes that e-voting systems are unsuitable for use in a general election (Rubin et al. 2004).

In particular, recommendation (ii) regarding the practicability and advantageousness of e-voting has been attacked. Cost saving is no longer mentioned as an advantage, either by advocates of e-voting or by vendors, due to the scale and cost involved in building and running a distributed highly scalable and secure e-voting system. Similarly, according to Kitcat (2006) the idea that e-voting can increase accuracy is highly contentious: the system can be subject to a host of hardware- and software-related bugs and inaccuracies. He also concludes that e-voting does not widen participation significantly. Helping disabled people to vote on their own is an important goal according to Kitcat, but he strongly questions whether e-voting for everyone is the best way to meet that goal.

The goal of involving all stakeholders is commendable, but does present a difficult proposition.

The finding of recommendation (vi) regarding public awareness has actually been reversed by some, who claim that such increased awareness has led to increased suspicion of the whole process.

In the wake of the arguments for and against e-voting and its role in e-democracy, one must note that no system, whether electronic or manual, is fully foolproof. Technology is rapidly advancing, and one must not discount the possibility of enhancing and using the system in the foreseeable future for the common good and the evolution of democracy.

#### 4.7. Voice of Customer Survey

A stratified convenience sampling survey was conducted by the Bahrain Government to get the attitude of citizens towards e-Government (SCICT 2005). The researcher had the opportunity to review and approve the contents of the survey questions as the member of the Supreme Committee for Information and Communication Technology (SCICT) in the government. The survey included some questions related to e-Democracy and e-Voting. The patterns and inferences that have a relevance to the current study are summarised below:

Of the people who responded, 54% owned a computer and 81% owned a mobile phone. Only 43% of the respondents had a dial-up or broadband connection at home. These figures render some opportunities for e-Democracy implementation.

Over 90% of the respondents have used the Internet service at least once in their life. 60% of the respondents said that the government should use electronic means such as e-Referendum, e-opinions (where peoples opinions and comments are sought via electronic means for e.g. opinion polls) etc for obtaining the decisions and opinions of the public.

On the question of e-Voting, over 55% of the Bahrainis responded that they would be willing to cast their vote electronically if such a system was made available. Perceived inconvenience and issues of security and trust were cited as the reasons for not choosing e-Voting.

On channel preference 43% of the respondents preferred electronic integrated service delivery channels. 44% of the respondents suggested to a single window concept (where many services provided by different government agencies can be accessed from one single website or service centre) using Internet and other delivery mechanisms. This reinforces the need for having a multi-channel strategy.

The result of the voice of customer survey reveals positive indicators such as an optimistic attitude towards e-Democracy and some indications about the reasons for not choosing e-Voting. It also gives a representative statistics of IT and telephone penetration, usage of the Internet, and channel preference. The scope of this research is to explore the issues pertaining to e-Democracy through a qualitative case study to get a deeper understanding and to develop the e-Democracy strategy for Bahrain.

#### 4.8. SWOT Analysis

The SWOT analysis reveals the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats with respect to e-Democracy implementation in Bahrain.

Figure 4.2 : Strength, Weakness, Opportunity and Threat (SWOT) Analysis

<p style="text-align: center;"><b><i>Strengths</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small size</li> <li>• High ICT penetration</li> <li>• High education level</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><i>Weaknesses</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of trust</li> <li>• Lack of awareness</li> <li>• Relatively new democracy</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><i>Opportunities</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stakeholder optimism</li> <li>• Benefits</li> <li>• Government commitment to improve democracy</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><i>Threats</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Politics</li> <li>• Sectarian divide</li> </ul>

The relatively small size of the Island country, high education, literacy and ICT penetration levels are the main strengths that favour e-Democracy implementation in Bahrain. Only 13.45% of the population above the age of 15 is illiterate.

The results of the study conducted by Bahrain Telecommunication Authority show as that around  $\frac{2}{3}$ <sup>rd</sup> of households have a fixed telephone line and 99% of the people in Bahrain have a mobile telephone. The survey also shows that 53% of households surveyed have got an Internet connection (TRA, 2007).

PC penetration in Bahrain is very high. As noted in section 4.5, approximately 70% of households have one or more personal computers and approximately 14.6% of all households have at least one laptop/notebook computer at home with almost all households (98.3%) having at least one television (CIO 2007b). Low level of Internet penetration with only just over 50% of households, lack of trust in the team responsible for the implementation of e-Democracy and lack of awareness of the possibilities of the e-Democracy are some of the main weaknesses.

Also relevant is that the democracy is at its infancy and peoples' awareness on the democratic form of government itself is in its evolutionary stage.

The overwhelming optimism expressed in the documents reviewed and the data collected, the benefits of e-Democracy and Governments commitments to enhance democracy in Bahrain stand out as major opportunities.

Politics for the sake of politics and rivalry between political societies may challenge e-Democracy in Bahrain.

#### 4.9. Lessons for Bahrain

The literature review reveals some key lessons that need to be considered while developing an e-Democracy strategy for Bahrain. They are:

- a. If properly implemented, ICT has the potential to enhance and transform existing democracies.
- b. There is growing interest in different parts of the world to apply ICT to enhance democracy.
- c. E-Voting deals with the application of ICT for enabling voting over electronic means either by remote online voting using the Internet or through electronic polling booths.
- d. E-Participation deals with application of ICT in order to enhance and even drastically alter the way citizens participate in the Democracy.
- e. The factors that impede the implementation of e-Democracy include non-technological issues such as social, cultural and constitutional in addition to technological issues such as security, privacy etc
- f. ICT that facilitates democracy could also be used for suppressing democracy through filtering, surveillance etc
- g. Equity of access and bridging of digital divide is an important concern for e-Democracy

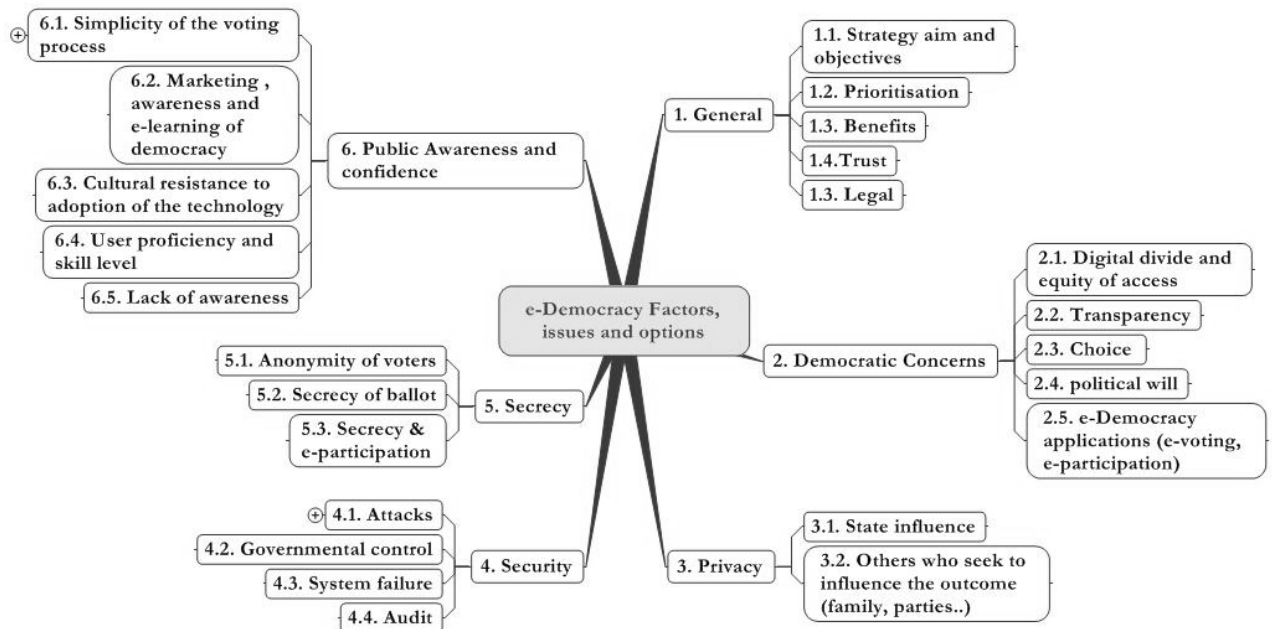
- h. A majority of e-Democracy efforts are directed towards providing services and information online and the interactive potential of the Internet is not fully utilised
- i. Different countries had different priorities with respect to e-Democracy implementations

Considering the key lessons and underlying themes in the literature the researcher identified an initial list of issues for investigation. In addition to the knowledge gained from literature review and the pilot case study, the researcher's interpretive skills and policy and strategy level experience gained working as senior civil servant in the government were used to list the issues. The issues for investigation were revised after the pilot case study and honed during data collection and analysis.

#### 4.10. Issues for investigation

From the forgoing discussion the researcher generated a list of issues for investigation that was used later for data collection and analysis. The list was used to define the data collection instrument, code the data collected and analyse and present the results. These were reviewed and revised throughout the different phases of the research. The final list is presented here. The evolution of the issues for investigation and codes are documented in Appendix 5.

Figure 4.3 : Issues for investigation



The preliminary literature review has discovered various definitions of e-democracy. There is broad agreement among authors at a broad level; a composite definition can be: “e-democracy is the application of information and communication technology for improving democracy”. This high-level definition will be used as a working definition for the purposes of this research.

The approaches of different authors, in extending the definition of e-Democracy, seem to be notably different. This is largely due to difference in the context of their analysis. Policy making and policy administration were the two aspects of e-democracy common to most of the models studied, although different terminologies were used. For example, Riley (2003) used e-voting and e-



participation, while others used terms such e-government and e-politics. These two streams – policy making and policy administration – need to be closely examined while formulating an e-democracy strategy for Bahrain. In a broader sense, it is also inferred that ICT can enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of administration, for example of voting, thereby enhancing the existing representative mode of democracy. On the other hand ICT can also challenge the very existence of the principles of representation and bring in more direct participation of citizens, for instance through online referenda. E-voting can be considered as an explicit, more tangible and achievable component of e-Democracy.

Given the components, challenges and approaches to e-Democracy what is the best strategy to embark on for e-Democracy? What is the most suitable model for Bahrain? Should there be long term and short term strategies? Should the strategy throttle the representative model and advocate a direct democracy model? Should that model advocate more of a utopian view of e-democracy advocating drastic and revolutionary change? Should the strategy propose a “hybrid” model?

#### 4.11. Chapter Summary

This chapter presents literature review on e-Democracy definitions, models and leading practices of e-Democracy. Though there is growing interest in e-Democracy and many countries are moving towards implementing various forms of e-Democracy there is no single agreed definition or approach to e-Democracy.

e-Democracy can be implemented to enhance the existing representative democracy as well as transform democracy to a more direct form of democracy. In these two dimensions there are different possibilities and practices. There is also argument that e-Democracy implementation can contribute to act against basic democratic values. For instance e-Voting if not implemented properly could lead to the situation where privacy and secrecy of

voting is compromised. Also, the issue of digital divide might lead to a situation where there is great inequality among people who as access to ICT and who do not have.

There are many countries who are actively engaged in promoting e-Democracy and implementing its various forms. The leaders discussed in this chapter are selected based on the ranking provided by [www.politicsonline.com](http://www.politicsonline.com) portal..

There are different models of e-Democracy in the literature. These models describe e-Democracy from different perspectives. Most of them share common characteristics of different stages of e-Democracy evolution. That is the initial phase characterised by improved information exchange between the state and citizens. The next stage is marked by improved interaction and the third by improved participation using ICT. These phases are not clearly distinct and mutually exclusive. They can evolve one after another as well as in parallel.

E-Voting is the application of ICT for enabling voting over electronic means. This can happen either by remote online voting as well as through electronic polling booths. E-Participation deals with application of ICT in order to enhance and even drastically alter the way citizens participate in the Democracy. e-Access, e-Consultation, a-Petition, e-Voting and e-Consultation are some of the tools of the e-Democracy which promotes transparency, participation and deliberation in varying degrees.

The factors that impede the implementation of e-Democracy include non-technological issues such as social, cultural and constitutional in addition to technological issues such as security, privacy etc. Digital divide is an important concern for e-Democracy

In this chapter, after reviewing the literature the researcher takes the position that If properly implemented ICT has the potential to enhance and transform existing democracies that include Bahrain. Also, the researcher agrees wit the argument that the care must be taken while implementing e-Democracy that the

implementation does not suppress any of the democratic values. The chapter also identifies key issues that are listed for investigation.

## 5. UNDERSTANDING STRATEGY

This chapter discusses the concept of strategy and strategy formulation. After selecting one strategy formulation framework the chapter also discusses e-Government strategies of some of the leading countries. The lessons from e-Government leaders are discussed with an objective of learning from their experience as we formulate Bahrain e-Democracy strategy. The chapter then summarises the e-Democracy strategy framework found in the literature.

### 5.1. Strategy

The concept of strategy originated in military use and has been adapted by a variety of contemporary disciplines (Mercer 1991). The word comes from the Greek word "strategia" which means "generalship", which in turn is derived from "strategos", the word for a general commanding a large body of troops (a "stratos"). In this military context strategy often refers to directing the troops into position before the enemy is actually engaged (Nickols, 2000). Liddell Hart (1954) defines strategy as "the art of distributing and applying military means to fulfil the ends of policy" (LiddellHart, 1954).

Steiner (1979) argues that there is no agreed definition of strategy, and enumerates some of the most commonly used.

- i) Strategy is that which top management does that is of great importance to the organisation.
- ii) Strategy refers to basic directional decisions, that is, to purposes and missions.
- iii) Strategy consists of the important actions necessary to realise these directions.
- iv) Strategy answers the question: What should the organization be doing?

- v) Strategy answers the question: What are the ends we seek and how should we achieve them? (Steiner, 1979)

Hamel and Prahalad (1993) consider that strategy for many managers revolves around the 'relationship between the company and its competitive environment', 'allocation of resources among competing investment opportunities' and having a long range view of the company. Hamel and Prahalad (1993) argue that managers must go beyond this conventional definition and consider strategy as a stretch where it is incrementally planned against overall aspirations of the company. Thus according to Hamel and Prahalad (1993), the new strategy frame is "aspiration that creates by designing a chasm between ambition and resources".

Legnick-Hall and Wolff (1999) compare and contrast three strategic research perspectives found in the literature. First, the resource-based approach to strategy reflects the general argument that one firm will outperform another if it has superior ability to develop, use and protect elemental, platform competencies and resources. The focus here is on the internal capacity to create and exploit external opportunities and develop sustainable advantages. Secondly, the strategy perspective, as observed in firms that operate in highly competitive environments, argues that one firm will outperform another if it is more adept at rapidly and repeatedly disrupting the current situation to create an unprecedented and unconventional basis for competition. The third perspective, business ecosystem and chaos theory perspective of strategy argues that business success is a function of a firm's talent for thriving in dynamic non-linear systems that rely on networks of feedback and emergent relationships. Effective strategies therefore require a blend of competition and cooperation

Mintzberg (1994) studies how people use the term "strategy" in many ways. The most common being

- i) Strategy is a plan, a "how," a means of getting from here to there.
- ii) Strategy is a pattern in actions over time.

- iii) Strategy is position; that is, it reflects decisions to offer particular products or services in particular markets.
- iv) Strategy is perspective – that is, vision and direction.

A vision in the context of strategy is a desired ideal future state (Joyce, 2000, p.72), whereas strategy is the application of the vision, spelling out the specific manner by which that vision is to be realised (Satyanarayana, 2004 p24).

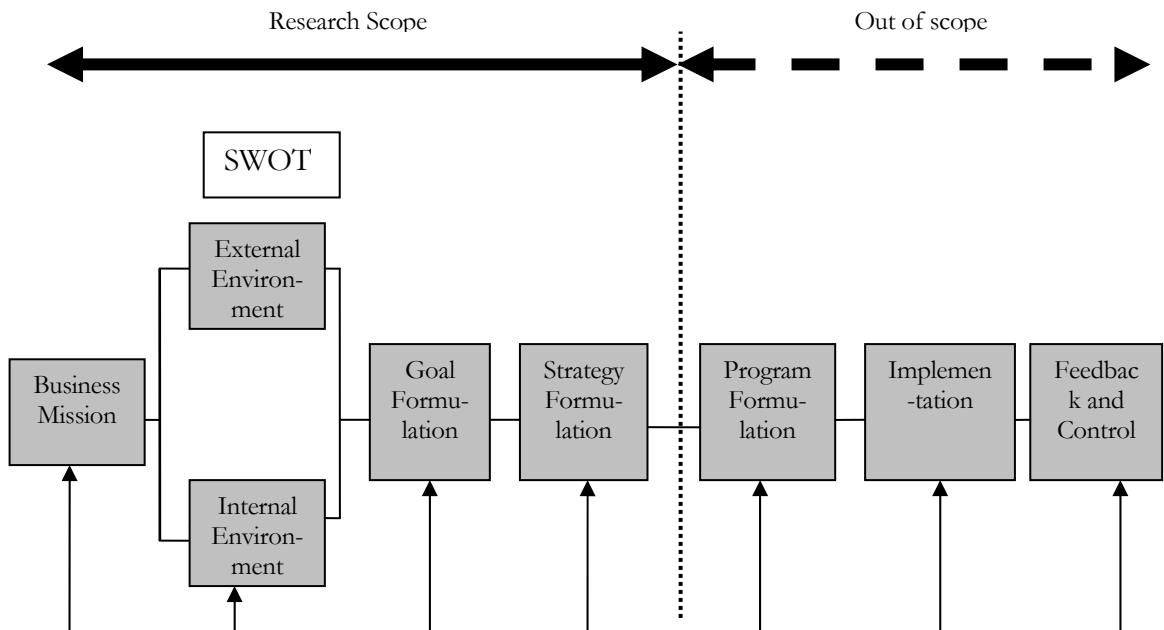
For the purpose of this research the approach suggested by Mintzberg (1994) will be adopted, as his definition contains elements of others and better fits the context of the present research, which seeks to develop a strategy for a country rather than a corporation or business.

## 5.2. Strategy Formulation

Authors in the field of business propose various processes by which to carry out planning. The process is initiated by defining the business mission and putting feedback and controls in place (Kotler 2000; Jobber 2004). Joyce, after presenting the definitions proposed by such authors as Bushnell and Halus, and Wilkinson and Monkhouse, argues that the process of strategic planning often features mission statements, strategic goals and evaluation of results (Joyce 2000).

Kotler (2000) proposes an eight-step business strategic planning process, which the present researcher intends to use for the e-democracy strategy research.

Figure 5.1 : Business Strategic Planning Process, adapted from Kotler (2000, P. 102)



Each firm needs to define why it wants to be in its business and what it wants to be in the future. The mission is the expression of this purpose. A SWOT analysis is then used to scan the opportunities and threats in the company’s environment and assessing the company’s strengths and weaknesses. In the case of Bahrain’s e-democracy strategy, this refers to the assessment of readiness for e-democracy. This step also involves assessing the opportunities in the macro environment, such as the political, economic, social and demographic spheres. In the context of e-democracy this may entail looking at the emerging e-Democracy opportunities. The next step in the strategic planning process is goal formulation and involves setting specific goals against a particular timeframe. Strategy is the game plan for achieving the goals. After the formulation of goals, every business must formulate marketing, compatible technology and sourcing strategies (Kotler 2000: P. 106). This step heavily relies on the data gathered during the SWOT analysis. In the context of this study, strategy formulation may involve making choices from those available on the e-democracy continuum of information, participation and consultation, and opting for various permutations and combinations of e-democracy tools such a e-voting, e-referendums and online-forums.

Once the strategy is formulated, a detailed supporting program should be worked out in order to implement it and achieve the goals. This step basically addresses the implementation issues and must tie in with the timeline of responsibility. Feedback and control is the ongoing process of checking whether the goals are being achieved. If not, there must be a mechanism to identify the gaps and take control and corrective actions. The last three steps (program formulation, implementation, and feedback and control) is not in the scope of the current research.

From the forgoing discussion it is evident that the term “strategy” is used in many ways and in various contexts. However, most of these definitions have certain grounds in common, as they largely pertain to the realisation of long term objectives for an organisation, a corporation and even for a nation, and tie in strictly with the vision. Kotler’s model will be adopted for the current research for the following reasons:

1. It articulates a step by step process without diluting its complexity.
2. The model is adapted from a text book on management., Its perspective is therefore academic as well as practical.
3. It covers most of the elements of other strategic planning models such as mission formulation, analysis of the internal and external environment, gap analysis and feedback and control.

On the other hand, this strategic planning framework also has some limitations such as its simplicity and its business context. These limitations can be dealt with by adapting the model using the expert knowledge of the researcher’s extensive experience in the public sector and in formulating strategies for various Bahrain Government initiatives that include the Strategic Information System Plan (SISP), the Information Technology Security Strategy (ITSS) Project, the Labour Market Reform (LMR) Program and the Bahrain Vision 2030 Initiative.



### 5.3. e-Government Strategy

e-Government is the process of transforming the relationships of government with its constituents – citizens, businesses and its own establishments (Satyanarayana 2004). Some authors differentiate between e-government and e-governance. e-Government constitutes the use of technology to conduct the business of government in order to enhance the delivery of existing services, whereas e-governance is the transferral of government online to deliver its services and programs, to provide government information and to interact with citizens electronically (Riley, 2003).

According to Satyanarayana (2004) an e-government strategy prepares a wish list of desired outcomes in the various sectors of government and prioritises these outcomes in the form of services and products. It also identifies infrastructure needs, suggests the required process transformations within government, identifies barriers to implementation and ways to overcome them, decides on the technical framework, incorporates the needs of the socially disadvantaged sections of society and lays down an indicative timeline (Satyanarayana, 2004, pp. 24-25). From the forgoing discussion it can be argued that the e-government and e-democracy strategies are not completely separate entities, but are in fact closely interrelated.

Many countries including the US, the UK and Singapore have been working towards e-government and have made solid progress with respect to their e-initiatives. The UN Global e-Government Survey of 2005 reveals that a total of 170 countries have an online presence, constituting 94 per cent of United Nations member countries. The report also states that some of these countries have been venturing into more mature areas of e-government such as e-participation (U.N 2005).

As discussed at the beginning of the thesis, the researcher worked from the basis that Bahrain can learn from the leaders in the field of e-Democracy implementations. The researcher also took a proposition that with respect to e-

Democracy, there is no single model can fit all countries and there needs to be adaptation and customization. As the literature review progressed it was inferred that in many countries the start of e-Democracy was continuation of e-Government programs. It is in this context that it was decided to study the leading countries, both in the field of e-Government and e-Democracy. The researcher used the U.N. e-Government Readiness ranking as the criterion for selection of e-Government leaders. Accordingly, U.S.A, Denmark, Sweden and U.K were selected based on the U.N. ranking of 2005. Similarly, the researcher also used the e-Democracy ranking provided by [www.politicsonline.com](http://www.politicsonline.com) for selecting e-Democracy leaders discussed in section 4.2.1. The following section briefly introduces the e-Government strategies of the leaders as per the U.N e-Government Readiness Index. It must be noted that Bahrain was ranked 53 and has an index score of 0.5282, above the world average of 0.4267 (U.N 2005).

#### 5.3.1. U.S. e-Government Strategy

The US's Expanded Electronic Government initiative is a part of the President's Management Agenda initiated in 2001 to improving government performance. The initiative aims to significantly improve the government's ability to serve citizens and deliver secure IT systems on time and within budget (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/egov/g-8-pma.html>, 2006). The US Government's e-government vision is guided by the citizen-centred, result-oriented and market-based principles which focus on reducing bureaucracy, producing measurable results and actively promoting innovation (Satynarayana, 2004, p.26).

The US's e-government strategy envisages the identification of the highest payoff cross-agency initiatives that can be rapidly developed, the detection of key barriers to the federal government's becoming a citizen-centred e-government and the implementation of the action needed to overcome these barriers, and the development of a technology framework that provides for the integration of government services and information and focuses on four groups of initiatives:

Government-to-Citizen (G2C), Government-to-Business (G2B), Government-to-Government (G2G) and Internal Efficiency and Effectiveness (IEE). Based on the above strategy, the US Government selected 24 program initiatives on the basis of value for citizens, the potential improvement on internal agency efficiency, and rapid deployment.

In April 2003, the Executive Office of the President issued a document detailing achievements in e-government since the previous e-government strategy issued in 2002, as well as the strategy for the future. According to this document, government will adopt a two-pronged strategy, one focusing on modernising IT investments within agencies using the principles of e-business; the other integrating IT investments across agencies centred around groups of citizens such as individuals, businesses and other government and federal employees (U.S-e-GovernmentStrategy, 2003).

The strategy had the following specific goals (U.S e-Government Strategy, 2003, p.6):

- a) Agencies are to focus IT spending on high priority modernisation initiatives.*
- b) Major IT projects are within 10 per cent of cost/schedule/performance objectives.*
- c) Major IT systems are certified, accredited, or otherwise authorised as being properly secured.*
- d) Presidential e-government initiatives are operational and yield benefits such as cost reduction, response time, burden reduction and improved service to citizens.*
- e) The negotiation of government-wide Enterprise Software licenses.*
- f) The reduction of redundant IT spending in the six overlapping lines of business identified in the FY04 Budget, by defining government-wide solutions.*

The report also highlighted unresolved challenges in implementing e-government that the strategy needs to address. It is noteworthy that none of these challenges

were related to technology, but were rather centred on policy, behaviour, leadership, funding and communication issues (U.S e-Government Strategy, 2003, p.5).

Another report titled Expanding e-Government, released in December 2005, highlights the results achieved from the last update. The document outlines the vision and strategy based on the principles of citizen-centred, result-driven and market-oriented strategies, focuses on completion of the implementation phase and moves to mature service offerings.

### 5.3.2. Denmark's e-Government Strategy

This builds on the strategy published in 2002. Denmark has a goal of becoming one of the leading countries in the use of digital technology to create growth and welfare with, the following vision:

*The e-government vision is to systematically use digital technologies to introduce new ways of thinking and transform organisations and work processes to improve the quality of service and efficiency (Towards-e-Government-in-Denmark 2002).*

The above vision is expressed in the recent strategy as:

*Digitalisation must contribute to the creation of an efficient and coherent public sector with a high quality of service, with citizens and businesses in the centre (Towards-e-Government-in-Denmark 2002)*

It can be inferred from the 2002 strategy document that the strategy is articulated in terms of guiding principles, targets and priorities. The strategy requires the government to move towards citizen-centric, personalised services, at the same time transforming processes to make them efficient and effective. The targets include the following:

- i) e-Government should actively contribute to development of a networked society*

- ii) *The public sector should work and communicate electronically.*
- iii) *Public services must be delivered in a comprehensive, citizen- and business-centric way.*
- iv) *Public sector tasks must be handled in the best possible way. The priorities include a flexible and slimmer organisation, full electronic services, multiple access channels, security, cooperation and knowledge sharing (Towards-e-Government-in-Denmark, 2002).*

e-Government in Denmark (2005, p. 8) outlines the strategy in terms of five signposts and shares many common elements with the previous strategy:

- *Signpost 1: The public sector must provide coherent services with citizens and businesses at the centre. By the end of 2006, at least 60 per cent of citizens and 95 per cent of businesses should use e-government services, and the level of user satisfaction with such services must have increased.*
- *Signpost 2: e-Government must result in improved service quality and the release of resources. By the end of 2006, at least 75 per cent of all digitalisation projects should release resources, and at least 25 per cent should do so on a large scale.*
- *Signpost 3: The public sector must work and communicate digitally. By the end of 2006, at least 80 per cent of all public authorities should receive at least a quarter of all documents sent by other public authorities in digital form, and at least 60 per cent of all public authorities should be able to communicate securely in digital form with other public authorities, citizens and businesses.*
- *Signpost 4: e-Government must be based on a coherent and flexible infrastructure. By the end of 2006, no more than 15 per cent of all public authorities should state that the absence of common public sector solutions and standards is a significant obstacle, and at least 1.1 million digital signature certificates should have been issued to citizens, businesses and civil servants.*
- *Signpost 5: Public sector managers must lead the way and ensure that their own organisations are capable of realising the vision. By the end of*

*2006, no more than 20 per cent of public authorities should state that lack of allocation of resources for work with digitalisation is a significant obstacle.*

Each signpost is accompanied by specific measurable goals and further supported by priority areas; this highlights the importance of breaking down the strategy into specific goals and objectives and prioritising country-specific needs.

### 5.3.3. Sweden's E-Government Strategy

The goal of Swedish e-Government is to make public information and services available electronically 24 hours a day and seven days a week. It aims to strengthen democracy through improved transparency and citizen participation in policy- and decision-making processes (IDABC 2005b). Like the other countries' initiatives discussed in this study, Swedish e-government also emphasises on citizen-centric, multi-channel approach that urges departments to shed bureaucracy and work in cooperation to build public service effectiveness and efficiency.

Sweden uses a decentralised strategy for e-government delivery. The Government sets targets, allocates resources and measures progress against these targets by giving substantial freedom to public agencies. The Government also provides agencies with the common infrastructure and the necessary support in terms of law, guidelines and methods for e-government (IDABC 2005b).

According to the strategy, the main responsibility for e-government rests with the agencies, yet Swedish e-government aims to make more co-ordinated efforts to establish networked agencies and a citizen-focused administration. The strategy outlines the following direction:

*Article 1. to set more explicit targets for agencies' e-service development*

- Article II. to stimulate the development of e-services of great benefit to citizens and enterprises, but not cost-efficient for separate agencies to provide.*
- Article III. to decide on a minimum of binding rules and standards necessary for well-functioning electronic communication within public administration and with its customers.*
- Article IV. to provide a supporting set of basic functions as a common infrastructure for communication and co-operation between the different public agencies.*
- Article V. to deepen co-operation between state, regional and local government in the development of public e-services.*
- Article VI. to provide a common entry and guide, based on real-life events and business situations, to all electronic information and services offered by different sections of public administration.*

#### 5.3.4. The UK's e-Government Strategy

The UK's e-Government vision has two binding elements: the improvement of the lives of citizens, and the improvement of the economy. The strategy aims to provide the policies, legislation and programmes to realise the vision of offering all government services online by 2005 and is composed of four initiatives:

- i) a focus on a set of e-Government services ranging from business services to democracy
- ii) the creation of standards for interoperability and ease of implementation
- iii) the creation of a standard-based infrastructure
- iv) the creation of channel frameworks to enable multi-access channels to e-services (Satyanarayana, 2004, p.37)

The UK's e-government vision and the accompanying strategy is further expanded in the document titled "Transformational Government – Enabled by Technology" issued by the Cabinet office. The vision calls for the better use of

technology to deliver public services and policy outcomes that have an impact on citizens' daily lives and emphasise greater choice and personalisation. The vision requires the government not only to transform itself by using technology but also to create a capability to continuously innovate as technology develops (U.K-Cabinet-Office-Website, 2005). As a result of this vision, the following strategy is articulated:

- 1) *Services enabled by IT must be designed around the citizen or business, not the provider, and provided through modern, coordinated delivery channels. This will improve the customer experience, achieve better policy outcomes, reduce paperwork burdens and improve efficiency by reducing duplication and routine processing, leveraging delivery capacity and streamlining processes.*
- 2) *Government must move to a shared services culture – in the front-office, in the back-office, in information and in infrastructure – and release efficiencies by standardisation, simplification and sharing.*
- 3) *There must be a broadening and deepening of government's professionalism in terms of the planning, delivery, management, skills and governance of IT-enabled change. This will result in more successful outcomes, fewer costly delivery failures, and citizens' and politicians' increased confidence in the delivery of change by public services.*

The strategy further outlines a long-term timetable for 2005-2011 and beyond. The immediate focus of the broad plan is connectivity, while in the medium term it will concentrate on priority citizen services. The plan beyond 2011 calls for radical transformation of public services (IDABC, 2005a).



### 5.3.5. Bahrain's e-Government Strategy

This envisages the provisioning of services not only through the Internet but also by mobiles, toll free call centres and Common Services centres, and self-service kiosks at public places. The exceptionally high penetration of mobile phones means that both mobile and toll free call centres will be useful for reaching the public. Common Services Centres will cater to those sections of society who are not comfortable using any electronic channels, while self services kiosks are likely to be useful to people who cannot afford computers or the Internet at home, as well as to visitors to the country.

The Government has already created an advanced infrastructure. The focus is now on providing services by leveraging this infrastructure. Some noteworthy steps in this direction are outlined below:

- A national e-Government portal that has been periodically overhauled with added features and services.
- An online payment facility has been made available on the national e-government portal and on some important ministerial websites such as those of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, and of municipalities.
- A one stop shop has been launched by the municipalities. Applications for building permits can only be made online by the registered builders. This system will be extended to individuals in due course.
- Services such as traffic infringement payments, payment of electricity and water bills, education results and scholarships, applications for e-Visas, renewals of Commercial Registrations (CR) and applications for Central Population Registration (CPR) cards are already available online.
- Information services such as a directory of government officials and
- Information on service procedures for availing government services.

Almost all government organisations have websites containing useful information. Phase 2 of the implementation is now in progress and is aimed at enabling all priority services online by 2009 (CIO 2007a).

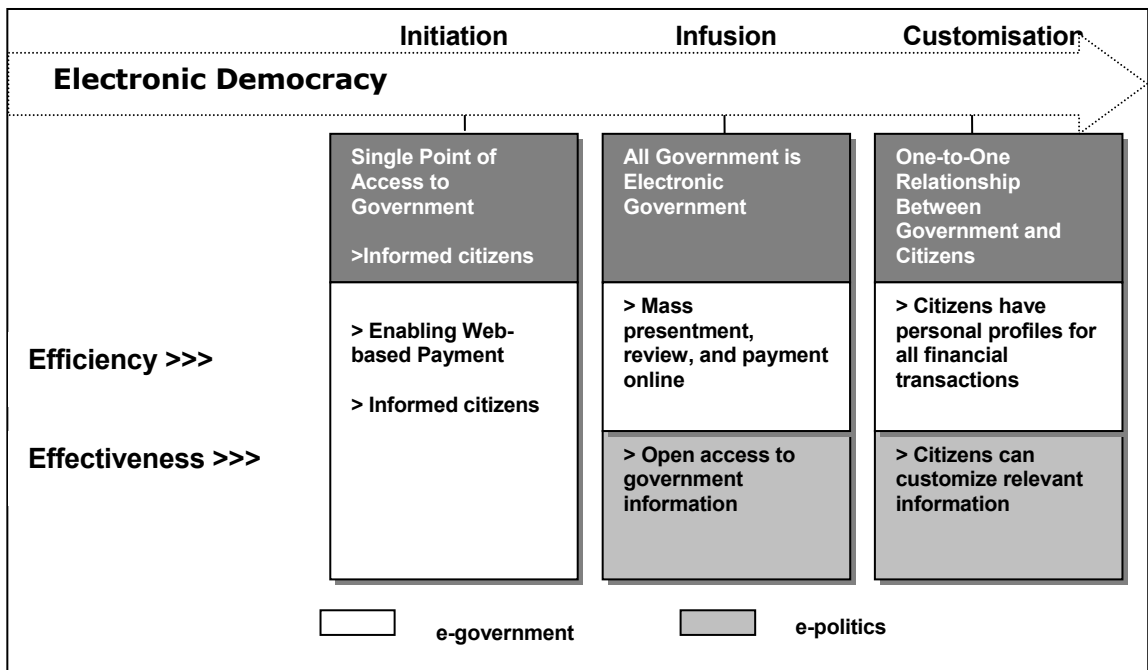
#### 5.4. E-Democracy Strategy in the Literature

Watson and Mundy (2001) propose a three-phase, dual-pronged strategy for implementing e-democracy which is relevant to the subject area of this research. Out of the total literature reviewed, no other sources addressed or presented a strategy for implementing e-democracy. It should be noted that many models of e-democracy were presented by different authors, as discussed in this section.

Initiation, infusion and customisation are the stages in Watson and Mundy's strategy, which also considers the efficiency and effectiveness of e-democracy and identifies e-government and e-politics as two of its elements (Watson and Mundy 2001).

Figure 5.2 : E-Democracy Strategic Phases

(Source: Watson and Mundy, 2001)



E-government informs citizens about their representatives and how they may be contacted, and improves government efficiency. E-politics, on the other hand, is the use of Internet technology to improve the effectiveness of political decision-making by raising citizens' awareness of the how and the why of political decision-making and facilitating their participation in this process. According to the authors, democracy is effective when there is an unimpeded flow of information between citizens and government, and when there is high level of authentic popular participation in the political process. Efficiency calls for all such interactions to be timely and convenient, with information readily available and transaction costs significantly reduced. Thus, the goal of electronic democracy according to Watson and Mundy is "to deploy information technology to improve effectiveness and efficiency of democracy" (Watson and Mundy 2001).

The initiation stage sets up the infrastructure in terms of software firms, methodologies and consulting skills, and acquaints governments and citizens with the concept of e-government. The infusion phase fosters large-scale adoption; in this phase, all government becomes e-Government. Customisation sets the scene for tailor-made interaction between government and citizen, and is part of the endeavour to obtain a one-to-one relationship (Watson and Mundy 2001).

#### 5.5. Lessons from E-Government Leaders

Many lessons can be learned with respect to developing the e-democracy strategy for Bahrain from the forgoing discussion of different e-government strategies. First and foremost, strategies evolve in line with the changing requirements of the stakeholders. For example, in the case of the US and Denmark it can be seen that there are significant improvements over previous versions of the strategy. In almost all the countries outlined above, it can be noticed that there is an emphasis on a citizen-centred approach, and therefore on calls for a close consideration of citizens' needs in the development of any strategy. It can also be noticed that technology is not the main barrier to implementations of e-Government.

## 5.6. Chapter Summary

This chapter discusses the concept of strategy and strategy formulation. The strategy formulation framework given Philip Kotler is discussed and used as a conceptual framework. The strategy relates to the long term course an organisation wishes to traverse. The strategy formulation often involves the long term vision and mission followed by an assessment of internal and external environment and then goal, strategy and programme formulation.

The chapter also discusses e-Government strategies of some of the leading countries. The chapter then summarises the e-Democracy strategy framework found in the literature. The lessons from e-Government leaders are discussed with an objective of learning from it as we formulate the Bahrain e-Democracy strategy.

We learn from ensuing discussion on the theory and practice that strategy is not static and it changes owing to changes in the environment. We understand that e-Government strategy must be citizen-centric. This applies to e-Democracy strategy as well as strategy must take care of the dreams and aspirations of citizens.

## 6. RESEARCH METHODS

e-Democracy as a subject area cuts across different disciplines such as information technology, political science, social science, management and law. Determining an appropriate research method therefore requires careful analysis. This chapter examines different research methods available for consideration.

There are two fundamental types of research method available to a researcher. Each of this method serves a particular function; their relative value is determined by the objectives of the researcher. These are quantitative and qualitative research methods.

It is argued that no matter how rigorous the research method, there is no way to guarantee that it will be totally free from bias (Travers, 2001). In fact, all research, be it quantitative or qualitative, is unavoidably value-laden. It is further argued that it is utterly impossible for any researcher, research method, measuring instrument or mode of analysis to be totally free of any bias (Mitroff, 1974).

In this section, quantitative and qualitative methods will be examined with an eye to their specific characteristics and uses, and with specific regard to the present study.

### 6.1. Quantitative Research

Quantitative research falls into the category of empirical studies according to some, and statistical studies according to others (Newman and Benz 1998). This approach seeks to adhere as strictly as possible to the dictates of the scientific method of the natural sciences. Specifically, this method consists of four steps: the observation and description of a phenomenon or phenomena, the formulation of a hypothesis (a tentative explanation of a phenomenon or phenomena), the use of the hypothesis to predict occurrences, results or phenomena, and the

testing of the validity of predictions(Newman and Benz, 1998). In sum, the scientific method essentially provides researchers with a process whereby hypotheses may be tested and either confirmed or rejected.

The scientific method has its roots in the philosophies of empiricism and positivism. Empiricism is the philosophical doctrine of testing or experimentation and refers to the concept that all human knowledge ultimately comes from the senses and experience, and that knowledge can be derived through careful observation (Hooker, 1996), whereas positivism refers to the concept where the source of knowledge can only be derived from mathematical and logical treatment of phenomenon. Positivists reject the notion of gaining knowledge by introspection and intuition (Hamlin, 2000). Indeed, all scientific disciplines share empirical and positivist foundations, although the instrumentation may differ. For example, while a natural scientist may make use of the telescope or microscope to investigate the physical world and the social scientist may by contrast use a survey to investigate opinions or attitudes, both have a common basis in empiricism and positivism.

Empiricism basically holds that knowledge is the result of human experience, both sensory and mental. However, empiricism also holds that even mental experience has its basis in sensual experience. Empiricism was the predecessor of the doctrine of positivism put forth by the 19<sup>th</sup> century French thinker Auguste Comte. Comte held that the laws whereby phenomena operate were the only proper object of scientific investigation (Hughes and Sharrock, 1990).

The positivist doctrine presently dominates the field of social science and serves as the intellectual foundation of the quantitative approach. It thus is of no surprise that the hallmark of quantitative research methods is the utilisation of deductive reasoning and the dissection of phenomena in order to isolate and examine their components. These are referred to as either dependent or independent variables. A dependent variable is one that might be impacted on by some intervention or another factor; an independent variable is one that impacts on the dependent

variable. Quantitative research specifically seeks to determine correlation – i.e. the relationship between variables (Creswell, 1998, p.17).

The validity of a quantitative study is based on the extent to which that study actually measures what the researcher or researchers intended to measure. Essentially, validity comes in two forms. The first form, external validity, refers to the degree to which the conclusions of a study would be applicable to other individuals in other contexts at different times (Creswell, 1998). Any study that uses random selection will have higher external validity than studies that do not. Since qualitative research studies do not use random selection, their external validity is weaker than that of quantitative studies.

Random selection refers to the manner in which a sample is drawn from a given population. Specifically, a random sample is one that has been drawn in such a way that every person in a particular population has an equal chance of being selected and becoming part of the sample (Neuman, 2003).

The internal validity of a quantitative research study is determined by the degree to which the results of the study are a function of the observed, measured or manipulated variables. If other variables have significantly impacted on the relationship between the observed, measured, or manipulated variables, then the validity of the study would be compromised (Neuman, 2003).

As previously noted, quantitative research takes place on the basis of deduction. However, the use of deduction has its limits, for the discovery of corroborating evidence does not prove that a hypothesis is correct; nor does it eliminate the possibility that there may be evidence that contradicts the hypothesis. Indeed, the accumulation of corroborating evidence only indicates support for a given hypothesis.

The Quine-Duhem thesis presents another view on this. In its simplest form it states that the available data obtained from observation cannot determine whether a given hypothesis is true or false, regardless of how voluminous such data may be. According to Blaug (1980), it was the Quine-Duhem thesis that

spurred the philosopher Karl Popper to develop the notion of methodological falsification that stands at the centre of his hypothetico-deductive method (Blaug 1980). Popper acknowledged that no scientific theory or hypothesis could be proven through the mere amassing of evidence. Accordingly, his method consists of searching for evidence that contradicts a given hypothesis. If evidence cannot be found that falsifies a hypothesis, then the hypothesis is considered plausible.

To summarise, the quantitative approach is rooted in the philosophies of positivism and empiricism. Empiricism holds that all knowledge comes from the sensory and mental experiences of the human being. It involves the formulation of hypotheses and general theories from observations. Positivism also holds that knowledge comes from experience. However, unlike empiricism, it uses deductive reasoning, which means that research is guided by previously formulated hypotheses. Positivism serves as the basis of the quantitative approach and currently pervades the social sciences.

Deduction, and therefore the quantitative approach, has its limits. Although there may be an abundance of evidence supporting a hypothesis or set of hypotheses, the approach has no way of determining the existence and extent of contradictory evidence. Accumulation of evidence may indicate the strength of a hypothesis, but not conclusively enough to prove it.

## 6.2. Qualitative Research

Quantitative research attempts to find a correlation between variables, whereas qualitative research is concerned with investigating a specific social event or reality (Creswell, 1998). Qualitative research tends to have certain elements: one is a flexibility that allows it to respond to changing circumstances, another the selection of a relatively small number of participants or subjects, often in a non-random manner, and a third being the involvement of the researcher. Qualitative researchers spend significant time in the environment or context of the subject of the study, and tend to be in close contact with the participants (Patton 2002) .



Under what conditions should a researcher choose a qualitative research design? One condition is when there is no existing theory regarding a particular phenomenon. Another is when there is an existing theory, but it no longer has explanatory power. As intimated above, qualitative researchers tend to search for a theory to explain data as manifested in the real world rather than trying to find data to substantiate an existing theory (Patton, 2002). Furthermore, the qualitative approach is especially useful for certain research purposes. For example, it is especially valuable for understanding the meaning of particular events, situations and actions that subjects are involved with and for acquiring first-hand accounts of their experiences and lives (Padgett, 2004). The qualitative approach is also useful in helping researchers understand the context in which the actions of subjects take place and the impact that the context has on their behaviour. What is particularly distinctive about the qualitative approach is that it allows researchers to discover new phenomena and factors that affect the subjects and to appreciate the processes whereby actions and events occur. This stimulates the development of causal explanations and the formulation of new theories that are rooted in empirical observation (Maxwell 1998).

#### 6.2.1. Qualitative Research and Issue of Validity

It should be noted that there are differences between the forms of validity that are relevant for qualitative and quantitative research studies. The former often do not use random selection at all. Rather, they use a process of purposeful selection. This means that subjects are chosen for a particular reason. For example, subjects may be chosen because of their age, race, culture, occupation and experience (Maxwell, 1998).

Three forms of validity are relevant for qualitative studies: descriptive, interpretive and theoretical (Scholz and Tietje, 2001). Descriptive validity refers to the extent to which researchers report what they observe accurately and factually and whether a reported event actually took place (Travers, 2001). Interpretive validity refers to the extent to which the researcher has accurately related the meaning that subjects attach to the research phenomenon. This requires that the

researcher provide some form of corroboration (Scholz and Tietje, 2001). Theoretical validity is related to the credibility and defensibility of a theoretical explanation based on the information produced by a study. This form of validity is concerned with the constructs that researchers devise and its use for the study (Maxwell, 1998).

It should be noted that both descriptive and interpretive validity are vulnerable to researcher bias. Researcher bias tends to be the result of the researcher selectively observing and recording phenomena. It also tends to stem from researchers allowing their personal views and perspectives to influence how research is conducted and how the resultant data are interpreted. Researcher bias is a recurring problem in qualitative research because the methods used are less structured and more open-ended than those of quantitative research. As a result, researchers can be prone to find what they want to or expect to find. The biases that researchers bring to their research tend to be related to their knowledge, skills, and personal dispositions (Ragin, 1989).

A qualitative study is susceptible to bias from a different but related angle: the actual presence of the researcher. This can actually affect the behaviour of the subjects and the context in which the research is being conducted. Indeed, the mere fact that the subjects know they are being observed can cause them to either consciously or unconsciously alter their behaviour (Kleinman and Copp, 1993). This suggests that the objectivity of the qualitative researcher is a function of their physical distance and invisibility – the very factors that give this approach its value (Padgett, 2004).

It should not be concluded from this presentation of the limitations of qualitative research that the quantitative approach is necessarily superior. Each form has its place, as well as its own peculiar advantages and disadvantages.

Notably, there are a host of strategies available to the qualitative researcher to mitigate the problems mentioned, one of the foremost of which is reflexivity. This refers to critical self-reflection on the part of the researcher about their possible

biases. It allows researchers to become more aware of themselves and helps them monitor their biases and make an effort to mitigate them (Padgett, 2004).

### 6.2.2. Forms of Qualitative Research

Cresswell (1998, P. 47) distinguishes five traditions of qualitative research:

- a biography, which describes the life of an individual as told to the researcher or collected from documents
- a phenomenological study describing the meaning of experiences of many individuals about a concept or a phenomenon
- A grounded theory, aimed at generating or discovering a theory about an abstract phenomenon
- An ethnography, which is a description and interpretation of a social or cultural group or a system
- A case study, which is a study of a bounded system, event, process or program

One of the instruments used in qualitative research is interviewing. A qualitative interview consists of verbal discourse between the interviewee and the researcher whereby the latter obtains information. However, that is not all the researcher does. The researcher also observes the interviewee, taking note of non-verbal responses. Accordingly, the success and validity of the qualitative interview is strongly contingent upon the researcher's listening and observational skills and their ability to follow the cues given by the interviewee in order to obtain as much information from the interview as possible (Creswell, 1998).

This is not to say that the qualitative interview is wholly unstructured. It generally consists of open-ended questions that have been specifically designed to elicit the maximum amount of information from the respondent regarding a particular issue within a given period of time (Neuman, 2003). It is true that the qualitative interview is not as rigidly structured as the quantitative interview. However, given

the purpose of the interview, such a rigid structure would be an impediment, not an asset.

The qualitative interview is not without its weaknesses. One is that the questions asked by the researcher, the wording of these questions, and the manner in which they are asked can influence the responses and thus may lead to bias.

One form of qualitative research that uses interviews is the focus group, which allows the researcher to obtain multiple perspectives on a specific issue or topic at one time. As such, it is a far more efficient way to elicit information from people than interviewing them individually. Furthermore, the focus group allows the researcher to observe both the behaviours of individuals and the interactions that take place between group participants (Neuman, 2003).

However, the focus group also has its weaknesses, the principal one being that individuals may respond differently than they would if they were interviewed alone. As a result, the success of the focus group depends on the group interviewing skills of the person leading it (Neuman, 2003).

Another method of qualitative research is participant observation, which involves the researcher in the environment and in the actions or events that take place in it. Underlying this type of research is the concept that the involvement of the researcher will provide them with a unique understanding of the situation. This understanding is believed to be more insightful than an approach that detaches the researcher from the context of the subject (Kleinman and Copp 1993). The researcher, by immersing himself in a particular situation, comes away with information that more uninvolved researchers probably could not even fathom. Nevertheless, participant observation has been criticised. It is argued that this method remains susceptible to problems associated with researcher subjectivity, including a dependence on a subjective form of measurement, the haphazard gathering of information and the possibility that the researcher's participation may actually distort the situation they are investigating (Hamel et al, 1993). Participant observation has the additional shortcoming that it requires a substantial investment by the researcher of their time and energy.

### 6.3. Research Method for Bahrain E-Democracy Research

From the previous discussion of various research methods available for the researcher, it can be argued that qualitative and quantitative methods are fundamentally different with respect to their movement from observation to theory and their purposeful selection of subjects or data. The qualitative researcher operates from the premise that objectivity does not exist, a fact that it is best to acknowledge from the outset. As a result, the qualitative researcher is free to conduct open-ended interviews, in-depth case studies, analyses of historical data, and to serve as a participant-observer.

The core purpose of this research is to come up with an e-democracy strategy for the Kingdom of Bahrain. The strategy will particularly address Bahrain-specific issues. However, it will also put forward a generic framework that can be used in the neighbouring GCC countries.

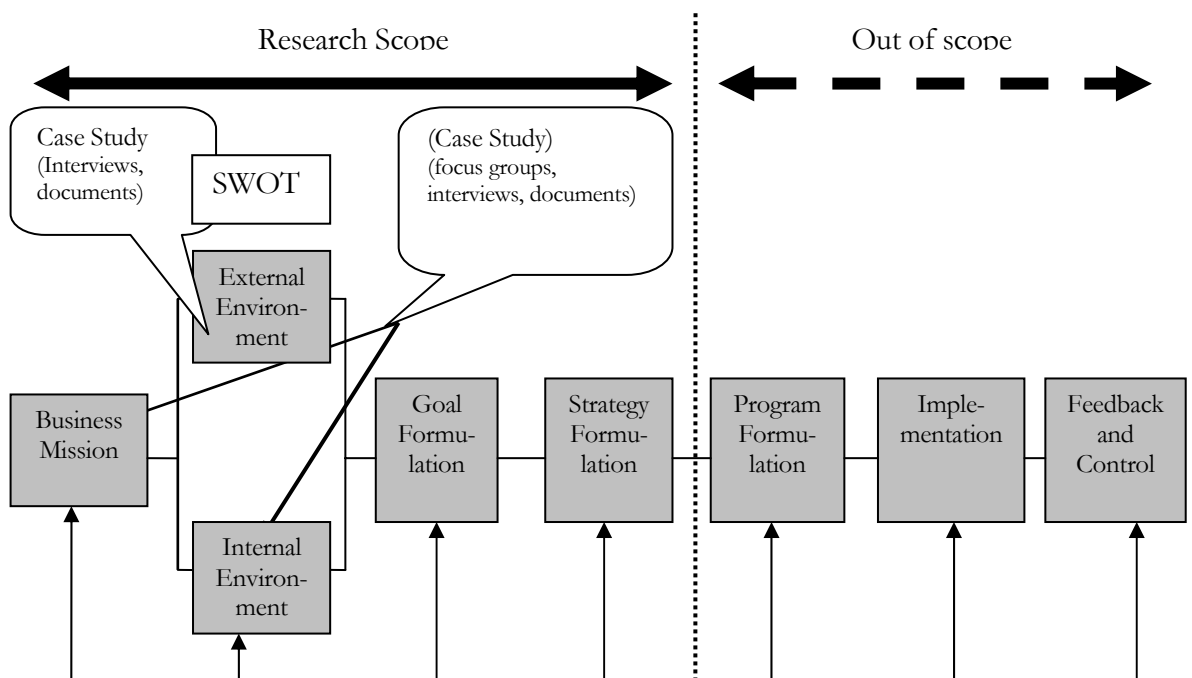
After evaluating quantitative and qualitative methods, it was decided to use qualitative case study research for this study. Qualitative methods permit the researcher to study selected issues, cases and events in depth. Data collection and analysis is not limited by predetermined categories of analysis, and such methods allow for a depth and detail that quantitative research cannot provide (Patton 2002). This is particularly relevant for Bahrain's e-democracy strategy, as this should be applicable to a real world setting, and depth of investigation is required.

Greater awareness of the perspectives of program participants, the capability to understand dynamic developments in a program as it evolves, the awareness of time and history and a sensitivity to the influence of context are other advantages of qualitative research that have particular relevance to an e-democracy strategy (Weiss 1998).

Case study research is particularly useful when one needs to understand some particular program or situation in great depth, and information-rich case studies exist. Major effects may be gleaned from just a few exemplars of phenomena

(Weiss, 1998). One of the strengths of the case study approach is that it permits the researcher to use multiple sources of information (Merriam, 1988; Yin, 1989 in Creswell, 1998 p 62). According to Creswell, a case study is chosen because of the subject's clear boundaries; it is important for the researcher to have contextual material available to describe the setting of the case. The researcher must also have a wide array of information in order to provide an in-depth picture of the case (Creswell, 1998, P. 39). The scope of this research is bounded by place (Bahrain) and by time (the researcher intended to collect the data during the pre- and post-election period, when the country is most politically active). The researcher has therefore used a qualitative case study method as detailed in Section 6.3.1, along with the strategy formulation framework discussed in Section 5.2.

Figure 6.1 : Strategy Formulation Framework and Qualitative Research Methods for the Formulation of a Bahraini e-Democracy Strategy



### 6.3.1. Qualitative Case Study

There are several ways in which to define the case study. One is to describe it as a systematic investigation into an event or group of related events in order to describe and explain that event or set of events (Travers, 2001). Another, similar definition describes the case study as an account of an activity, event or problem as it has taken place in the context of real life (Scholz and Tietje, 2001). Yin (2003, p.13) defines the qualitative case study as a thorough, comprehensive account and examination of a particular project, program, group, or individual as it exists in its environment (Yin, 2003).

The application of case studies tends to be retrospective - collecting information across studies done in the past. However, the case study is also used prospectively, deriving data from interviews, archival records, documentation, direct observations, artefacts and, most notably, participant observation (Yin, 2003, p.83). In fact, one of the strengths of the case study approach is that it permits the researcher to use multiple sources of information (Creswell, 1998, p.19).

There are three basic types of qualitative case studies from which a selection is made depending on the purpose of the research (Stake, 1995). One is the intrinsic case study, which is used to understand a specific case in depth. The second form is the instrumental case study, which seeks to gain insight into a particular issue, the case being used as an illustration. Finally, the collective case study consists of the study of several cases, the purpose being to gain insight into a specific occurrence (Stake, 1995). Thus, the collective case study uses a number of cases that occur either on the same site or across multiple sites.

The qualitative case study can be exploratory, analytical, descriptive, deliberative or any combination of these. The descriptive study provides an account of a process, or records an action or sequence of actions, or both (Davey 1991). The analytical case study looks at results as well as process. A deliberative case

study is concerned with process, but is also concerned with the manner in which transformations within the particular situation take place (Datta 1990). Finally, the exploratory case study seeks to determine the philosophy or ideas behind a strategy (Stake, 1995).

According to Yin (2003, p.21), the case study design must have a research question, propositions, a unit of analysis, a way to connect data to the propositions and criteria for interpreting the findings. However, it is not absolutely necessary that propositions be advanced in all cases (Yin, 2003).

Notably, the case study is not limited to the sphere of qualitative research. In fact, case studies can also be quantitative. However, the two types differ in that the latter tend to focus on one particular outcome that is amenable to numerical measurement (Travers, 2001). They also stress the objectivity of the researcher and the research instruments. Qualitative case studies, on the other hand, permit acts or events that are not amenable to quantification (and that are therefore ignored by quantitative case studies) to be observed (Kleinman and Copp, 1993).

This indicates that the qualitative case study approach has many advantages. However, qualitative case studies are also characterised by certain shortcomings. Firstly, qualitative studies tend to use fewer individuals and events than do quantitative ones. Consequently, qualitative case studies, as is the case with all qualitative research, tend to have less external validity – in other words, they are less capable of being generalised to a particular population. Moreover, qualitative case studies, unlike most quantitative studies, do not comfortably lend themselves to the aggregation of data and systematic comparisons (Scholz and Tietje, 2001).

A common criticism of the qualitative case study approach is that it gathers data in a manner that is unsystematic and reliant on subjective measurement. If the case study utilises participant observation, it is considered to be further weakened and is rendered more subjective than normal (Maxwell, 1998). Furthermore, critics argue that qualitative case studies offer little protection against the possibility that the researcher may have a vested interest in the



outcome of a study, and thus may intentionally or unintentionally attempt to shape results (Creswell, 1998).

There are other forms of qualitative research methods than the ones already mentioned. One such method is the historical research approach (Neuman, 2003) which consists of the analysis of data regarding past events, particularly in order to discern the relationship between past intentions and such events. Historical research can offer insights into how past intentions and events affect the present.

#### 6.4. Research Design for Bahrain e-Democracy Strategy

At the commencement of this research, but after initial reading, a conceptual diagram was prepared to serve as a guide for further work. The following steps were interlinked in order to come up with a Bahraini e-democracy strategy:

1. Literature review
2. Statement of problem
3. e-Democracy current theory and practice
4. Research methodology
5. Assessment of Bahrain's ICT readiness
6. Data collection and analysis
7. Summary and conclusion

As the work progressed, these steps were broken down and linked directly to the original research questions so that the researcher could prepare a research design.

A research design is the logical sequence that connects the data to the original research questions and its conclusions (Yin, 2003, p. 20). This study uses qualitative research techniques. Yin (2003, p.21) identifies five important components in case study research design. These are:

- 1) a study's question
- 2) its proposition (if any)

- 3) its units of analysis
- 4) the logic linking the data to the propositions
- 5) the criteria for interpreting the findings

Based on this and further readings the research design as shown in Table 6.1 was prepared and a pilot study was conducted.

Table 6.1 : Research Design

Steps	Method	Research Proposition	Units of analysis	Logic linking data to the propositions and criteria for interpreting the findings
<b>Q1: What are current e-democracy practices in countries other than Bahrain?</b>				
List practices, models and strategy framework	Literature review	Studying the current e-democracy practices elsewhere in the world is a useful tool in building a theoretical underpinning for a study of Bahrain's e-democracy	Journals, books, previous case studies	Analysis of internal consistency and pattern matching for matches to democratic ideals in the 21 <sup>st</sup> century context
Choose one model and strategy framework	Literature review	Studying the current e-democracy practices elsewhere in the world is a useful tool in building a theoretical underpinning for a study of Bahrain's e-democracy	Journals, books, previous case studies	Pattern matching and the degree of similarity to the Bahraini context
Check feasibility and changes required for the model	Case Study	Studying the current e-democracy practices elsewhere in the world is a useful tool in building a theoretical underpinning for a study of Bahrain's e-democracy	Journals, books, previous case studies	Pattern matching for the degree of similarity to the required pre-conditions for e-democracy as described elsewhere
Refine the models and propose the strategy	Synthesis by researcher	Studying the current e-democracy practices elsewhere in the world is a useful tool in building a theoretical underpinning for a study of Bahrain's e-democracy	Results of the analysis of the previous three steps	Pattern matching and the degree of similarity between the Bahrain context and the required pre-conditions for e-democracy as described in the models from elsewhere

Steps	Method	Research Proposition	Units of analysis	Logic linking data to the propositions and criteria for interpreting the findings
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**Q2: What specific applications of e-democracy are both particularly relevant to Bahrain and are achievable in the near future?**

List of potential applications	Literature review	Some e-democracy applications are more feasible than others depending on the context	Journals, books, previous case studies and the results of answers to the previous question	Pattern matching and the degree of similarity to the Bahraini context
Feasibility of applications	Synthesis of the research work done so far	Some e-democracy applications are more feasible than others depending on the context	Results of the previous work	Pattern matching for the degree of similarity to implementations elsewhere

**Q3: What constraints must be overcome and what conditions must be met in order for e-democracy to be successful and benefit the entire population of Bahrain?**

Research constraints and conditions	Literature Review	There are constraints that need to be overcome and conditions to be met for implementing e-democracy. Some will be universally relevant, others will be specific	Journals, books, previous case	Analysis of the extent to which constraints are surmountable within their own context and pattern matching and the degree of similarity to the
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Steps	Method	Research Proposition	Units of analysis	Logic linking data to the propositions and criteria for interpreting the findings
		to Bahrain	studies	Bahraini context
Overcoming constraints and conditions	Interviews with key stake-holders	Constraints and conditions can be overcome	Government executives, Members of Parliament, citizens	Pattern matching for the degree of similarity to the constraints for e-democracy described in the model

#### 6.4.1. Pilot Case Study

A pilot case study on e-voting was conducted with the aims of obtaining practical leaning experience in conducting a case study, assessing the suitability of the research method selected, and using the lessons learned in refining or revising the overall research design. Such an approach is recommended by Yin (2003) as mentioned in section 6.6.

The case study focused on understanding why people did or did not use e-voting options during the National Action Charter referendum. A referendum held in 2001, in which all Bahrainis over the age of 21 years were eligible to vote, paved the way for democracy in the country. Voters cast their ballots in 40 polling stations situated in various accessible locations. The voting process involved traditional paper-based voting as well as an option for e-voting.

A research design and a case study protocol were devised and interviews were conducted. Interviews were transcribed and analysed using a data display matrix.

The pilot case study provided valuable insight into the research process. It firstly helped the researcher to critically think about the boundaries of the e-democracy research. As the researcher started designing the pilot case study, he found himself confronted with the complexity of narrowing the pilot case study questions down to more specific issues. The researcher had to think of the data indicators and problems in collecting and analysing meaningful data that would answer those questions. These real life research issues not only helped the researcher to revisit the pilot research design but also to go back and revise the research questions.

Secondly, as part of the data collection stage, the researcher had prepared a research protocol. After conducting the first interview, the researcher had to revisit this protocol and add some more questions on the benefits of e-voting and potential solutions to overcome issues that arose. This entailed further

exposure to the fluid nature of qualitative research, in which the researcher needs simultaneously to be actively involved and to be restricted by the parameters of the research.

Thirdly, the researcher learned the difference in practice between a tightly structured closed question interview and a semi-structured open ended interview. When he heard the tape of the first interview, he realised that he was prompting the interviewee with clues and answers. He learned that in an interview such as this, the role of the researcher is to facilitate the interview and let interviewees produce their own answers. The researcher learned patience and the necessity for neutrality concerning the issues being investigated.

Fourthly, the researcher was exposed to the complexities of data analysis. A single interview can create volumes of data. Through his reading of research literature the researcher was well aware of this fact. The research was consequently well planned, so that data collection and analysis occurred within a well-defined structure. For instance, the researcher prepared a data reduction and display format, prior to data collection, still he was taken by surprise by the volume of data produced during the interviews that were part of the pilot case study. This provided valuable lessons for the next phase.

Fifthly, the interviews conducted also gave some insight into the unit of analysis for a case study. The researcher felt that in order to develop an e-democracy strategy it was important to include the key stakeholders as the unit of analysis. The views and opinions of the most influential stakeholders would help him to produce a strategy that could be easily implemented. He also deemed that a focus group with follow-up one-to-one interviews with the participants would be a better strategy rather than only conducting one to one interviews, because it would help the researcher obtain the participants' input both individually and in groups. Given Bahrain's small size and the extensive contacts he had as the result of being in the government, as well as the

availability of stakeholder databases, he thought that it should be easy to conduct focus group interviews.

The researcher also thought that it would be a good idea to add the profile of the interviewees as one of the data elements without divulging their identity.

Sixthly, the researcher felt that the interviewees had trouble in articulating their thoughts in English. As a preface to the interviews, he had told them that they would be conducted in English. This forced them to use that language, even though it caused them difficulty in expressing their ideas. Therefore, the researcher felt that it would be better to conduct the interviews in Arabic for the next phase of the project. The researcher's proficiency in Arabic and his ability and experience in translating technical documents into that language would be strength in this regard. The researcher felt that when fixing the appointments for the interview, he should brief the participant about the objectives of the research so that the interviewee could think about the subject beforehand.

In conclusion, the pilot case study achieved its objectives. However, it should be noted that this case study was limited to three interviews and was done within limited time constraints using only one method.

#### 6.5. Elaborating Research Design after Pilot Case Study

Based on the lessons learned in the pilot case study the design was further elaborated, linking research questions and data as shown in Table 6.2.



Table 6.2 : Research Questions and Data Collection Methods

R. QUESTION	S.Q.NO	SUB QUESTIONS	DATA COLLECTION					
			LIST OF DOCUMENTS	INTERVIEWS				
WHAT E-DEMOCRACY STRATEGY, IF ANY, IS MOST SUITABLE FOR BAHRAIN?	SQ1	What are the current e-democracy practices outside Bahrain?	Literature Review in the Transfer Report  Democracy Online  OECD Publications	Government	Political Parties	Media	Citizens	Interest groups
	SQ2	What are the visions, dreams and aspirations of stakeholders with respect to democracy in general and e-democracy in particular?	Transfer Report Democracy Online OECD Publications Bahrain Constitution	H.H the Deputy Prime Minster and the Chairman of the SCICT  H.H the Deputy Prime Minster, the Minster of Islamic Affairs and the Chairman of Election	Focus group interviews with all the four political parties	Editors of Akhbar Al Khaleej, Alwasat, GDN and Bahrain Tribune	Online survey,  Voice of citizen survey	Focus Group with BITS Board, BIS Board, Bahrain Youth Parliament
	SQ3	What are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and	National Action Charter Document		Focus group with MPs			

	threats with respect to Bahrain?	Arab Election Laws website	Committee	Officials
SQ4	What specific forms of e-democracy applications such as e-voting, e-referendum, online opinion polls, e-consultation are particularly relevant and achievable in Bahrain?		H.E the Minster of Cabinet Affairs  The Director of Elections and Referendums  The Director General of IT and the Program Manager for e-Voting	
SQ5	What constraints must be overcome and what conditions must be met in order for e-democracy to be successful and benefit all the people of Bahrain?			

## 6.6. Data Collection Approach

The types of qualitative research data collection are observation, interview, documentation and audiovisual materials (Creswell 1994, p. 151). Yin (2003, p. 85) identifies documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant observation and physical artefacts as the sources of evidence when collecting data in a case study research. The researcher will use one or more of these depending upon the needs of the research design.

The steps involved in data collection set the boundaries for the study, collecting the data and establishing data collection protocols (Creswell 1994, p. 151). Yin (2003, p. 57) suggests five issues for consideration as part of the preparations for data collection for a case study as

- i) the skills of the case study investigator
- ii) training for a specific case study
- iii) the protocol for investigation
- iv) screening of the case study nominations
- v) conducting a pilot case study

Of these five, the first two have partly been accounted for by the researcher's knowledge and experience of ICT developments in Bahrain.

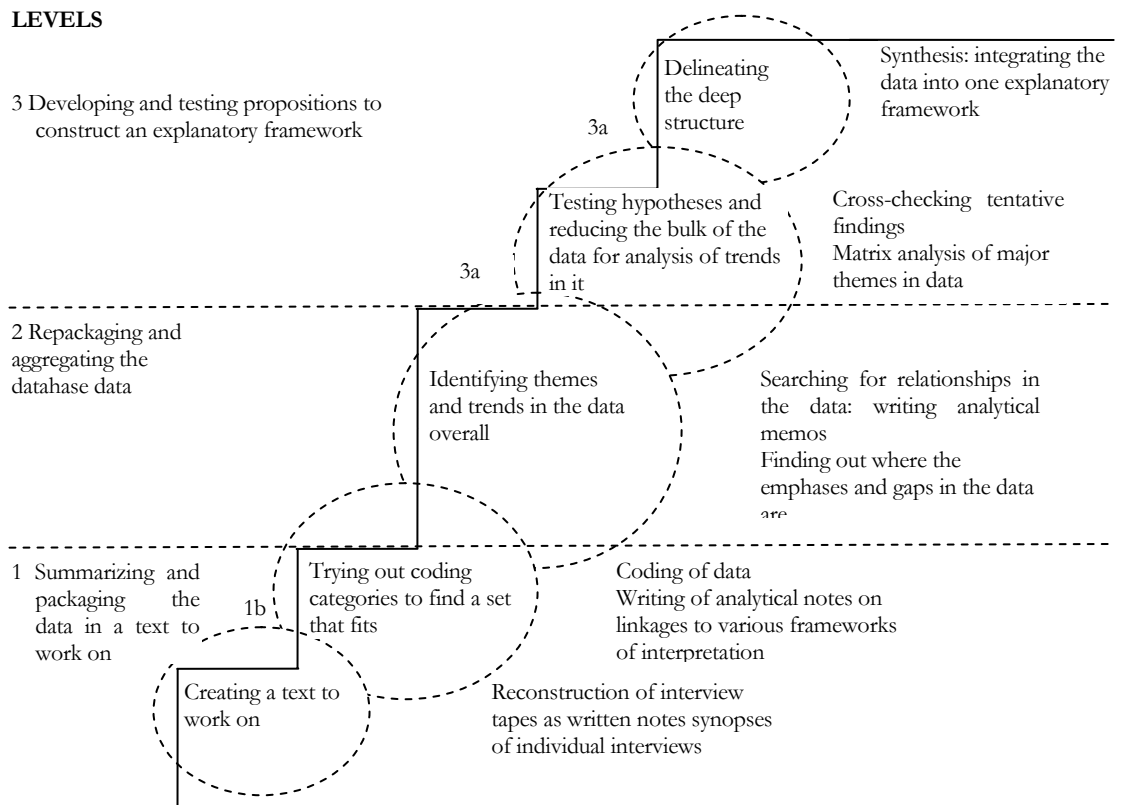
## 6.7. Data Analysis Approach

The three components of data analysis are data reduction and display and the drawing and verification of conclusions (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Yin (2003, p. 112) suggests three general strategies for case study data analysis. The first is "relying on theoretical propositions", wherein the researcher focuses on the proposition that led to the case study and uses it as a guide to case study analysis. A second approach is "thinking about rival explanations" which focuses on proving or disproving conflicting hypotheses. The third strategy is "developing a case description" for organising the case study.

A case study design can use five modes of data analysis technique. These are pattern matching, referring to searching for patterns by comparing results with previous patterns observed in the literature or predicted in the theory building stage; explanation building, in which the researcher analyses the case study data by building an explanation of the case (this is also a special type of pattern matching and attempts to establish causal links regarding a phenomenon); time-series analysis, where the researcher traces changes over the time, matches patterns between different variables and attempts to explore a trend of data points; logic models, involving the matching of empirically observed events to theoretically predicted events (this method is different from pattern matching because of their sequential stages); and cross-case synthesis, which is used when the research design involves analysis of multiple cases (Yin, 2003, p.109).

Miles and Huberman (1994) talk about analytic progression to create an explanation of the data from the mere description of qualitative data. They refer to the ladder of abstraction. In this analytic progression researchers begin with a text to work with; they try out coding categories and move up the scale to identify themes and patterns. Intuitions and findings are then tested with the aim of delineating the deep structure and integrating it into an explanatory framework.

Figure 6.2 : Ladder of Analytical Abstraction (Carney 1990 in Miles and Huberman 1994)



Yin (1993) recommends four data analysis principles, stating that analysis is to be based on the relevant evidence, that it will include rival interpretations, that it will focus on the most important dimensions of the case study, and that it will utilise the researcher's knowledge.

## 6.8. Chapter Summary

This chapter explores different research methods available for the researcher. Literature on quantitative and qualitative research is reviewed. The strengths and weaknesses of these two types of methods are discussed along with the issues of validity affecting both types of research.

A qualitative case study method has been selected as the method for this study. Justification for selecting this method is also discussed. A research design is

presented and elaborated. The data collection and analysis strategies are discussed.

## 7. DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

This chapter first discusses the overall approach and the process followed for data collection and analysis. It also discusses how the respondents and interview methods were selected. This chapter then presents the research findings with respect to the issues for investigation that were identified as part of the literature review.

### 7.1. Data Collection

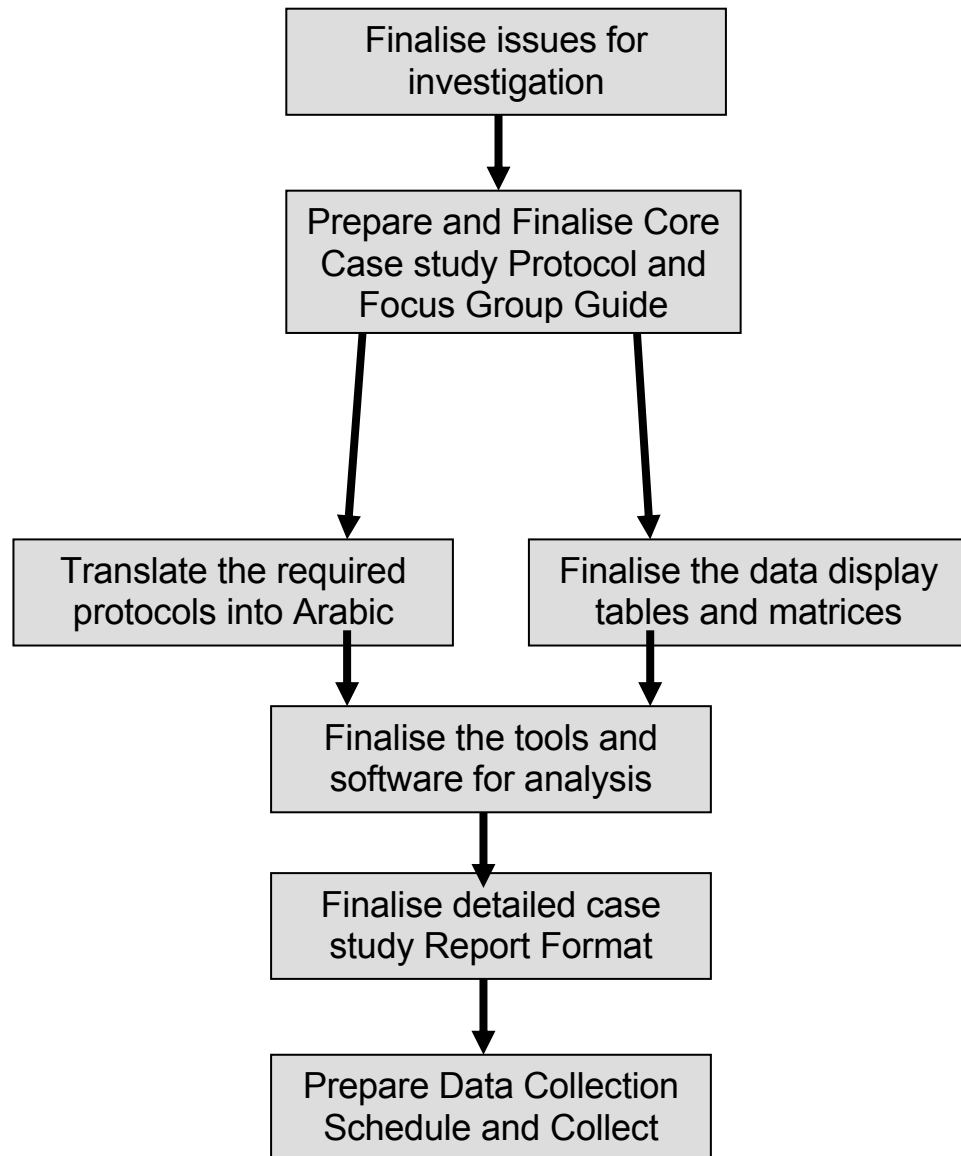
The following approach was developed based on the existing literature on data collection in research. The data collection included focus groups, interviews and various documents. Data was collected before and after the election, a period when the country was most politically active. The total of 26 interviewees included government officials, political activists, NGO representatives, students, IT professionals and media personnel. The sources of data also included newspaper articles and documents that represented different stakeholder opinions on the subject, particularly as regards e-voting. The documents and reports selected contained direct quotes and analysis from different stakeholders including political societies, government officials and media personnel.

A tape recorder was used to record the interviews with the permission of the interviewees. Human Research Ethics clearance was duly obtained from the University and the guidelines for research ethics were followed.

The interviews were conducted in Arabic based on the lessons learned from the pilot study. The tape was transcribed to text and then translated from Arabic into English. Due care was taken not lose the richness of the data while translating and when it was required the researcher went back to the original text and recording to obtain more clarity.

The model used for data collection is shown in figure 7.1. This model was adapted from: The Ladder of Analytical Abstraction (Carney 1990 in Miles and Huberman 1994) and Yin (2003).

Figure 7.1 : Data Collection Model



## 7.2. Selection of Respondents and interview methods

The researcher used purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling method in line with the qualitative research paradigm chosen for the study. Purposive



sampling is a technique often employed in qualitative investigation wherein the number of people interviewed is less important than the criteria used to select them. The characteristics of individuals are used as the basis of selection to reflect the diversity and breadth of the sample population (Wilmot, 2005). Thus, this type of qualitative research uses a process of purposeful selection and subjects are selected with a particular reason in mind such as age, ethnic group or culture (Maxwell, 1998).

In selecting respondents for interview the researcher prepared a list of guiding principles based on the literature review and considering the socio-political landscape in Bahrain. The guiding principles were:

- i) The sample must include people from different and opposing political standpoints. For example pro-government as well as anti-government, Liberal and not so liberal parties.
- ii) The sample must have citizens, government officials, election officials and parliamentarians.
- iii) The sample must include views of different media organizations.
- iv) The sample must include people who are well versed with IT as well as those not so well versed with ICT.
- v) The sample must include political parties as well as non-governmental organizations.
- vi) The sample also should include the views of young people as well as the middle aged and elderly.

Based on the guidelines, three organisations were selected for focus group interview. The first one represented an IT NGO and the second one a political party and the third a Youth NGO. The political party was chosen in such a way that it belonged to one of those parties who opposed the government reforms and e-Voting.

The interviewees included a journalist, an election official, a civil servant, an economist, an IT specialist and a University student. In some cases it could not be certain that the identified respondents would be available for interview. These risks were addressed using appropriate mitigation actions. For example, initially the researcher aimed to interview the Executive Sponsor of the Election Project. However later the researcher interviewed the program Director as the researcher got an opportunity to interview him in the sidelines of an overseas conference.

Whether to interview participants individually or in groups is a common design question that is not always easy to answer (Ulin 2004). For this research the data collection method includes focus groups, individual interviews and analysis of selected documents. The decision was based on the lessons learned from the pilot case study and the analysis of literature on different aspects and implications of using focus groups and individual interviews.

Both focus groups and individual interviews have merits and demerits. Morgan (2001) recommends that social science researchers must channel their energies into understanding the differences and the similarities between focus group and individual interview rather than arguing about the supposed superiority or inferiority of either method.

It is argued that focus group interviews are less natural compared to individual interviews due to a host of reasons (Morgan, 2001). At the same time one must also consider the fact that focus groups produce data and insights that would not be obtained by use of personal interviews. This is a key feature of focus groups that it explicitly uses group interaction to solicit views and opinions (Nassar-McMillan, 2002). This group synergy fosters more creativity, hence provides for a wider range of thoughts, ideas and experiences (Vaughn, Schumm, & Sinagub, 1996). The researcher is able to observe the interaction between group members that might lead to additional insights regarding the subject of discussion (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). Also, by stimulating interest in a common issue and listening to other people's views the focus group might also motivate people to

initiate change (Ulin 2004). Another advantage of using a focus group is that it generates greater amounts of information in shorter and more efficient time spans (Krueger, 1994).

The differences between focus groups and individual interviews in the social sciences arise from the different purposes that guide their use. It is expected that these two methods will remain viable. It is important to recognize that both methods can be adapted to serve a wide variety of purposes (Morgan, 2001). Highly sensitive topics might require individual interviews that will provide the needed privacy and intimacy. On the other hand if the participants are accustomed with topic and if they engage in informal exchange on the topic among themselves then the investigator might choose a focus group. (Ulin 2004, p.44). The research design for e-Democracy research adapts a method that mixes both focus groups and individual interviews in line with the guiding principles.

It is argued that no single research method can tap all dimensions of a complex research problem and it is recommended to combine two or more methods for drawing conclusions from a synthesis of the results. Thus, triangulating results by using multiple methods, results in broader perspectives and more persuasive findings for policymakers (Ulin 2004).

The data for e-Democracy research includes multiple sources of data as well as multiple perspectives. The researcher conducted one focus group and followed by an interview in the first iteration. Based on the initial analysis it was found that there were no significant differences in the way people responded between the interview and focus group when the subject matter of this research was under consideration. Moreover, many inferences were also reflected in the documents analysed. Thereafter, the focus groups were used to get more perspectives in the time available. It is stated that the homogeneity in agency type of the individual groups greatly contributed to the smoothness of the group process (Nassar-

McMillan, 2002). The researcher took note of this and chose members accordingly.

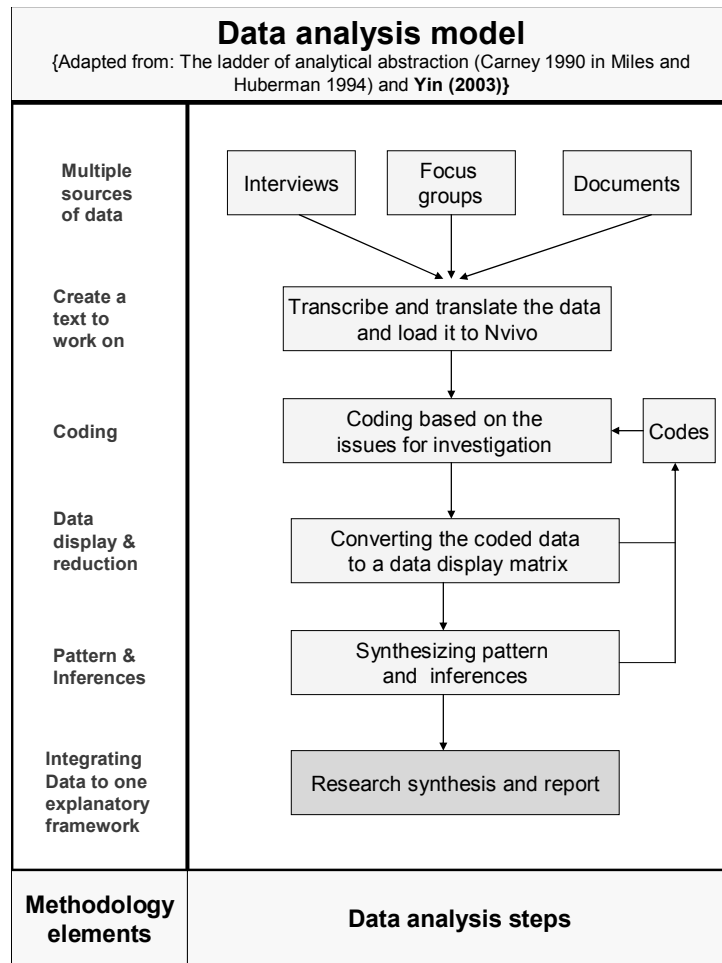
### 7.3. Data Analysis

The data collected was transcribed and then translated to English and loaded into Nvivo software. The process of translation was tedious and presented some challenges. First of all, it took more time than anticipated. The researcher had to read the Arabic text and the translation many times so that the richness of data was not lost. Where required the original tapes were played again to resolve translation issues.

The choice of software was based on some initial reading including the appendix titled “Choosing Computer Programs for Qualitative Data Analysis” in Miles and Huberman (1994). From the pilot case study it was evident that the most help that would be required was in terms of organising and coding the data. The major benefit derived from using Nvivo was that the researcher could keep a chain of evidence for the data and it automated coding and searching process. The disadvantage of using the software was it took some time to learn the program and become familiarised with it. It must be noted that the program was used for organising and coding the data. The data display, reduction, analysis and development of description were done manually.

The model used for data analysis is shown in figure 7.2. This model was adapted from The Ladder of Analytical Abstraction (Carney 1990 in Miles and Huberman 1994) and Yin (2003) .

Figure 7.2 Data Analysis Model



The coding was based on the issues for investigation already identified. The initial set of issues for investigation was divided into two broad categories of e-participation and e-voting (see Appendix 1 for the initial set of issues for investigation). Based on the pilot study and further review of the literature it was further refined into the following six categories:

1. General: including issues that were general in nature and did not fit into any other specific category

2. Democratic concerns: including issues related to democracy in general and specifically to e-democracy applications that can enhance democracy
3. Privacy: included concerns related to e-democracy that affect personal privacy
4. Secrecy: included secrecy issues related to e-democracy
5. Security: all the security issues were grouped into this category
6. Public awareness and confidence: including issues related to awareness training and marketing of e-democracy

New codes “legal” and “benefits of e-Democracy” were added during the data analysis process. Some codes were combined for clarity and similarity, and to avoid duplication. The initial set of codes which the researcher started with together with the modified set of codes and the final list of codes are shown in Appendix 5

The coded data was arranged in the data display matrix shown in Appendix 3. All the data was considered for analysis and every viewpoint was taken into account. Every strong counterinterview was recorded and explicitly mentioned in order to obtain a balanced view of the issue. Data reduction was achieved by reviewing the content for duplication. Additional codes were added as the researcher began the analysis. Some of the codes did not have any relevant data. “Secrecy and e-participation” is an example of a code that did not have any data to analyse. Similarly, some of the codes were combined, as the data collected was not distinct enough to group into categories. “Privacy” and “Secrecy”, for instance, were combined for the purpose of data analysis.

Quotes were used where appropriate to support the argument.

The inferences, themes and trends were identified. They are summarised below.

## I. General

### a. Strategy Aim and Objectives

In general, all of the respondents showed overwhelming enthusiasm for e-democracy. Many respondents recommended that the proposed strategy and e-democracy initiatives must uphold general democratic values. “Everyone has equal rights and all are equal before the law” said one of the professionals who was interviewed during the data collection. Similarly, political life must be inclusive and without discrimination and favouritism in terms of the rights of minorities, women, disabled people and the rural population. Supporting the argument, one of the citizens who was interviewed stated that e-democracy must aim “to strengthen the concept of democracy in society and not exploit the process”.

The view that the role of e-democracy is to strengthen the ideals and values of democracy was further supported by one of the board members of a political society who participated in the focus group. He stated that “the first thing we should consider is looking to democracy as democracy before looking at the technology and its applications. The existence of freedom, equality and acceptance of others’ opinions are primary factors that need to be ensured before plunging to e-democracy”

It was suggested that democracy has not been fully implemented and practiced in Bahrain by one of the



citizens who participated in the interview. The aforementioned sentiments and opinions relate to the importance of the values and principles that must exist in any democracy regardless of its form, as discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis.

This spirit and the general encouragement of e-democracy, were further expressed by the comments made by the President of the Youth Society:

“Due to the small population, and the technological development of Bahrain in terms of Internet and mobile phone penetration, I think that the electronic democracy implementation in Bahrain is possible, provided that measures are taken into account to manage the process both technically and culturally.”

One of the members of the political society said that he strongly agrees with the implementation of e-democracy in Bahrain. He was optimistic that any negative concerns could easily be overcome. He further stated that citizens must vote on the basis of the national interest and not on any other basis. He concluded his optimistic statement by saying “I expect the implementation of e-democracy in Bahrain to be successful, modern and high-class and I am looking forward to it”.

What emerged from the data about the general sentiments towards e-democracy was support for the view expressed in the literature that e-democracy can enhance existing forms of representative democracy (Gibson, Rommele et al. 2004) and partial support for the notion that e-

democracy can contribute to transforming the nature of government and democracy (Westen 2000). The concerns that e-democracy can be used to suppress democracy also surfaced in the data; however, a majority of the respondents took the view that these concerns could be addressed by implementing proper measures. One may argue that if all the respondents were very optimistic about e-Democracy, then why did most of them not raise their voices for a more direct democracy? This, according to the researcher's viewpoint, is largely due to the fact that democracy in Bahrain is in the early stages of its evolution. Lack of awareness and the experience of the democratic system of government were evident in the data collected.

It was also recommended that e-Democratic strategy is formulated through policy consultations with key stakeholders. The example of the Central Bank of Bahrain, that issues discussion papers on financial policy before it is fully adopted, was cited by the economist who participated in the interview.

The issue of trust and confidence resonated in all the interviews and focus groups. Everyone emphasised that the strategy should aim at building the trust and confidence of the citizens before any actual implementation. Notably, one of the political activists argued that "If people actually trusted the implementation of democracy, they would automatically trust all democratic methods whether conventional or by electronic means." In order to build that trust and confidence and to ensure success, many suggested a gradual implementation; a few, however, were very specific on the implementation cycle, suggesting that

the government must first “implement confidence-building measures between government and political societies”, then initiate a sequence progressing from discussion forums to e-consultation and then e-voting. It was also suggested that e-voting be tested in the youth parliament and other forums before considering it for the 2010 elections. The gradual implementation of e-democracy was highlighted by the board member of the political society who participated in the focus group. He said:

“We are a young democracy and many of our people outside the elite are not well aware of its role. People are still not aware of their role and how to convey their opinions, nor of what democracy consists of. Therefore, to jump to a full-blown electronic democracy, sidestepping the different implementation steps and stages, may have negative implications”

It must be noted that even the majority of the participants from the IT NGO focus group favoured a gradual implementation. As one of the members puts it: “start small to create a culture and then take the decision for full scale implementation”. All of the participants of the focus group with the IT NGO held senior IT-related positions in their career. Their level of IT proficiency and understanding of e-democracy was high compared to all the other interviewees. Yet the IT NGO focus group participants underlined the need for building trust and adopting gradual implementation.

The same views were echoed when the Secretary General of the Constitutional Conference was quoted in a newspaper article as saying “that electronic voting is undoubtedly not a fashion but an evolutionary process

acceptable to all mindful and those who are ambitious to the progress of the society, and to facilitate voting for the citizens of all categories” (Alwasat Newspaper 2006c). In another article he asserted he has been looking very closely on the experiences of other countries including U.K and U.S. Despite the technological development in Britain which can not be compared to the situation in Bahrain, Britain has been very cautious in introducing e-Voting. (Alwaqt Newspaper 2006c)

However, it must be noted that even a cautious approach of “starting small and going big” has its own pitfalls. Small-scale implementations, for example, tend to have fewer security problems as they are a less attractive target for attack and are relatively less complex. Such an implementation may raise the problem of building confidence too easily to a level that is not justified and later bigger problems may creep in to the system such as increased threat and target for attackers.

It was argued that Bahrain must analyse the impact of its e-Democracy implementation on neighbouring Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Countries, as Bahrain is a member country of that bloc. Similarly, it was suggested that existing electronic services such as e-banking, which are offered to ordinary citizens, be studied in order to understand the penetration of electronic services.

The journalist who was interviewed spoke about the price that the government must pay for e-Democracy. “Genuine e-democracy will not be without a price and therefore the

authority must have the ability to assess and cope with the consequences of this political decision”

The university student who participated in the interview gave the opinion that “the current websites are very bad examples; many of them widen unhealthy divisions and conflicts. While we strive to raise the awareness level for the very important cause of national unity, some people are busy in promoting unhealthy differences of opinions for their own political benefits”. Such a view is indeed a point worthy of consideration and reflects the views expressed by Coleman (2001) who argues that the parliament members' websites must be a medium for interaction rather than politically motivated information.

However, it can be argued that according to the U.N. e-Government Readiness Report (U.N, 2005), Bahrain leads the other countries in the region with respect to the use of websites and information portals.

The IT specialist who participated in the interview mentioned as challenges the possibility that the Government does not implement a decision approved by the majority via electronic means, and the necessity of convincing people that the team managing the e-democracy system is credible and trustworthy. Another participant from the youth NGO focus group highlighted the lack of awareness and the issue of trust in the voting process as two of the main challenges.

The goals of the e-democracy initiative must be clear and more meaningful than current democratic practices. The initiative must also state what it would eventually achieve

in terms of financial savings and meeting public aspirations and demands of trust.

The economist who participated in the interview stated that “We would like to see more diffusion of power of decision making to the democratic institutions, and we would like to see a more clear separation of duties; the judiciary, the ruling family, the parliament, the executive branch. I think at the moment they are somehow blurred. Others who participated in this study had indicated this implicitly by of the need for upholding the democracy values as discussed in the beginning of this section.

Another goal that must be achieved is the commitment that government will make to implement the outcome of any discussion or agreement and thereby contribute towards building credibility.

“If the dialogue was positive and both the participants and the moderator have agreed on a certain point or a particular proposal it has to be implemented to make it credible and useful. Part of the success of electronic democracy is how serious the government is, not only in debate, but in listening to the opinion of the people; otherwise it’s going to be useless” said the economist He stressed on the need to create a sense of national unity on key issues. In addition to the need for sharing power he asserted that it is important to foster a sense of civic responsibility as democracy becomes deep rooted in Bahrain.

It was also highlighted by many participants, especially the political society members who participated in the study, that a small-scale beginning should be made using information portals, and opinion polls, before moving on to other areas of e-democracy.

The importance of active marketing to promote e-democracy was highlighted by the board member of an NGO who participated in the focus group:

“Marketing is very important politically for the decision maker. The National Action Charter is a good example. The King convinced everyone by putting the Charter into action even before the vote on the referendum. He has allowed all rebels back into the country and many other measures. e-Democracy can be promoted properly to address the change in culture”

The setting of criteria and technical qualifications for people who will contest elections was recommended. For example, people with ICDL or similar qualifications must be given preference when being considered for executive jobs. In this way, citizens will eventually embrace technology as part of living culture. This also relates to the wider debate on the need for representatives to meet some standards for qualifications and other criteria as they contest elections, even in a traditional democracy. For example, in some countries such as India there have been concerns that some criminals and mafia become politicians and contest elections.

One of the board members of the IT NGO suggested that the nation must focus on the younger generation (40 or less) and that school students must be encouraged and taught electronically because they will become the main users of the system in the future.

The human element of elections and candidates' campaigns must be taken into consideration, as these rituals are enjoyed by many. The e-democracy initiative is the process of elevating the democratic process to the next level. This needs to consider all aspects of change management. The issue of social and cultural change was highlighted by a young lady who participated in the focus group:

"I have some reservations because it will partially cancel out the social atmosphere of carrying your passport, leaving the house,, waiting in queue and voting. This physical act of voting increases the people's patriotic feeling. It resembles what happens now in the event of mourning. People send short text messages of condolence which replace the beneficial tradition of people visiting others in their 'Majlis' to convey their condolences. I am afraid that by adopting this system (e-democracy) we may lose the sense of patriotism, the scene of women and older men taking the trouble and waiting in queues because they love their country and want to do anything for it".

Further on the subject of formulating an action plan for e-democracy, the president of the youth forum NGO suggested that:



“I think we have four basic actions. The first is to increase awareness of the importance of this system and its use. The second action is more important: it is to find systems and measures to ensure some sort of protection, privacy and trust. The third action is to provide public voting centres in some areas equipped with dedicated e-polling machines having limited options such as (Yes/No). The fourth action is the need for a group of people to raise awareness on the basis of any new topic for e-polling. For example, I have been listening to the public views on the 1 per cent deduction as part of the new unemployment insurance scheme, which is the most hotly debated topic these days. This is considered a kind of referendum. Many people have called to express their views, whether for or against the scheme. But the beautiful part is that the programme hosts specialists from both sides to debate and discuss the topic in detail so as to explain the subject matter to the general public.”

Such discussions and debates on important issues that concern citizens are important for any democracy, as discussed in Chapter 2. One can argue that e-democracy makes it easier to organise such rational debates and create an online “public sphere”.

However, there is the point of view that public debate on television and in newspapers bears little resemblance to a rational-critical debate, as events are manipulated to provide the maximum commercial impact. Debates are structured so that extreme points of view can clash to maximum effect, increasing ratings but doing little to contribute to the formation of discursive public will or

opinion. The selection of topics reflects the pressures of commercial and other interests (Thornton, 2002).

#### b. Prioritisation

When it comes to the prioritisation of e-democracy services there was a consensus that implementation needs to be gradual. This view also resonated in the reports in the news papers. For instance, Alwaqt Newspaper (2006b) wrote that it is not necessarily to achieve all the benefits of e-Voting from the first time. The transformation from conventional to new methods in the beginning is often arduous and costly. However we can reap the benefits once the technology is spread and people are used to dealing with it.

Most respondents argued for starting implementation with services that are less sensitive and politically controversial, and then moving to e-voting and e-referendums, all the while embracing programs for building trust and confidence in the process. However, care must be taken to adopt a small but scalable approach, as such implementations have a tendency to be less risky and complex, thereby perhaps encouraging an unrealistic and therefore unjustified sense of trust and confidence. The authorities may use this as a tactical measure move the project on without really addressing all the issues in sufficient depth.

The strategy should consider implementing consultation in municipal-related policy matters first, then e-consultation on non-sensitive issues, after e-petitions can be started. A

gradual implementation starting from opinion polls and progressing to e-voting must be considered. Non-political opinion polls should be the first step in the implementation of e-democracy, and due attention must be given to producing representative samples by adopting scientific approaches.

There was also an emphasis on selecting uncontroversial pilot schemes and then embarking on fully-fledged production systems.

These views are reflected in the following quote:

“We should start with easy things to get the acceptance of the people first. We must not start with e-voting. We must begin with discussion forums to generate people's interest and to be able to get the benefit of information about the government's programs and plans and what it wants to achieve in order to gain public trust and confidence. Later it can engage them in electronic voting and electronic referendums. It must build bridges of trust between government and people. Moreover, we must educate the public electronically. Give them a package and the Internet free of charge.”

Another participant had a different approach which resulted in the same solution:

“Except for the electronic voting, which I believe must take a longer time, the rest like referendums and opinion polls can start immediately.”

One participant, who was one of the board members of a political society, was highly sceptical about e-democracy and argued that the Government must focus on implementing e-government and refrain from implementing electronic services that have political connotations, as he felt that implementations of e-democracy could not succeed due to lack of trust.

The discussion on prioritisation can be summed up by the views expressed by one of the student participants:

“I think that e-polls and e-consultation can be implemented, especially with the proliferation of the Internet in all the ministries and companies. Government should cooperate with Batelco to create a link in their site to the Government e-poll site. With regard to e-Consultation, I believe we have in Bahrain the right calibre of people whose expertise can benefit the country but they are not fully utilised. I think these two applications can be implemented immediately. e-Referendums can be implemented in the short term. To put them in terms of stages: e-poll and e-consultation in the first stage, e-referendums in the second stage and e-voting in the final stage”

#### c. Benefits

The technology provides ways and means for cost saving and improving efficiency. It was argued that these benefits can be used to improve democracy. One of the interviewees commented that

“The idea [e-voting] is good and would save time and effort; particularly during elections, it would save the person the effort of going to the voting centres. People who

are reluctant to express their opinion can do so through the Internet because they are on their own and free”.

Another view on the benefits of e-democracy was:

“e-voting will certainly be better than traditional voting. It can overcome many of the technical challenges to identifying people through technologies such as fingerprinting or iris scanning”.

Similarly, it will help Bahrainis residing abroad to vote as they don't need to visit the diplomatic mission offices. Often there is great distance from city of residence abroad and the city where Bahrain diplomatic mission is present. This makes voting very difficult. E-Voting can thus help people abroad to vote easily (Alayam Newspaper 2006a).

However, as mentioned in Section 4.3, it is argued that the use of biometrics could cause privacy, health and safety issues. Designs must therefore include a full risk analysis of biometrics before implementation (Fairweather 2002). It must be noted that Bahrain has already implemented national smart ID cards with fingerprints. Therefore, any use of the smart cards for e-voting must take into consideration the privacy, health and safety issues associated with using biometrics for identification, and a full review must be conducted.

Many benefits were also mentioned, including the quick sorting and counting of votes, the avoidance of queues, the ability to provide the authorities with direct and instantaneous responses, the ability for the people living abroad to participate in the political process, the elimination of the need for printing and managing ballot

papers, the provision of privacy and credibility, as each voter is given a password allowing them to vote only once, and easy access to voting centres for citizens to cast votes in the comfort of their homes or at their work places. This last benefit may not be as universal as it may appear, as noted by Fairweather and Rogerson (2002): there may be others such as family members or line managers who might be interested to know for whom a voter has voted for. The strategy, therefore, must give some due consideration to ensuring privacy.

e-Voting also helps in eradicating many problems that could face conventional voting. Those include paper damage, mistakes in candidate names, stamps, difficulties in dealing with huge quantities of paper and human error while counting votes. This is in addition to problems related to time wasted in long queues and the high financial cost of conventional methods. Similarly the reach of democracy will be extended through continued engagement and continuity.

#### d. Trust

The need for public trust and confidence in the system was one of the themes strongly emphasised by most of the respondents. The issue of trust appeared in many contexts and the need for implementing trust-building measures and mechanisms were firmly underlined.

It was observed that trust was one of the most important factors in ensuing success of any implementation of e-

democracy. “Trust is the basis for cooperation in e-democracy, and lack of trust would adversely affect the democratic process” said one of the participants in a focus group. The voters do not trust the system as they do not have confidence that it will protect their privacy and the secrecy of their ballot. These concerns were reflected in this statement: “The (voting) method is not important. A trust must exist between the people and civil society from one side and the government on the other. They must have a common goal to achieve. Thus, the Internet or any other means does not matter.”

Most of the participants reiterated that trust was the most fundamental element in the implementation of e-democracy. The advantages of using technology can be harnessed and exploited for improving democracy and its weaknesses can be overcome by taking effective precautions. However, the issues of awareness, confidence and trust need to be tackled, asserted one of political activists.

The concern over trust was strongest around the subject of e-voting. Most people warned that the authorities should not jump into e-voting without properly addressing this issue.

“Election through electronic voting is something negative. People are afraid of the possible changing or manipulation of votes. Manipulation may or may not happen but people are very suspicious. Their inner feeling is that the rate of manipulation will be high. They are afraid that their vote may not be considered.”

The member of the IT NGO felt that people are against e-voting not because of the influence of the political societies, but rather because they do not trust the system. He said that a large proportion of the population does not trust computers, and that the idea would therefore need more time to mature.

One of the interviewees expressed his concern explicitly: “I can’t currently rely on electronic democracy because of the lack of trust. It may facilitate the process, but it can likewise facilitate manipulation.”

A report in Alwaqt Newspaper (2006d) reiterated this point by highlighting the views of political leaders. It reported that the representatives of Alwefaq Society, one of the major opposition parties, had pointed to the need of establishing trust between the citizen and the political regime. The president of another opposition party named ‘Waad’ Society stated that “I have no objection to this method [e-Voting] provided that it’s supervised by an independent authority whom we can trust’. Amal Society Vice President also stated in the same report that there is a need to establish trust between the executive wing of the government, political societies and professionals in our attempt to implement e-Voting. He called for ‘transparency and neutrality in the experiment’

Similarly, a government official commenting on trust expressed his views as follows:

“e-Voting, I do not think, because they [political societies] rejected it in the past. We have tried, but they took it with a



bad grace. I mean, the government intended to uplift and enhance the system, but they thought that the government wanted to manipulate the outcome by it. Then we discovered that it was more of a precautionary self-defence by the opposition just in case they failed, because the same thing happened in the previous elections despite the cancellation of e-voting. They kept accusing us of vote manipulation till the announcement of the vote results. Then they declared that the elections were transparent and fair. I mean, they anticipate events as a precautionary measure in case the results are not in their favour”

In a report by the Joint Committee for Monitoring Election Results, the committee reported that “it does not possess any tangible evidence to support the contention that the elimination of the general voting stations may have altered the announced results from the ones announced earlier. However, the elimination of the stations in question would definitely increase the trust of public opinion in the final results”. It points to the fact that the issue of trust needs to be addressed at many levels such as system procedures and processes as well as more intangible aspects such as public opinion.

Raising awareness of electronic services and e-democracy and encouraging people to use other electronic services such as bill payment was suggested, Such electronic vehicles as Internet purchases and ATMs can be used as trust-building mechanisms. Other ideas proposed to increase trust were conforming to international standards, ensuring security, selecting solution providers known for their integrity and trustworthiness, the involvement of

stakeholders, the proper testing of the system and proper training.

It was also clear that the issue of trust is difficult to address. It is important to be pragmatic, as pointed out by one of the participants:

“With trust, we can overcome all difficulties associated with democracy and its electronic applications. If I have to delay electronic democracy till after I gain the full trust of the public in the system, then I may have to wait for a very long time. I say, as long as the electronic method is complementary to the conventional ones, I can’t see any reason for not implementing it. Yes, there are some disadvantages in electronic voting which increases the gap in trust, but in other aspects I imagine we can take action towards it if it is an option rather than the only method. The crisis of trust will not dissipate in a few days. We shouldn’t wait till it’s completely dissolved to implement electronic democracy. As long as it is an option, I think we can start. The trust crisis will only be overcome by the people. It will take a long time before we reach stage of other more developed democracies that have started much earlier than us, and they still can’t achieve complete trust, and they are still suffering from the trust problem.”

What was interesting to note from the data collected for this research was that the majority of participants were positive about e-democracy and said that they would participate in e-democratic initiatives subject to the element of trust.

#### e. Legal

Some of the data collected from newspaper articles and election reports revealed that some opposition members refer to Article 23 of the law on the Exercise of Political Rights, which stipulates that “the polling and election process must be conducted through general, confidential and direct voting. Expressing opinions in the polling or election process is to be done by casting the vote on the “card” specified for this purpose in the designated ballot locations”, and claim that e-voting is not supported by law, alleging that government attempts to introduce e-voting is illegal. The argument claims that the only way to conduct an election is through general direct secret voting by manually ticking a ballot card which is deposited in a physical ballot box.

However, protagonists of e-voting point to Article (25) of the same law which stipulates that “each citizen registered in any voting list and outside the Kingdom of Bahrain, can cast his vote in referendums or elections with either the conventional method or through electronic methods, in accordance with procedures issued by the Minister of Justice and Islamic Affairs”, and claim that e-voting is legal and can be introduced without further legislation.

Regardless of the claims and counterclaims, it is important to ensure adequate legal provisions to validate the introduction not only of e-voting but of all aspects of e-democracy. Furthermore, there will be additional legal challenges related to confidentiality, privacy, audit and

other aspects of e-democracy that need to be addressed, as summed up by one of the interviewees:

“The second point is that the process must be linked to legislation and the legislation in the country must serve this idea. It must guarantee confidentiality, it must ensure no duplication exists, and it must allow for the freedom of expressing one’s viewpoint with no external influence. As we know, the village culture unfortunately dominates the culture of the city.”

## II. Democratic Concerns

### a. Digital Divide and Equality of Access

Concerns regarding inequality of public access to technology, creating a split between the technological haves and have nots were raised by many. “There will be discrimination if electronic democracy is implemented because there are some people who do not have computers or still are computer illiterate”

However there was an element of optimism throughout; as one participant puts it: “Time will bridge the gap”. The concerns about the digital divide were voiced more by participants than by the reports and documents analysed as part of the research.

It was also suggested that, although e-democracy is a good and positive thing, there must be choice for people to participate in democracy in the traditional way, so that those who are averse to technology or who do not know how to use it are not left out.

“The system [e-democracy] is not very useful if only about 30 per cent of people are committed and able to use the system. There must be a ratio of more than 50 per cent of those that can use the technology, in term of the ability to read and choose among options.”

A few of the respondents touched on the deeper issues of the digital divide by saying that the lack of equal access and equal proficiency may make the implementation of e-democracy undemocratic.

“It [i.e. e-democracy] is more convenient than waiting in queue; however some people will be left out, not having the equal opportunity which is a basic tenet of democracy. Therefore, it must be one of the means, not the only means”

Although there was some consensus that time would bridge the gap, some other measures were suggested to reduce that gap:

“I reckon that 10 years will be needed until this generation grows up. We also need to possibly raise awareness and economic power to allow the citizens the capacity to buy a computer, connect it to the Internet and use it for online transactions such paying telephone bills. Free Internet service must be provided at schools and universities. This ought to raise awareness and trust in technology. If someone is able to buy a PC they will automatically know how to use it and [this] will reduce the gap.”

Raising people's awareness and purchasing power and providing free Internet and PC access were suggested as measures. It must be noted that the issue of the digital divide is indeed an issue with wider connotations, as discussed in Chapter 4. The gap in equality of access may lead to inequality and injustice, which strikes at the very foundation of any democracy. The strategy must ensure safeguards and mechanisms to ensure that the digital divide does not impede democracy

b. Transparency

It was suggested by the one of the students that “the authentication of identity is 100 per cent ensured in traditional voting but quite difficult to implement in e-voting and doesn't provide the same level of transparency”. Any system that has no provision for an audit is not transparent; it was therefore urged that efficient audit mechanisms be put in place. In the interview, one of the government officials said that during the last election there was a concerted effort from the government to ensure transparency. A committee of judges was formed to oversee the integrity of elections and to engage independent organisations to monitor electoral procedures and the legal and technical frameworks.

A lawyer who is also a member of the Political Office of the 'Wa'ad' Society expressed the concern over e-voting in a newspaper article. He asserted that e-Voting system has flaws and it lacks transparency. The system opens room for possible confusion and discrepancy that will affect credibility of the final election results (Alwaqt Newspaper

2006e). Alwefaq Society also expressed deep concern over the doubts surrounding the integrity and transparency of the upcoming parliamentary and municipal elections (Alwatan Newspaper 2006). However the President of the Almenbar Society did not mind e-voting provided that measures and controls are put in place to ensure fairness and transparency (Alwasat Newspaper 2006a)

One government official further claimed that the allegations by the opposition were more of a “precautionary self-defence by the opposition just in case they failed, because the same thing happened in the previous elections despite the cancellation of e-voting. They kept accusing the government of vote manipulation till the announcement of the vote results. Then they declared that the elections were transparent and fair. I mean, they anticipate events as a precautionary measure in case the results are not in their favour”

It was further reported that the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), based on a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed with the government, had reviewed and approved the full election process. UNDP has also reported that the principles of integrity and transparency were ensured in the last elections in accordance with international standards. It was suggested by some of the participants that adhering to international standards and best practices would increase transparency.

c. The issue of choice

Choice was highlighted by all the participants as an issue. However, some maintained that the traditional method must remain in place along with any e-voting. “e-Voting must be supported by traditional voting” said one of the participants. “It must be one of the means, not the only one. Then the turnout will be highest” asserted another.

However there was a counterview whereby some of the participants suggested that the country must gradually move to a full e-voting system, especially when the use of traditional voting is very low. For example, “Options can be given at the start, especially for elderly people, and because some may not know how to use computers and may not be highly educated. It is possible to run the two methods in parallel, but later to stick to the electronic system when the use of the conventional voting method markedly decreases”.

One of the political societies and a newspaper has actively advocated a combined system where traditional paper-based and e-voting systems coexist and voters are given the choice. The president of Transparency Society announced in the Alwaqt newspaper that "The Transparency Society will adopt a proposal, which combines the traditional and electronic voting and it can be applied in the forthcoming elections" (Alwaqt Newspaper 2006a).

d. Political will

In a report in the newspaper a member of the General Secretariat of an opposition society has reaffirmed his



society's reservations on using e-voting in municipal and parliamentary elections. He was commenting on the results of a poll conducted by the Government that shows nine out of 17 societies approving e-voting. He believed that "election is not an area of experimentation and can not be imposed by the Government on the people of Bahrain, particularly, in the absence of any agreement at the public and official levels" (Alwaqt Newspaper, 2006c)

The Director of Elections and Referendums stated that a political consensus would be sought before the decision on e-voting is implemented. Insufficient awareness and political reasons were cited as reasons for opposing e-voting by some of the political parties. It was stated by some that those who oppose e-voting for political reasons also oppose anything and everything that is not in their favour (Alayam Newspaper, 2006b).

The director responsible for the technical implementation of e-voting stated that the executive team would hold discussions and workshops with all the stakeholders to build a consensus (Alayam Newspaper, 2006b).

The Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs, who was also the President of the Central Informatics Organisation (the government arm responsible for e-voting systems) stated during the Bahrain e-Voting Forum held in January 2006 that the Kingdom intends to use optional e-voting in the upcoming elections. He also however, pointed out that the process will be done in consultation, with discussion and an exchange of views with various concerned societies

and institutions to reach the solution most suitable to the electoral process in the country.

Following the e-voting forum, the Elections and Referendum Directorate announced the organisation of a workshop on e-voting with the aim of coming to a consensual agreement with regard to the implementation of e-voting.

One of the officials interviewed in this study was responsible for the e-voting project in the government. He commented about the aforementioned workshop:

“The objective of the workshop was to introduce e-voting, its forms, and all of its technical, legal and security aspects, in order to come to a clear perception of the political societies, organisations and citizens with regard to the implementation of e-voting in the upcoming municipal and parliamentary elections. This included the e-voting system infrastructure, technical, and legal aspects of e-voting; It addressed issues of security and the need for precautions in order to ensure the safety, integrity and transparency of the electoral process besides, identifying different models throughout the world that have previous experience in this area. The workshop also discussed the proposed system and highlighted the needs, benefits and the process of e-voting, and ended by answering all questions and proposing technical and legal solutions.

In a poll conducted at the end of an e-voting awareness workshop to which all political societies were invited, nine out of seventeen approved the implementation of e-voting.

Of those who opposed it, three were completely against any form of e-voting while five opposed voting over the Internet but approved the e-polling. Al Wefaq, one of the main opposition societies, which boycotted the last election, condemned the poll soliciting the approval of e-voting in the workshop. Al Wefaq stated that “such a poll has no scientific basis and major decisions like e-voting can not be taken in an ad hoc manner”

The secretary general of one of the Human Rights NGOs issued a statement expressing its support and praise for the Election and Referendum Committee’s approaches in the Kingdom and its continuing and permanent dialogue with Bahraini civil institutions and its participation with these societies concerning the proposed e-voting process during the upcoming elections. Bahrain’s Society for Human Rights Watch expressed its praise for the elections and the Referendum Directorate for listening to civil society’s views, suggestions and opinions in order to achieve agreement regarding e-voting.

A consensus and the political will were not effected in time for the last election, and e-voting was shelved by the Government, which however reiterated its commitment to the process.

“We [i.e. the government] will work over the next four years to prepare society, political societies in particular, and civil society to keep abreast of developments in this field such as those taking place in other countries of the world, hoping that e- voting will be supported and consented to by all.”

This remark also point also relates to what is seen in the literature:

“Governments should not offer online consultation as a gimmick; they must be committed to integrating the evidence gathered into the policy process and being responsive” (Coleman and Gotze, 2001).

The data collected strongly emphasised that decisions like e-democracy have more to do with political will rather than technical issues. It is therefore important that the strategy give due consideration to mechanisms to build political consensus regarding a minimal implementation of e-democracy.

e. Applications

i. e-Voting (e-Polling and Remote e-Voting)

One of the Government’s Executive Officers interviewed confirmed that stakeholder consensus on e-voting is planned by the Government, and that the Election and Referendum Directorate will work over the next four years to prepare society for e-voting and e-democracy in order to achieve political consensus. Voter registration, voter authentication, electronic counting of votes, candidate registration and management and voting centre locators are application of e-voting that can be used in addition to the voting application itself.

The director responsible for the technical implementation of e-voting stated that e-voting will be implemented gradually through special purpose kiosks (electronic voting machines) inside the polling centres, He assured that it is going to be a simple and smooth process and the e-Voting process contains tight security and precautionary measures. He expressed his optimism that it will be widely accepted by the political societies (Alayam Newspaper, 2006a).

It was argued that people must be culturally prepared for e-voting as this is not a tangible reality; hence it is difficult to trust the system. The chances of electoral manipulation were pointed out as a potential issue that needs to be addressed politically and technically. It was recommended that e-voting be first implemented step by step using a pilot scheme, and then fully.

Commenting on e-voting, the president of Youth NGO raised concerns about tracing votes through the computer's IP address. Another board member shared her concerns in the following words:

“As far as I know e-voting was dropped from the last elections due to the number of criticisms raised by the public. They are sceptical about the e-voting process and that their votes may not go to the intended candidate. Where are the ballot boxes going to be stored and who ensures that no manipulation or favourism will take place? Besides, they were afraid that votes may be added in favour of one candidate

against the other. i.e. instead of 1000 votes they will suddenly become 1500 votes without our knowledge. This was raised with the general voting centres, along with the problem of duplicate votes. They are all concerns related to distrust in the first place. A lot of these problems can be taken care of with proper awareness and proper IT literacy training, as our fathers and mothers cannot use computers.”

The perceived inconvenience and the issue of security and trust were cited as the main reason for not choosing e-voting, as revealed by the Voice of Citizen survey conducted by the Government (see Section 4.7). It can therefore be argued from the case study data analysis that people’s aversion to e-voting is largely driven by issues of trust and security.

ii. e-Participation (Continuous Interaction in Policy Matters, e-Petition, e-Panels, e-Referendums)

Most people suggested e-consultation, e-referendums and electronic discussion forums as potential applications for e-participation. It was unanimously felt that matters of most concern to citizens, such as municipalities and housing, education and justice, must be given preference when adopting e-participation for Bahrain. It was also suggested that opinion polls must be conducted on non-sensitive issues and that discussions can take place at many levels such as for expert groups and for the entire citizenry.

The Vice President of the Youth NGO gave his opinion on potential applications for e-participation in Bahrain:

“I do not mean to totally invalidate Parliament, but there are tools that might be used, such as opinion polls and referendums on specific topics before they are discussed and voted on by Parliament”.

Supporting this, the board members of the youth NGO added that if the people are empowered to vote or express their views on all the issues to be discussed by MPs then Bahrain would achieve somewhere near the highest level of democracy. He further pointed to the drawbacks of e-referendums by saying that they are an excellent method in principle, but may work in favour of one group against another. If direct voting is instituted, the results would be for the benefit of one group over the others, and it therefore might not be in favour of the national interest, in a similar fashion to what is happening in Iraq. It was also recommended that measures be taken to eliminate the system from being prevailed on by the opinions of parents, guardians or village leaders.

“I have been following e-polls in other countries like the USA and I feel it’s a very good method. It has been used to gauge the President’s popularity and so on. But in a country as small as Bahrain, I am not sure that it will be successful” said the Vice President

of the Political Society who participated in the focus group.

One of his colleagues from a political society agreed, and added that e-consultation may hinder the democratic process as it is unreasonable to raise and discuss each topic; involving people directly might impede work and would not add any value.

To address some of the weaknesses it was suggested that the quality of each topics for e-consultation be determined before discussion.

Another point of view expressed while discussing the potential applications of e-participation was the necessity of setting up information websites about MPs' plans and programs in order to make them accountable to the electorate. One of the interviewees put it thus: "The enhancements of websites of ministers, MPs and members of the Shura Council have feedback facilities and prompt responses to comments and questions. I have noticed that some of the websites are very weak in content and do not get updated for years". This is an important aspect of as one of the foundations on which the evolution of e-democracy can take place. The discussions on different models of e-democracy in Chapter 4 reveal that the implementation of e-democracy can start from a more passive dissemination of information through websites to a more sophisticated two-way interaction. For example the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and



Development (OECD, 2001) defines information, consultation and active participation as three types of involvement that constitute e-democratic interaction between the state and the citizens. Refer to Section 4.2.2 for a detailed discussion on the views and models of e-democracy.

Similarly, blogging is a tool that parties and politicians can make use of. Francoli and Ward (2007) state that the democratic possibilities of blogging as a place for debate and conversations are used only by a few (Francoli and Ward, 2007). Bahrain's MPs and politicians can make use of the potential of blogs to create spaces for active interaction.

It must be argued that Bahrain must review and improve information dissemination mechanisms as a strategic priority as it embarks on e-democracy.

Furthermore, the views expressed by the participants had a strong emphasis on action from the government as an outcome of online discussions. Some confirmed that they would only participate in online discussions if they brought about results and are not mere discussions, as happens with respect to debates in newspapers.

"The government can present issues for debate and discussions in forums and listen to views and recommendations. The most important is that the government should be responsive and listen to all views". The results of polls cannot be generalised without due consideration for every viewpoint.

Many of the respondents touched on the issue of building and cultivating trust. They argue that the “moderator or facilitator of the e-Discussions must be a person who is trustworthy and respectable in society.”

When asked about the potential applications for citizen engagement, one of the interviewees responded:

“I will speak about democracy in general and not about our current situation. I think that electronic democracy is inevitable, if I may say. It has evolved to become part of our day to day life, from mobile phones to emails and SMS. It evolves spontaneously and not due to your own will. We will find ourselves amidst social pressures and therefore we find that electronic democracy automatically enters into the political sphere. I think e-democracy is coming regardless, but I think it should be used in a gradual manner, which shouldn't exceed the usage of questionnaires and referendums. I am enthusiastic about the idea, as the other participants mentioned. The issue is a done deal sooner or later. Many of the ideas in the past have become de facto necessities. Current alternatives don't replace the current Parliament. Bahrain is an ideal country for applying some of these successful and effective ideas due to its size. The current parliament unfortunately conveys the viewpoint of their parties and societies, while electronic democracy will transmit the views of the

people directly. I believe that the only electronic tool that can be used at the present time is the opinion poll. The margins of democracy are still not as wide as it should be. The ruler still does not tolerate full democracy. The people are not ready to give their honest opinion for the sake of the public interest rather than because of any religious leader's order or any other mandate. Therefore the people are unprepared.

The above comment reflects the enthusiasm for e-democracy and postulates that electronic democracy is inevitable. This is indeed a subject of debate, as in the cases of e-commerce, e-government and the paperless office, as protagonists of these new methods argue that it are imminent and will replace current practices. However, the author is more in agreement with the interviewee's comment that the e-democratic alternative does not replace the existing Parliament, but rather complements it by allowing the views of the people to be directly heard.

The interviewee who holds a PhD in economics argues that Bahrain is an ideal country for applying e-democracy, yet he is sceptical about the extent of implementation of the democratic form of government in Bahrain. He comments that "the margins of democracy are still not as wide as they should be. The ruler is still not tolerant to full democracy. The people are not ready to give their honest opinion for the sake of public interest and not because of any religious leader order or any other mandate.

Therefore the people are unprepared". This relates to the discussion on the values and ideals of democracy where such principles as equality, freedom, liberty are the unalterable foundations of any democracy, be it direct, representative or of a more modern electronic form.

### III. Privacy (State's and Others' Influence) and Secrecy

The system must ensure 'that nobody gets to know who a particular voter has voted for'. The legal provision should be reviewed in the light of e-voting requirements, and the anonymity of voters must be safe-guarded. The issue of identity authentication is fully ensured in traditional voting but it is quite difficult to implement in e-voting, which brings the secrecy of votes into question. According to one of the participants:

"It is the fear of security-related technical problems which in turn adversely affects trust in the secrecy and privacy of the voting data".

It was stated that compared to conventional voting, where the citizen votes freely in the booth without being affected by others, is not possible with e-voting.

"Secrecy is not available with e-voting because you will be with others either at home or the village, which could exert pressure on individuals by the people around them. This is a very important point. Thus, the lack of controls."

The fear that the government can influence the electronic system and manipulate the vote is a major issue that needs to be addressed in any e-Democracy initiative. “Technology doesn’t give assurances that the choices or the vote cannot be changed. It may permit a person to repeat their answer or vote many times, which can affect the results.”

Similarly, some of the interviewers were concerned about hackers manipulating the system.

Issue of privacy were discussed much less than others being investigated. The need for privacy to be protected was stressed, but the deeper implications of privacy with regard to e-democracy were not addressed by the data. The reason for this is that issue of privacy, security and secrecy is deeply linked to the issue of trust that was addressed at the beginning of the interviews.

#### IV. Security (Attacks, Governmental Control, System failure, Audit)

Security concerns were reflected by in many ways including potential threats from hackers, the influence of authority, viruses and other problems. However the participants were aware of the potential measures that can be adopted to counter these threats. “Security problems are always the biggest issue when considering IT based systems” said one focus group participant. It was argued that security fears regarding e-voting weakens it as a choice. There is a belief that any IT system is vulnerable and can be hacked and manipulated. Hackers will attack the system if the proper security measures are not built in. Technology gives no assurances that votes cannot be changed. It may permit a person to repeat their

answer or vote multiple times, raising serious security concerns as expressed by one of the participants.

“e-Voting has significant benefits, but it could become a serious issue if it was linked with an authority’s scheme to manipulate elections.”

It was suggested by most of the interviewees that governments must ensure that measures will be set up to prevent tampering with the votes.

“It will be good if they can ensure that e-voting will be done without interference and guarantees from hackers who could penetrate the system to manipulate the votes to serve their interests.” People are concerned about hackers; however there are many measures to deal with this problem. Even traditional voting has security risks. No system is totally secure.

“There are processes that contain tight security precautionary measures and safeguards. For example: data encryption, not opening programs and kiosks till only the day before the vote, and using smart cards with the possibility of printing a confirmation receipt to be used when need arises for vote recounts appeal, and the possibility of providing backup devices and additional lines in order not to interrupt the process”

The system also must have a mechanism to do a technical audit if required, as suggested by one of the board members of the political society:

“It would be a good idea to have an independent auditing body that consists of members of the Government, the private sector, political

parties and professionals to increase the trust and credibility of the entire process.”

One of the members of the youth NGO also commented along similar lines:

“The Election Committee should be supervised by an audit committee to control and oversee the voting process. It must be an elected committee. People will have trust in the voting process if the committee has been elected by them. They will trust the results of the voting whether it’s concerning minor or major decisions.”

Furthermore, e-polling instead of remote e-voting was suggested as one way of mitigating the security risks:

“A second e-voting process was discussed during the meeting. It will be done through kiosks inside the polling centres, and general polling centres in malls, etc. It is a simple and smooth process with implementation prospects in Bahrain. It has been tested successfully. It is also widely accepted by political and other societies. This process contains tight security precautionary measures and safeguards. For example: data encryption, not opening programs and kiosks till only the day before the vote, and using smart card with the possibility of printing a confirmation receipt to be used when need arises for vote recounts appeal, and the possibility of providing backup devices and additional lines in order not to interrupt the process”.

It is evident from the data collected that security is indeed a concern, ranging from the threat posed by hackers to the potential of government and political parties to influence the outcome of elections. The discussion on security mostly centred on the security of e-voting; the security issues related to other means of e-democracy were not much highlighted.

## V. Public Awareness and Confidence

### a. Marketing, Awareness and e-Learning of Democracy

Special marketing campaigns urging citizens to adopt and use e-democracy must be instigated. Proper measures to educate citizens on what e-democracy is should be prepared and implemented. Governments must first organise public lectures and seminars, and then use web-based learning tools for continuous learning.

Training is very important to make citizens ready to use e-democracy systems. All channels should be used for this purpose. Training and awareness campaigns should aim not only to build knowledge about how to use these systems but also to strengthen trust and build confidence among citizens.

The trainers and lecturers chosen to conduct education, marketing and awareness campaigns should be selected carefully, as people will trust the trainers they know more than those they do not. Selection of trainers from among relatives or from the same village or neighbourhood are all good techniques by which to ensure the effective and efficient delivery of training.

It was suggested that an optional curriculum be included at university level to teach students about the means of electronic democracy by the President of the Youth NGO. This way the government can have a long-term perspective on school and university students with the aim of instilling in them the spirit of democracy.



## b. Cultural Resistance to Adoption of the Technology

All of the participants stated that there is no tension between e-democracy and the unique Bahraini and Islamic culture, as one political activist says:

“No, I don’t think there is anything that you can trace back to Sharia or Islam that would contradict e-democracy. I think it’s a mere technical and political issue. In this part of the world, of course, people would like to shake hands and meet face to face. It has yet to pick up virtual concepts, but this tends to be general to all societies and is not specific to Arabic or Islamic culture, but it is human nature. Something with time we can overcome.”

Some said that the fear of technology is a factor that needs to be considered. Technology will spread on its own if this fear is overcome, as people are now more happy to order goods electronically and engage in e-banking.

On the other hand, one of the participants referred to cultural resistance to change as the problem, rather than resistance to the technology; he suggested that:

“There is a need for the government to raise the level of awareness of citizens in this regard [i.e. cultural resistance] before starting the adoption of e-democracy.”

Therefore, the data did not provide evidence that the concept of e-Democracy is against Arab and Islamic culture and ideology. It rather points to fear of technology

or resistance to change which need to be tack as part of the e-Democracy strategy.

c. User Proficiency, Skill Level and the Simplicity of the Voting Process

It was suggested that the Government should engage in focused educational interventions to increase user proficiency and skill levels above the minimum require for the majority of the people have the ability to use e-democracy systems if they choose to.

d. Lack of Awareness

Government should raise citizens' levels of awareness before adopting e-democracy. Increasing awareness of the Internet is very important for e-democracy. Many citizens, especially older adults, do not know how to use the Internet. Awareness about the use of computers must also be raised, and the standard of living must be increased in order to allow them to buy computers and connect to the Internet for online transactions.

“The biggest challenge is the lack of awareness which must be addressed” said one of the board members from the IT NGO. The same concern was raised by the Vice President of the youth NGO who said: “Although the government has provided [online] booking facilities for government services, few people actually use it, preferring to go to government ministries in person to book appointments, as they are not aware of these online services. Therefore, there is a need to raise awareness.”

In an article, a writer in the media agreed that one of the most important challenges is to make people trust e-voting; they said that there is a need for creating adequate training and awareness programs. He added that establishing training centres may turn out to be expensive and recommended establishing mobile training centres (tents) in primary, intermediate and secondary schools, universities and even in villages and towns, to be used for voting on simple matters. The outcomes of the voting exercise are to be implemented on the ground. Thus young generation will grow up accepting the idea. They will in turn teach their children on e-voting. So lack of awareness is the main challenge.

If free Internet access is provided in schools, universities and other public places, awareness will be automatically raised. This, together with imparting knowledge on how to use other systems such as ATMs and telephone bill payments online will complement an e-democracy-specific awareness. It was also suggested that mobile training centres be instituted to cater for those in remote locations.

The website of government ministries, MPs and Shura Council members must be up-to-date and the general awareness level about these websites must be raised through frequent campaigns.

The development of training modules to train citizens on the use of the system and technicians on the technical aspects are required. The awareness campaigns and training programmes should be tailored to cater to the needs of different educational levels and age groups.

What is apparent from the discussion on awareness is that there is general agreement that there must be consensual efforts to increase awareness; the participants felt that these campaigns can positively contribute to the adoption and implementation of e-democracy.

All of the participants of the focus group who were with the IT NGO held senior IT-related positions. Their level of IT proficiency and understanding of e-Democracy was high compared with all other interviewees. Yet the IT NGO focus group participants underlined the need for building trust and adopting gradual implementation.

The majority was positive upbeat about e-Democracy. No one rejected the idea of enhancing democratic experiences by using technology outright. One member of the political society said he would not trust e-voting in any case and would not vote using electronic means, but this was an exception. All the others supported e-democracy but argued for ensuring the correct measures to circumvent the threats and concerns associated with its implementation.

#### 7.4. Chapter Summary

This chapter discusses the data collection and analysis. It begins with a discussion on how data collection and analysis progressed during the study. It also discusses how the respondents and interview methods were selected. This chapter then presents the research findings with respect to the issues for investigation that were identified as part of the literature review

## 8. Research Synthesis : Answering the Research Questions

This chapter synthesises the overall results of the research on Bahrain e-Democracy and answers the central research question:

What e-democracy strategy, if any, is most suitable for Bahrain?

Based on the strategy formulation framework discussed in the literature review's e-Democracy Vision, a seven point strategy and its associated goals are presented in this chapter, which also discusses the research findings, limitations of the research, issues for further research and the work's contribution to existing knowledge.

### 8.1. Evolving an e-Democracy Vision for Bahrain

As discussed in Chapter 5, a vision within the context of strategy is the desired ideal future state (Joyce, 2000, p.72). Based on the data collected and analysed the researcher is proposing an e-democracy vision for Bahrain.

As discussed in Section 1.1, while introducing the research it was apparent that the country's leadership wants to place Bahrain as a leading international player. In many sectors such as education, health and e-Government, various reform programs are already in place with the clear goals of placing Bahrain at the forefront of development in the region. For example, Bahrain wants to be a "global financial player" in the field of banking and finance (Lidstone, 2007).

The data analysed in this research reinforces the general direction that the country's leaders are taking and shows that almost all stakeholders are optimistic about the concept of e-democracy, advocating the positioning of Bahrain at **'the leading edge' of e-democracy**.

Thus, Bahrain's leadership wants to position the country at the forefront of societal and economic development. The King has set the direction and pace for transforming Bahrain into a forward-looking developed nation. The first of the main strategic initiatives was to adopt democracy in Bahrain. The Prime minister's address to the National Council urging deployment of all electronic means to improve the government prepares the ground for this effort, whether it regards e-Government or e-Democracy. This overall leadership vision is further echoed in the words of a participant in the study "I expect the implementation of e-democracy in Bahrain to be successful, modern and high-class and I am looking forward to it."

Indeed, it is emphasised that the strategy and the e-democracy initiatives must uphold the values and principles of democracy such as equality, freedom and liberty. The democratic evolution should aim to adopt ways and means to move up the democratic continuum (as discussed in Chapter 2) and to become an **"ideal"** democracy. In the long run, moving towards a more direct democracy is indeed part of this evolution and the opportunities provided by contemporary developments in ICT are some of the key driving forces.

Similarly, it is also evident that the stakeholder who participated argued for an inclusive strategy that will address the digital and other divides in the country. "Everyone has equal rights and all are equal before the law" as one of the respondents put it. Equal rights for minorities as well as for women, youth, and children and for different interest groups including the disabled, and senior citizens should therefore be considered.

The whole e-democracy initiative must strengthen the democratic revolution, and at no point should the government machinery or political societies use it for exploitation and sectarian advantages. It must aim "to strengthen the concept of democracy in society and not exploit the process". Therefore, the strategy must enhance the participation of increasing numbers of people who

are less politically active due to lack of awareness, access or interest, making it an **"inclusive democracy"**. This strategic notion is in line with what Riley (2004) has noted, saying that an inquiry as to the basic principles of democracy remains fundamental to further analysis of e-democracy and what it will look like in the 21st century.

Based on this discussion, Bahrain's e-democracy vision can be stated as:

**"To be at the leading edge of implementing e-democracy and to contribute to building an ideal and inclusive democracy for Bahrain"**

According to this vision, Bahrain will spearhead the implementation of e-democracy with an aim of becoming its leading practitioner in the region; while doing so, the country will strive to become a democracy that is just and fair and upholds ideal democratic values. It will provide equal opportunity and freedom for all by adopting modern technology that is trusted and reliable.

However, it must be noted that there are many competing issues that need to be carefully considered as Bahrain implements democracy. There is a danger of heading in the wrong direction. For example inclusiveness with respect to access to technology can be achieved by ignoring such issues as security and privacy. The challenge is to combine these competing demands and striking a balance with a sense of pragmatism. It must be noted that such an approach is true for any kind of democracy as each form has its own limitations and strengths as discussed in Chapter 2.

## 8.2. Bahrain's e-Democracy Strategy

Based on the findings of the research the following strategy is proposed in figure 8.1.

Figure 8.1 : Bahrain e-Democracy Strategy : Vision and aspirations

Vision	E-Democracy Strategy
<p>To be at the leading edge of e-Democracy implementation and thereby contribute to building an ideal inclusive democracy for Bahrain</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Ideal &amp; Inclusive Democracy</li> <li>B. Building Consensus by Consultation</li> <li>C. Start Small and Go Big</li> <li>D. Information – Interaction – Participation – Voting</li> <li>E. High Tech &amp; Soft Touch</li> <li>F. Credible, Trusted, Secure &amp; Transparent e-Democracy</li> <li>G. Learn &amp; Lead the Way</li> </ul>

As is evident from the data, the stakeholders argue for the **enhancement** of existing democracy by way of implementing e-democracy. None of those interviewed argued for a complete replacement of the existing representative form by more direct forms of democracy. As noted in the SWOT analysis in Section 4.8, the relatively small size of the country, its mature ICT infrastructure, its high literacy levels and high telephone and Internet penetration makes it more feasible to implement direct democracy as compared to other countries where infrastructure is underdeveloped. Interestingly, the participants of the study did not argue for a direct democracy model. This is due to the fact that the democracy is in its early stages of development in Bahrain, as it was only in 2001 that the country took the decision to move towards a constitutional democracy. The level of awareness, knowledge and experience of the stakeholders regarding democracy in general and e-democracy in particular is very low.

The new initiative must pave ways for diffusion of power to the grassroots. The government must become more responsive and action from the executive, legislative and judicial wings must be guaranteed along with certain service levels. Measures must be taken for inserting effective feedback and audit loops into the system. e-Democracy systems and technology must be accessible to all. People must have the knowledge and proficiency to use the



system if they choose to do so. The interests of minorities and disabled people must be given special care. This is the argument for an “**ideal and inclusive**” democracy. The strategic goals suggested by the stakeholders and inferred from the data are:

- (a) Improve existing democracy by upholding values of equality, freedom, liberty and participation, deliberation and the rule of law.
- (b) Enhance participation of all stakeholders in democracy.
- (c) Increasingly diffuse power.
- (d) Become a responsive government by implementing decisions taken through e-democratic means.
- (e) Enhance the adoption of technology throughout the country to bridge the digital divide.
- (f) Involve the younger generation.
- (g) Provide free Internet access to all.

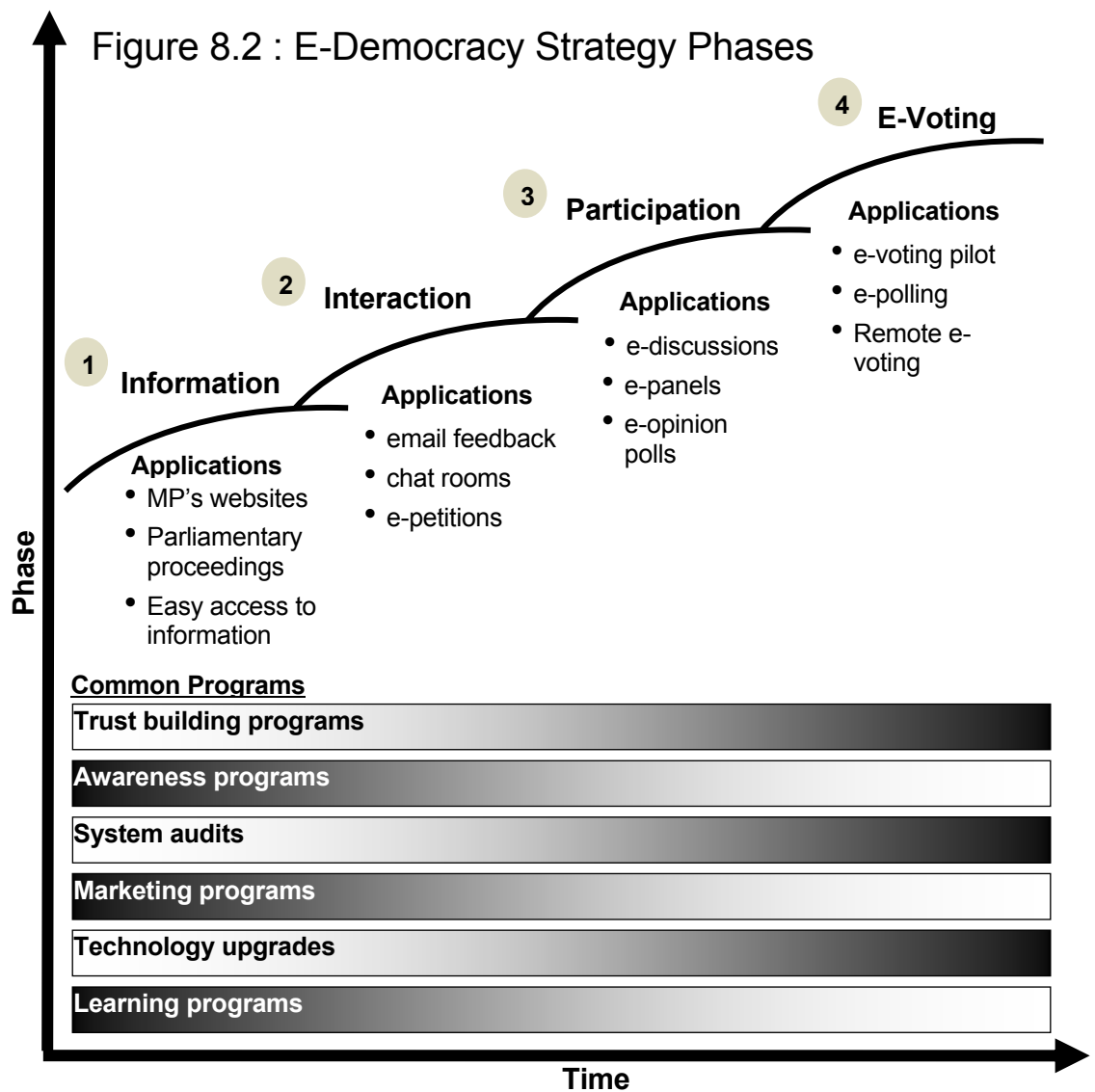
e-Democracy must also contribute to the overall adoption of technology in the country with the objective of addressing the issue of the digital divide and provision of access to technology. Otherwise the very implementation of e-democracy may bring such democratic fundamentals as equality into question.

It is emphasised that there is a need for engaging in continuous discussions with all stakeholders in order to create the needed political will. One of the themes that emerged was that the implementation of e-democracy should adopt a policy of consultation and a consensus-building approach. Opinion polls and discussion forums on non-sensitive matters can initiate the process of building trust and consensus, and therefore a strategy of “**building consensus by consultation**” is advocated. The goals are:

- (a) to adopt and implement a policy of consensus and consultation.
- (b) to create the needed political will for e-democracy through consultation.

e-Democracy in Bahrain will adopt a “**Start Small and Go Big**” strategy as advocated by the majority of the participants in this study. A gradual and phased implementation where non-controversial issues are tackled first before moving on to the wider-scale implementation is recommended. It can be seen that the strategy should adopt an “**information–interaction–participation–voting**” sequence. Implementing pilot programs in non-controversial issues such as opinion building on municipal related services can be the starting point. Similarly, e-democracy systems can be tested first in organisations like the youth parliament before embarking on full scale implementations.

Enhancing existing e-channels such as websites and information portals in order to provide information on political actions and plans can create buy-in from the public. More interactive and participatory e-democracy services can be gradually implemented. e-Voting should be the last service to be implemented. The gradual implementation approach is depicted in the following figure:



e-Democracy needs foundations that are “**credible, trusted, transparent and secure**”. These needs are not mere choices but strategic compulsions. The issue of credibility and trust must be given priority as many factors have a either direct or indirect impact on the issues of trust and credibility in an e-Democracy system. Integrity, secrecy and anonymity of voting were highlighted by almost all participants in the study. There must be concerted programs to build justified trust and transparency into the system; this must precede actual implementation and must run throughout all phases, as shown in Figure 8.2 above. These trust-building programs must be maintained

throughout the implementation cycle. Where necessary the audit capability – both technical and business - must be built into the system in line with international standards. Voter-verifiable auditing as discussed Section 4.3 is a definite step towards building trust and confidence.

As discussed in Section 4.3, concern over the loss of trust is an issue that must be addressed. The fact that the stakeholders overwhelmingly supported the taking of all possible measures to improve trust in Bahrain confirms the importance of trust in e-democracy. The author agrees with Thomas (2007) that the issue of trust must be tackled as a “trust deficit” rather than a “trust crisis”.

In a democracy like Bahrain which is in the early stages of evolution from a monarchy, this deficit is very apparent. There is overwhelming evidence from the data that this is one of the most important concerns that need to be addressed. This also resonates with what is argued by Thomas (2007).

Traditional, informal relationships of trust have been found wanting. They are being replaced by an ever expanding web of rules, procedures, and bodies with oversight over such matters, all of which are intended to prevent incidents of wrongdoing, inefficiencies, performance failures and a perceived lack of accountability and to deal with these should they occur.

Bahrain’s Government has been embarking on building accountability and transparency through system approaches. Reorganisation of some government organizations such as Ministry of Oil and setting up of Tender Board are examples of the application of this approach. However the researcher feels that the Government must make further efforts to reinforce informal mechanisms in order to begin addressing the trust deficit. Both mechanisms, formal and informal, must complement each other.

The importance of ensuring security, privacy and official transparency was stressed by most participants. The strategy must therefore be to adopt ways and means of fulfilling these requirements without compromising current democratic practices. The source code for the e-democracy system must be open in order for inspection to ensure transparency.

In order to make it a credible, trusted, transparent and secure e-democracy, concerted efforts and programs must be planned from the beginning and must be continued throughout the implementation cycle. There are technical and human aspects concerning creditability, trust, transparency and security. For example, technically there are means, mechanisms and measures that can safeguard the security of systems, but the public's perception of security also needs to be established.

Similarly, it is important not to ignore the human, social and cultural element of democracy, as people enjoy face to face interaction for political purposes. The strategy must implement **hi-tech** solutions while offering the **soft-touch** that provides for face to face meetings and for social and political gatherings. When implementing technology solutions, it must adopt international standards and best practice.

The data indicates that strategy must also adopt marketing, awareness and training programs. It is through imparting effective **learning** of new technology and spreading awareness of e-Democracy at all levels that Bahrain can attain a **leading** position with respect to e-democracy. However the researcher agrees with Ward, et al. (2005), who assert that publicising and marketing online initiatives might be a start but is not sufficient on its own. There is a need for concerted action across the board and a change in culture in terms of who the representatives engage with and the style and the frequency of communications (Ward, Gibson et al. 2005).

The overall strategy and the major goals identified are summarised in Figure 8.3 :

Figure 8.3 : Bahrain e-Democracy Vision, Strategy and Goals

Vision	STRATEGY	GOALS
To be at the leading edge of implementing e-democracy and to contribute to building an ideal and inclusive democracy for Bahrain	S1: Ideal and inclusive Democracy	1.1 Improve democracy by upholding democratic values 1.2 Enhance participation of all stakeholders 1.3 Attain more diffusion power 1.4 Become a responsive government 1.5 Reduce the digital divide 1.6 Involve the younger generation 1.7 Free Internet access to all
	S2; Building Consensus by Consultation	2.1 Adopt a policy of consensus and consultation 2.2 Create the needed political will
	S3: Start Small and Go Big	3.1 Implement pilot programs in non-sensitive issues 3.2 Implement the system in Bahrain Youth Parliament 3.3 Analyse cost and benefit of implementation
	S4: Information-Interaction-Participation-Voting	4.1 Improve the efficiency of existing web sites & services 4.2 Adopt a multi phase staged implementation
	S5: hi-tech & soft-touch	5.1 Implement state of the art e-democracy technology 5.2 Incorporate human, social and cultural elements 5.3 Standard and best practice based e-democracy
	S6: Credible, Trusted, Secure & Transparent e-democracy	6.1 Enhance trust & transparency through focused programs 6.2 Ensure secrecy, integrity and anonymity of votes 6.3 Auditable e-democracy
	S7: Learn & Lead the Way	7.1 Increase the level of awareness, increase basic & IT literacy

It must be noted that the answer to the question is based on the data collected and analysed as part of this research, and is therefore not exhaustive. The strategy is not an approved document and would need to be considered by the relevant stakeholders for validation and approval. The strategy suggests a policy of consultation and consensus building for this process. It will be presented to the country's leadership at the conclusion of the research, and the researcher will have an opportunity to pursue the case, obtain approval and push for implementation. This is outside the scope of the present research. The researcher is currently participating in the Bahrain Vision 2030 preparation, initiated by the country's leadership, and will have an opportunity to present the e-democracy vision and strategy in one of the working groups.

### 8.3. Adapting an e-Democracy Model

Based on the inferences from the data collected and key lessons learned from the literature review the researcher has adapted an e-Democracy model for Bahrain. It is based on the Managerial – Consultative – Participatory Models discussed by Chadwick and May (2003). This model was selected as conceptual basis for this study after reviewing different models found in the literature (See section 4.2.2 Views and Models of e-Democracy). The adapted model is presented in Table 8.1 below.

The model, while retaining the three stages of interaction, adds e-Voting as separate stage. The evidence gathered for the case strongly suggests that e-Voting must be taken with utmost sensitivity and as separate agenda in the e-Democracy basket. The model revolves around six dimensions / questions as originally proposed by Chadwick and May (2003). These dimensions include what role is the role of the government, who are the principal actors and interests, how the information flows, what are the principal mechanisms for interaction between government and citizens, what attention is paid to the

ability of citizens to interact electronically and what is the defining logic of each stage of interaction in the model. The adapted model also adds one more dimension that is ‘the aspect of democracy promoted’ [based on Trechsel (2006), see section 4.4]

The author takes the position and agrees with Chadwick and May (2003) that these stages are neither discrete nor mutually exclusive. They can coexist and can overlap. For example when the government is busy improving the delivery of online services according to the managerial model it can also initiate e-voting.

Table 8.1: e-Democracy Model for Bahrain (Adapted from Chadwick and May (2003))

	Information	Interaction	Participation	e-Voting
Role of Government	Regulatory. Responds to the needs of new economy. Emphasises the faster and more efficient delivery of government services	Regulatory. Responds to the needs of social and political interests.	Protector of free speech and rights of expression, regulator of infrastructure, Civil society mediated electronically	Ensure integrity of voting processes without undermining the democratic principles of equality, liberty and freedom. Ensure state or any unscrupulous elements do not ‘identify individual voting patterns’ and access any information on voting. Also ensure measures to minimise the threats concerning security, privacy and secrecy. Protect interest of minority, disabled and people who do not have access to technology.



	Information	Interaction	Participation	e-Voting
Principal actors and interests	Government and its customers – citizens, business and social organisations	Government and its customers – citizens, business, social organisations and political interest groups	Social and political interest groups spontaneously interacting in cyberspace, Groups use information gleaned from deliberation to influence government	Social and political interest groups, Technology and Legal experts, e-Voting market players
Flow of information	Mainly uni-linear from Government to its customers or its customers to Government. Main emphasis is to improve flow information within government	Uni-linear from Government to citizens and citizens to Government.	Discursive and complex (citizens to citizens, citizens to government, government to citizens)	Government to Citizens and Citizens to Government along with 1 to n between political societies and citizens
Principal mechanism for interaction	Provisioning maximum number of government services online with a concerted strategy and action plan	Opinion polls, referendums and electronic town meetings on issues that are not politically sensitive	Autonomous pluralist mechanisms such as discussion lists, Usenet, peer-to-peer technologies, time and distance become compressed, facilitating increased political participation and cyber civil society.	Electronic Machine Voting or e-Polling and Electronic Distance voting or remote voting.

	Information	Interaction	Participation	e-Voting
Usage issues	Minimal state regulation. marketing, education and awareness program sponsored by the Government.	Minimal state regulation. marketing, education and awareness program sponsored by the Government as well as initiated by the interest groups.	Universal access and wide spread usage as a pre-requisite	Easily accessible voting booths. Special provisions for disabled and groups who do not have access to technology.
Defining logic	Service delivery	Policy presentation and consultation using electronic means. Building trust by focusing on non-sensitive issues,	Deliberation, participation and enhanced democracy	Easy and convenient voting process that enhances political participation
Aspects of De-mocracy Promoted	Increasing Transparency	Increasing Deliberation	Increasing Participation Increasing Deliberation	Increasing Participation

In the adapted model the ‘managerial model’ has similarities to that proposed by Chadwick and May, but modified to reflect the insights from the data. ICTs are largely seen as a quantitative improvement on previous technologies and targeting efficiency gains and reduction of costs for delivering services. As discussed in Chapter 4 the model aims to remove the state bureaucracies, which is a major factor that leads to identified citizen disquiet. A major thrust in this model is exchange of information and provision of electronic government services.

However, the main difference with respect to Bahrain is that the model does not concede to the central presumption of the managerial model that change is incremental. In the Bahrain context the initiative to transform the Government is not an incremental phenomenon. It is achieved through a series of concerted reform initiatives such as implementation of e-Government strategy, Labour Market Reform, Educational Reform etc. as briefly mentioned in Chapter 1 of this thesis (also see section 5.3.4 on Bahrain e-Government Program).

In the Consultative which is named as 'interaction model', the role of government is to respond to the needs of social and political interests. The model advocates opinion polls, referendums and electronic town meetings etc., but only on issues that are not politically sensitive. e-Voting is not included in this model due to issues of sensitivity, trust and transparency as discussed in Chapter 7 and Chapter 8.

This model also proposes that social and political interest groups take a leading role in spreading awareness, marketing and education campaigns. The model proposes to achieve better policy presentation and consultation using electronic means. It also builds credibility, trust and transparency in e-Democracy by avoiding any attempt to introduce sensitive issues for electronic political discourse and e-voting.

The participative model brings about an enhanced and transformed democracy by facilitating an active cyber civil society. In addition to many other tools it also has discussion lists, Usenet, peer-to-peer technologies etc that increases the participation and deliberation. The 'e-Voting stage' is added as a separate model and it must be introduced only at a time where the cyber civil society fully trusts, accepts and supports the concepts and appropriateness of e-Voting.

#### 8.4. Discussion on the Research Findings

This thesis has attempted to answer the question “What e-democracy strategy, if any, is most suitable for Bahrain?”. Based on a qualitative case study, Bahraini e-democracy is synthesised and presented in the thesis.

The issues gleaned from the literature were further investigated using the empirical data. The results confirm that most of the issues found in the existing literature are also relevant to the case investigated, but the study also reveal some further issues specific to the current case such as need to consider the human, social and cultural aspects of democracy.

The results pose a broader question: in global investigations of e-democracy in and around the world, how will different ethnic groups and minorities approach e-democracy and place their trust in it? Will the minority and majority trust e-Democracy in the same way? Will educated and ICT literate people tend to trust the system more as compared to uneducated and ICT-illiterate people? These are questions that need to be, or that will be, answered as the theory and practice of e-democracy evolve in tandem.

The Voice of the Customer survey discussed in Section 4.7, that was conducted by the Government, concluded that over 55 per cent of the sample favoured the e-voting option. However the results of this study reveal that acceptance of e-voting is subject to many conditions; most stakeholders preferred e-voting to be introduced at a much later phase of the implementation cycle. The results also disprove the notion, held by the government of Bahrain and used as an initial premise by the present researcher, that e-voting is a more plausible form of e-democracy than any other.

As discussed in Section 4.7, the perceived inconvenience and the issues of security and trust were cited as reasons for not favouring e-voting in customer surveys. The results of this study confirm that the perceived inconvenience is

not a cause for this disapproval, but reiterates that the issues of trust and security are fundamental to e-voting and the implementation of e-democracy.

The results also confirm the need to make the technology accessible to everyone and indicate the necessity of implementing e-democracy using multiple channels. Thus the various feasible “technical options” (Fairweather and Rogerson 2002) must be explored, not only for e-voting but for the implementation of e-democracy in general.

The study also confirms that the argument in the literature by Coleman et al (2000) that the wider public wants not only to listen to their elected representatives but also to be listened to. The Parliament, in order to stand at the centre of an inclusive democracy, must devise ways of hearing from the broadest possible range of voices representing the wider electorate (Coleman et al, 2000). Most of the respondents expressed the need to be listened to. The proposed strategy calls for an inclusive e-Democracy.

The research findings establish a link with the literature review conducted for this study. For example, most of the e-democracy models discussed in Chapter 4 involve a phased implementation starting from a free flow of information followed by two way interaction and then active participation using electronic channels. Similarly, the formulation of an e-democracy policy through e-consultation was recommended as an option. This is to some degree similar to the UK experience, as related in the consultation paper titled “In the Service of Democracy – a Consultation Paper on a Policy for Electronic Democracy” discussed in Chapter 4. The finding also leads to the conclusion that e-democracy is not simply a technical issue but touches on the very fundamentals of democracy, its values and its ideals. If issues such as equality of access, trust, security, privacy and transparency are not appropriately handled, the very attempt to enhance and transform democracy may make the practice even more undemocratic than it is practiced today.

### 8.5. Limitations of the Research

Like any research study this one also has limitations. First and foremost, the results of the study are indicative and not exhaustive and conclusive. The key findings can be further tested on a larger scale as part of the strategy implementation or as part of large scale applied quantitative research project.

The initial list of issues was gathered as a result of the literature review on the subject using the researcher's skills, knowledge and experience gathered while working as a civil servant at policy and strategic level. Therefore the list of issues investigated can not be considered as exhaustive and comprehensive. This is another of this study's limitations. In the wider context of social research it is usually difficult to conduct a completely comprehensive study within the scope of the current research, however, measures were taken to improve the list of issues which was, for example, revised after the pilot case study and during data collection and analysis.

While translating the interview data from Arabic into English, one issue encountered by the researcher was that the Arabic words for trust and confidence were the same. The researcher had to find a way to delineate them in Arabic and to contextualise the comments correctly.

### 8.6. Issues for Further Research

The results of the study can be tested using quantitative methods to obtain a larger and more statistically proportionate sample. This can be done as part of the consultation process recommended in the strategy.

The need for building trust is an important issue. However, developing, implementing and evaluating trust-building programs in a Bahrain-specific context is a challenge. Further research in this area is suggested.

Similarly, the question of how ethnic minority and special interest groups will approach e-democracy and learn to trust it is an issue that will have wider implications for e-democracy implementations around the world.

#### 8.7. Contribution to Knowledge

This research contributes to the country-specific knowledge regarding the application of ICT to the facilitation, enhancement and transformation of Bahraini democracy, which is in its early stages of evolution since it was introduced in 2001. This thesis is the outcome of a systematic academic study using the case study research method. Various techniques and tests to ensure the validity of the research were built into the research design. No study pertaining to regional implementation of e-democracy exists. This study helps fill this gap. It also contributes further to the development of democracy in other GCC countries that are following suit in order to transform from more monarchical forms of government into democracy. As discussed in Chapter 3, similarities in these countries' political, demographic, economic and social systems make their paths towards reforms comparable, though not identical. Bahrain, Oman, and Qatar have already taken some visible steps towards reforming their political structures and have joined Kuwait in adopting constitutional and parliamentary systems (Khalaf and Luciani 2006). Saudi Arabia and the UAE have also announced steps toward increasing public participation. Thus, the similarity in the socio-political situation is a basis from which to argue that the result of this e-democracy strategy research can be utilised in the overall GCC context, with suitable further work being necessary for application to each particular jurisdiction.

Finally, the research also contributes to supplying the gap in bottom up, qualitative studies incorporating stakeholder perspectives in e-Democracy as indicated by Ward et al (2005) and Witschge (2004) as discussed in section 4.2.1.

## 8.8. Conclusion

The political debate that surrounded the attempt to implement e-voting in the last elections in 2006 has ended, as this implementation was cancelled by the Government and the elections were conducted without it. The e-voting debate will gather momentum as Bahrain approaches its next elections in 2010. The researcher argues that it is important to understand e-democracy and implement it in Bahrain in a systematic way without prejudicing the social, political and cultural sensitivities of the region. This is in line with the Government's efforts to position Bahrain as one of the leading countries in the world with the Government's commitment that it will "work over the next four years to prepare society – political societies in particular – and civil society to keep abreast of developments in this field [e-voting] in other countries, hoping that e-Voting will be supported and agreed by all stakeholders".

Based on the results of the study, the author therefore rejects the pessimistic view of e-democracy, which maintains that the application of ICT to enhance or transform the theory and practice of democracy is something of a meaningless debate than a reality. Realising the dream of a perfected Athenian-style direct democracy may be a distant reality, yet countries like Bahrain can instigate a staged implementation, which is quite possible and indeed feasible today. The researcher proposes an approach whereby the policy and decision makers explore the possibilities and opportunities of ICT to enhance, revitalise and transform democracy and to adopt country-specific strategies and policies after consulting with stakeholders.

The results of the research fundamentally enhances the knowledge of e-democracy in the Bahraini context and sets the basis for further discussion of e-voting and e-democracy with a view to building an ideal and inclusive democracy for Bahrain. The vision is clear, although it needs to be ratified through stakeholder consultation. This research started amidst the confusion and heated discussion surrounding the e-voting debate in Bahrain; this has now provided a theoretical basis on which programs and projects can be



planned and implemented before the debate starts again as the 2010 elections draw closer.

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Appendix 1 : Case Study Protocol

Case Study Guide & Protocol  
for

The Research

on

**“ELECTRONIC DEMOCRACY STRATEGY FOR BAHRAIN”**

by

Mohammed A. Al Amer  
alamerm@yahoo.com

Faculty of Computing Science and Engineering

De Montfort University

Leicester, England

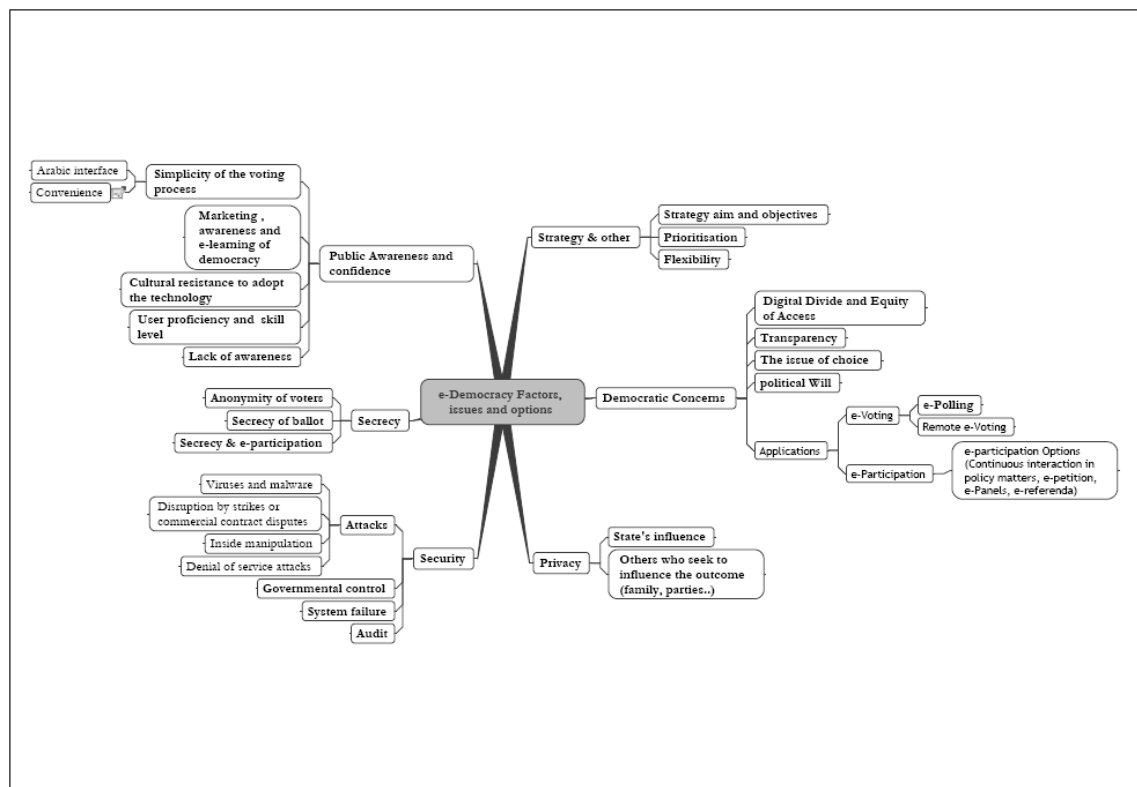
September 2006



SQ4 What specific forms of e-democracy applications are particularly relevant and achievable in Bahrain? For example e-Voting, e-referendum, online opinion polls, e-Consultation etc.

SQ5 What constraints must be overcome and what conditions must be met in order for e-democracy to be successful and benefit all people in Bahrain?

Prior to this the researcher has conducted a literature review to gain insight to the theory and practice of electronic democracy elsewhere in the world. The study reveals that ICT can not only foster the existing representative form of government by means of various tools such as e-Voting but also pave ways for transforming democracy to a more direct democracy where every citizen has an involvement in the way the affairs of the state is conducted. However the promise of e-Democracy also comes with some challenges such as security concerns (privacy, censorship, transparency etc) as well as social and cultural issues (digital divide, resistance to the adoption of technology etc). The research aims to investigate the potential of e-Democracy for Bahrain by understanding the country specific challenges and exploring ways to overcome these challenges. The following Diagram is a summary of the points for investigation:



The data collection will focus on the above-mentioned points. A Human Resource Ethical clearance form has been prepared to adhere to the research ethics in line with the advice given by the Supervisor.

## FIELD PROCEDURES

### FP1: Gaining access to organizations and interviewee

Organisation	Interviewee	Method
Government	H.H Deputy Prime Minister and the Chairman of the Supreme Committee for Information and Communication Technology	Formal letter requesting appointment and follow up call to his executive office
Government	H.E Minister of Cabinet Affairs	Take appointment thorough Minister's office
Government	Director of Election & Referendum	Personal call to the Director
Government	Director General of IT & Program Manager of e-Voting	Personal call to the Director
Government	Director of Statistics	Personal call to the Director
Political Parties	To be Decided	Formal letter requesting appointment
Media	Editors of Akhbar Al Khaleej, Alayam, Alwasat, GDN and	Formal letter requesting appointment

## Bahrain Tribune

Bahrain Information technology Society (BITS)	Board of Directors	Personal Call to the Present of BITS
Bahrain Internet Society (BIS)	Board of Directors	Personal Call to the Present of BIS
Bahrain Youth Parliament	To be Decided	Formal letter seeking appointment

### FP2: Resources

Resource	Purpose
Copy of the Protocol	Systematically guide the data collection
Audio Recorder	To tape the interview and to keep a chain of evidence
Note taking forms	To systematically capture key points that may help for data reduction during the transcription of audio file
Case Study Brief print out	To educate the interviewee on the objective, back ground of the study etc
Laptop and projector	To provide briefing on the subject if necessary



No	Case Study Questions	Issues For Investigation	Research Question Ref.
<b>STRATEGY &amp; GENERAL</b>			
1	How do you feel about the political changes in the country?	General	
2	What is your vision for an ideal political life?	Vision	SQ2
3	How active are you with respect to political involvement?	Political Involvement	
4	Out of the changes that is taking place what matters the most?	Priority of services	SQ4
<b>DEMOCRATIC CONCERNS</b>			
1	How would you like to contact Government ministers, MPs and other elected representatives?	Continuous interaction with government in policy matters	SQ2,SQ4
3	What do you think about the role of e-Participation & e-Voting in improving the democratic process and its feasibility in Bahrain?	e-Participation General Attitude & Awareness	SQ4,SQ3
4	e-Polling and remote e-voting? How do you feel about remote e-voting? Is it practical in Bahrain	e-Voting General Attitude & Awareness	SQ3
4	What policy and political issues would best be the subject of e-participation?	e-Participation General Attitude & Awareness	SQ3,SQ4

No	Case Study Questions	Issues For Investigation	Research Question Ref.
6	Are there any other e-democracy initiatives the Government should be developing to enhance Bahrain Democracy?	e-participation options	SQ2,SQ3 ,SQ4
7	Digital Divide is the gap between the have and have not in ICT. Do you think this will be a constraint in implementing e-Democracy in Bahrain? If yes what are the measures that the government can take to reduce the gap?	Digital Divide / e-Democracy Challenges	SQ3,SQ5
8	Should there be a choice to use e-Democracy and use tradition modes of participation?	Choice	SQ2,SQ4
<b>SECURITY, PRIVACY &amp; SECRECY</b>			
1	Do you think that as citizens we can rely on an e-Democracy system?	System reliability	SQ3,SQ5
2	What are your concerns about an e-Democracy system? (Note response on security, secrecy, privacy etc? prompting if necessary, with 'do you have any more concerns?' - perhaps repeated - until no more mentioned spontaneously, then prompting for any of the three that haven't been mentioned - e.g. 'what about privacy')	Security, secrecy, Privacy	SQ3,SQ5
3	What is your opinion on using a government-run site to initiate policy discussions?	Transparency other security issues	SQ3,SQ4 ,SQ5

No	Case Study Questions	Issues For Investigation	Research Question Ref.
4	What is your opinion on having a standard for e-Voting system?	Security, secrecy, reliability, anonymity of voters	SQ3,SQ5
5	How comfortable are you with secrecy of ballot when it comes to e-Voting?	Security, secrecy, reliability, anonymity of voters	SQ3,SQ5
<b>PUBLIC AWARENESS AND ATTITUDE</b>			
1	How is your computer skill? Are you a graduate?	User proficiency & skill level	SQ3,SQ5
2	In your opinion what are the advantages of e-Democracy?	Convenience	
3	What is your opinion on encouraging people to participate in e-democracy?	Encourage people to participate	SQ3,SQ4
4	How can we implement programs to encourage people participation in e-Democracy?	Encourage people to participate	SQ3,SQ4
5	Describe your e-voting experience during National Charter Referendum	e-Voting General Attitude & Awareness	SQ3
6	How conformable are you with the concept of e-Voting?	e-Voting General Attitude & Awareness	SQ3,SQ5

No	Case Study Questions	Issues For Investigation	Research Question Ref.
7	Do you think that e-Democracy is in tension with the unique Bahraini and Arab culture? If yes, how can we tackle cultural resistance?	Cultural Resistance	SQ3,SQ5
8	Given a choice, Would you participate in government's policy consultation via the Internet?	Cultural Resistance, General Attitude	SQ3,SQ5
9	Is e-Democracy training important for adapting the e-Democracy? How can this be provided by online or offline mode?	e-Learning	SQ2,SQ3 ,SQ4

## A GUIDE FOR CASE STUDY REPORT

The audience of Bahrain e-Democracy Strategy case study is the dissertation committee. Therefore, the case study will be reported in the form of the Thesis. The report will make use of linear analytic structure suggested by Yin (2003). The table of content for the proposed thesis is drawn. Section 1 of the thesis will introduce the research objectives and the background to the study. Section 2 will present a review of the literature on the subject. Section 3 will discuss the selection of the research methodology and justifications for choosing the method. Section 4 & 5 of the Thesis will describe the empirical aspects of the case study report will present the findings. The researcher will define forms & matrices for displaying & reducing data after the case study protocol is finalised.

The outcome of the study wherein a strategy for Bahrain is described will be written with a view of having a secondary audience of non-specialists. This may include decision makers, government officials, media, politicians and general public.

### **GUIDE FOR CONDUCTING FOCUS GROUPS**

(The material for preparing this guide is drawn from the article Written by Carter McNamara (1999) titled Basics of Conducting Focus Groups)

#### **SECTION 1**

This guide is prepared to assist the data collection process for the Research on e-Democracy Strategy for Bahrain

##### **A. Preparing for Session**

1. Identify the major objective of the meeting.

Refer to the section titled 'Case Study Overview' in the Case Study Guide & Protocol Document.

2. Carefully develop five to six questions (see Section 2 below).

Refer to Section 2 of this Document

##### **B. Planning the Session**

1. Scheduling - Plan meetings to be 1 to 1.5 hours long.
2. Setting - Hold sessions in a conference room, or other setting with adequate airflow and lighting. Configure chairs so that all members can see each other.
3. Ground Rules - It is critical that all members participate as much as possible, yet the session move along while generating useful information. Because the session is often a one-time occurrence, it is useful to have a few, short ground rules that sustain participation, yet do so with focus. Consider the following three ground rules: a) keep focused, b) maintain momentum and c) get closure on questions.
4. Agenda - Consider the following agenda: welcome, review of agenda,

review of goal of the meeting, review of ground rules, introductions, questions and answers, wrap up.

5. Membership - Focus groups are usually conducted with 6-10 members who have some similar nature, e.g., similar age group, status in a program, etc. Select members who are likely to be participative and reflective.

6. Plan to record the session with either an audio or a video recorder.

### **C. Facilitating the Session**

1. Major goal of facilitation is collecting useful information to meet goal of meeting.

2. Introduce yourself and the co-facilitator, if used.

3. Explain the means to record the session.

4. Carry out the agenda

5. Carefully word each question before that question is addressed by the group. Allow the group a few minutes for each member to carefully record their answers. Then, facilitate discussion around the answers to each question, one at a time.

6. After each question is answered, carefully reflect back a summary of what you heard.

7. Ensure even participation. If one or two people are dominating the meeting, then call on others. Consider using a round- table approach, including going in one direction around the table, giving each person a minute to answer the question. If the domination persists, note it to the group and ask for ideas about how the participation can be increased.

8. Closing the session - Thank them for coming, and adjourn the meeting.

### **D. Immediately After Session**

1. Verify if the tape recorder, if used, worked throughout the session.

2. Make any notes on your written notes.

3. Write down any observations made during the session. For example, where did the session occur and when, what was the nature of participation in the group? Were there any surprises during the session?

## **SECTION 2**

### Questions for Focus Groups

1. What is your opinion on implementing e-Democracy in Bahrain?
2. What specific forms of e-democracy applications are particularly relevant and achievable in Bahrain? For example e-Voting, e-referendum, online opinion polls, e-Consultation etc.
3. If we implement e-Democracy in Bahrain what are the challenges that we may face:
  - a. General
  - b. Democratic Challenges
  - c. Security, Secrecy and Privacy
4. What measures that the Government must take to implement e-Democracy and to realise its benefits for the citizens?
5. What should be the priorities?
  - a. E-Voting
  - b. E-participation



Appendix 3 : Data Display Matrix

No	Coding Category	Code	Coded Data	Patterns & Inferences	Research Question & Sub question reference
1	General	Benefits			
1	General	Flexibility			
1	General	Legal			
1	General	Prioritisation			
1	General	Strategy: Aim and Objectives			
1	General	Trust			
2	Democratic Concerns	Applications: E-Voting			SQ4
2	Democratic Concerns	Choice			SQ2

No	Coding Category	Code	Coded Data	Patterns & Inferences	Research Question & Sub question reference
2	Democratic Concerns	Digital Divide and Equity of Access			
2	Democratic Concerns	Political will			
2	Democratic Concerns	Transparency			
3	Privacy	Other's influence			
3	Privacy	States' Influence			
4	Security	Audit			
4	Security	Governmental control			
4	Security	System Failure			
5	Secrecy	Anonymity of voters			

No	Coding Category	Code	Coded Data	Patterns & Inferences	Research Question & Sub question reference
5	Secrecy	Secrecy and e-Participation			
5	Secrecy	Secrecy of Ballot			
5	Security	Attacks			
6	Public Awareness & Confidence	Cultural resistance to adopt technology			
6	Public Awareness and confidence	Lack of awareness			
6	Public Awareness and Confidence	Marketing Awareness and E-learning			
6	Public awareness and Confidence	Simplicity of voting process			
6	Public awareness and Confidence	User proficiency and Skill level			

No	Coding Category	Code	Coded Data	Patterns & Inferences	Research Question & Sub question reference
7	SWOT	Opportunities			
7	SWOT	Strengths			
7	SWOT	Threats			
7	SWOT	Weaknesses			

## Appendix 4 : Sources of Data

### A. List of Interviews

No.	Data Reference ID	Interviewee	Focus Group / Interview	Stakeholder Category
1.	DR1	President	FG1	IT NGO
2.	DR2	Vice President	FG1	IT NGO
3.	DR3	Board Member	FG1	IT NGO
4.	DR4	Member	FG1	IT NGO
5.	DR5	Member	FG1	IT NGO
6.	DR6	President	FG2	Political Society
7.	DR7	Board Member	FG2	Political Society
8.	DR8	Board Member	FG2	Political Society
9.	DR9	Board Member	FG2	Political Society
10.	DR10	Vice President	FG2	Political Society
11.	DR11	Board Member	FG2	Political Society
12.	DR12	Board Member	FG2	Political Society
13.	DR13	Board Member	FG2	Political Society
14.	DR14	President	FG3	Youth

No.	Data Reference ID	Interviewee	Focus Group / Interview	Stakeholder Category
15.	DR15	Member	FG3	Youth
16.	DR16	Member	FG3	Youth
17.	DR17	Board Member	FG3	Youth
18.	DR18	Member	FG3	Youth
19.	DR19	Vice President	FG3	Youth
20.	DR20	Board Member	FG3	Youth
21.	DR21	Journalist	Interviewee1	Media
22.	DR22	Government Official	Interviewee2	Government Organisation
23.	DR23	Economist	Interviewee3	Citizen
24.	DR24	IT Specialist	Interviewee4	Citizen
25.	DR25	University	Interviewee5	Citizen
26.	DR26	Civil Servant	Interviewee6	Citizen

## B. List of Documents and Articles

No.	Data Reference ID	Document / Article Name	Organisation / Publisher	Issue No.	Issue Date	Remarks
1.	DR27	Al Wefaq : demanding partnership in managing election process	Al waqat	166	060805	Al waqat 060805 - Al Wefaq - demanding partnership in managing election process.doc
2.	DR28	After meeting with AIAssalah.. The Director of information technology:	AIYam		060824	AIYam060824 AIAssala.doc
3.	DR29	Director of elections to AIYam: A committee of judges to prepare the involvement of civil society committee	AIYam		060928	AIYam060928 Muneera evoting.doc
4.	DR30	election and referendum Directorate: 9 out of the 17 societies agreed to the e-voting	AIWaqat		060818	AIWaqat060818 - 9 out of 17 societies agreed to the e-voting.doc

No.	Data Reference ID	Document / Article Name	Organisation / Publisher	Issue No.	Issue Date	Remarks
5.	DR31	The government and the opposition differ on the issue of ambiguity and individual's ability to control his vote through the e-voting system	AlWaqf	187	060826	AlWaqf060826 e-voting Govt and opposition differ.doc
6.	DR32	Transparency adopts a proposal to combine traditional and electronic voting in elections	AlWaqf	159	060729	AlWaqf 060729 Transparency adopts a proposal to combine traditional and electronic voting in elections.doc
7.	DR33	Suspecting that there was a public survey in the first place  Abul: The survey has requirements, where is the requirements?	AlWaqf	161	060731	AlWaqf 060731 - Abul - The survey has requirements.doc
8.	DR34	Al Wefaq : Vote Counting on Electronic is Unscientific	AlWaqf	168	060807	AlWaqf 060807 - Al Wefaq b-Vote Counting on Electronic is Unscientific.doc



No.	Data Reference ID	Document / Article Name	Organisation / Publisher	Issue No.	Issue Date	Remarks
9.	DR35	Warning of Executing Officials in CIO: Elections is not a place for experimentation.. No Law on applying e-voting	AlWaqf	170	060809	AlWaqf 060809 Abul Elections is not a place for experimentation.doc
10.	DR36	At a meeting held yesterday evening,  A dialogue for political societies entitled "Why electronic voting?"	AlWasat		060808	AlWasat060808 Discussion group for political societies on e-voting.doc
11.	DR37	Abul stressed that "the Central Organ" lacks pushing candidates to the elections AlMarzuq : no secrets in "electronic voting"	AlWasat	1448 p1	060824	AlWasat060824 P01 Why e-voting AlMarzooq.doc

No.	Data Reference ID	Document / Article Name	Organisation / Publisher	Issue No.	Issue Date	Remarks
12.	DR38	Abul stresses that "CIO" is non-transparent and can not be trusted	AlWasat	1448 p9	060824	AlWasat060824 P09 Why e-voting. Abul.doc
13.	DR39	a legal expert: It's illegal to conduct e-voting in Bahrain "Informatics Organisation".. What do you intend to do?	AlWasat		060819	AlWasat 060819 CIO what do you intend to do.doc
14.	DR40	The danger of e-voting soaring over the heads of people "Central organisation" will apply e-voting despite objections"	AlWasat		060922	AlWasat 060922 P01 EVoting Despite opposition.doc

No.	Data Reference ID	Document / Article Name	Organisation / Publisher	Issue No.	Issue Date	Remarks
15.	DR41	20 thousand smart cards have been issued.. and voting for Municipal and Parliamentary at same voting centres  National Election Monitoring,, and the selection of e-voting provider	AlWasat	1477	060922	AlWasat 060922 p08 E-Voting Public to select consultant.doc
16.	DR42	Elections 2006: Bahrain News agency: e-Voting – A reality that imposes itself on the world	AlWatan	250	060817	AlWatan060817 e-Voting is a realty.doc
17.	DR43	Information Technology Adviser said	AlWatan	258	060825	AlWatan060825 e-Voting Naz.doc
18.	DR44	Confirming its support for e-voting with measures  AlMenbar Supports Lebanese and Palestine's resistance	AlWatan		060729	Alwatan 060729 - AlMenbar Confirming its support for e-voting with measures.doc

No.	Data Reference ID	Document / Article Name	Organisation / Publisher	Issue No.	Issue Date	Remarks
19.	DR45	Al musawi and Kamal Al Deen are the main contenders  Central (3) hot competition between waad and Amal	AlWatan	251	060816	AlWatan 060816 - Al Musawi and Kamal Al Deen are the main contenders.doc
20.	DR46	12 societies supports the e-voting system	AlWatan	251	060818	AlWatan 060818 - 12 societies supports e-voting.doc
21.	DR47	The Elections Directorate organize a workshop on e-voting	AlWatan	251	060818	Alwatan 060818 - Elections Directorate organize a workshop on e-voting.doc
22.	DR48	The King reviews the e-voting system using smart card  UN adopts Bahrain's Experience in e-Voting	AlWatan	251	060818	AlWatan 060818 - UN adopts Bahrain's Experience in e-Voting.doc
23.	DR49	Director General of information technology in CIO  Elections by e-voting won't differ from the referendum or 2002 Elections	AlWatan	251	060818	AlWatan 060818 Elections by e-voting won't differ from the referendum or 2002 Elections.doc

No.	Data Reference ID	Document / Article Name	Organisation / Publisher	Issue No.	Issue Date	Remarks
24.	DR50	Statement of the Secretary meeting: 57 nominations for the Municipal		252	060819	AlWatan 060819 - Al Wefaq refusing rules that conduct the political work in gathering and election.doc
		Al Wefaq refusing rules that conduct the political work in gathering and elections.				
25.	DR51	Human rights watch supported the electronic voting in the kingdom		251	060818	AlWatan - 060818 Human rights watch supported the electronic voting in the kingdom.doc
26.	DR52	Bahrain ends a political debate by cancelling the e-voting in the elections.				Bahrain ends a political debate by cancelling the e-voting in the elections.doc

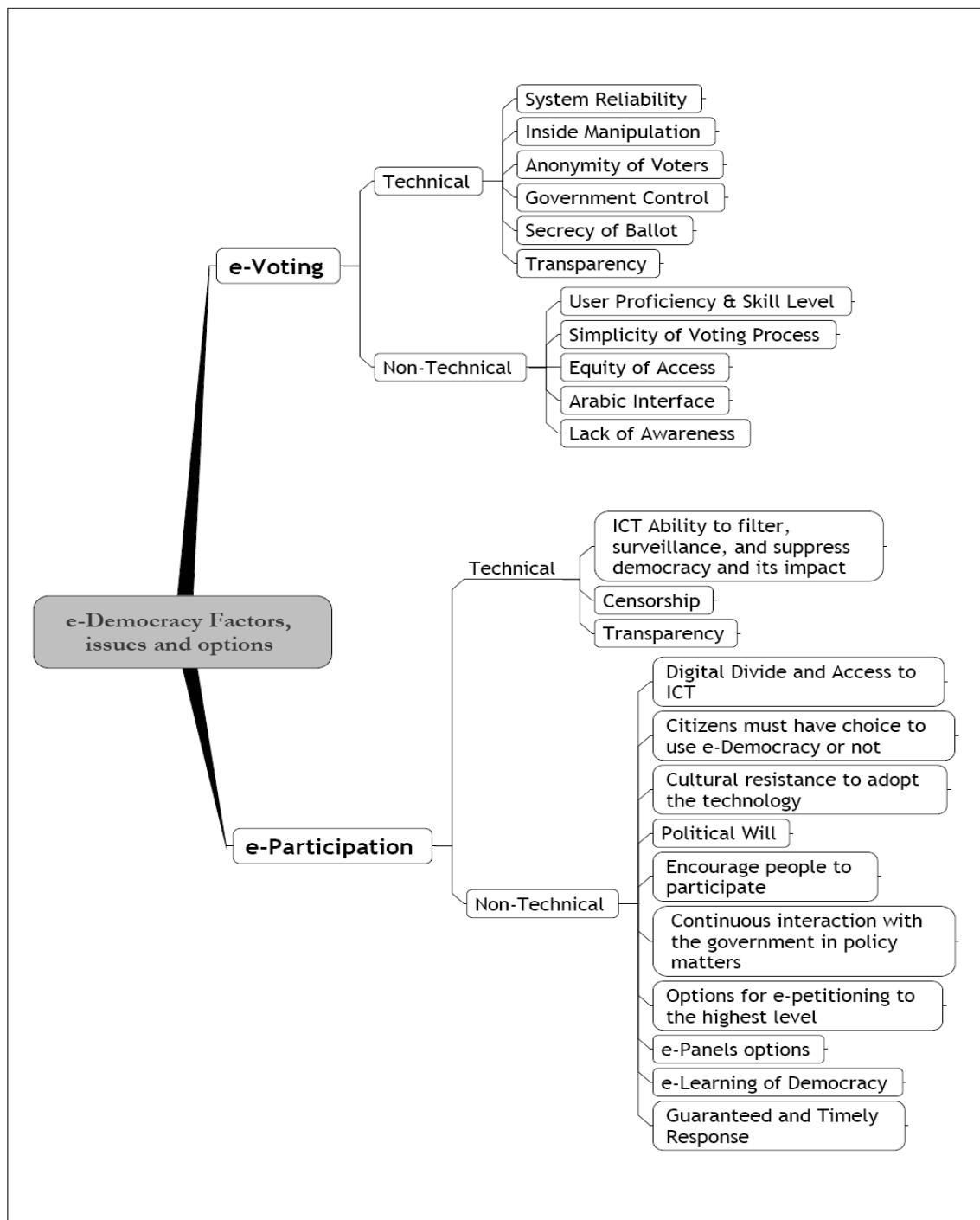
No.	Data Reference ID	Document / Article Name	Organisation / Publisher	Issue No.	Issue Date	Remarks
27.	DR53	The Joint Committee of Monitoring Elections 2006 REPORT ABOUT  Parliamentary and Municipal Elections  HELD ON 25TH November and 2nd December 2006				Election Report by National Committee summary and recommendations.doc
28.	DR54	Security Measures technically does not mean its safety "politically"...  Electronic voting... From the "Puzzle" "abroad code",		1442	060818	E-Voting Bahrain AIWasat 060818 p02.doc

No.	Data Reference ID	Document / Article Name	Organisation / Publisher	Issue No.	Issue Date	Remarks
29.	DR55	E-VOTING IN A DISTORTED DEMOCRACY				National Forum.doc Bahrain forum> public forums> National Forum
		Nabil Rajab distinguished member				E-VOTING IN A DISTORTED DEMOCRACY
30.	DR56	Public Committee for the Bahrain Jurists Society Monitoring Report (Summary) 2006 Elections				Public Committee for the Bahrain Jurists Society Monitoring Report (Summary) 2006 Elections

## Appendix 5 : Issues for Investigation & Its revision (codes)

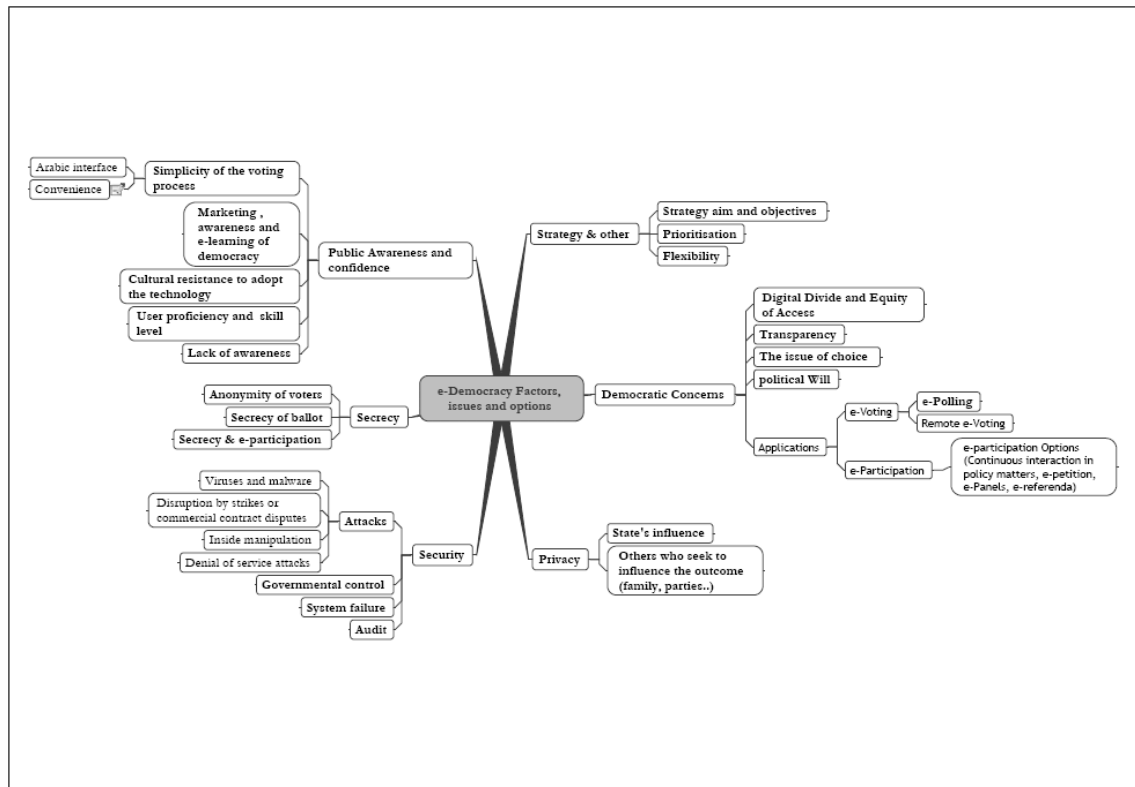
The picture below shows the initial list of issues for investigation (codes). These issues were first divided into e-Voting and e-Participation related issues and further divided into technical and non-technical aspects. The codes were further revised based on further reading of literature. The codes also underwent some changes during the data analysis process. This initial list, modified list and the final list are displayed below.

### A: Initial List of codes





## B: Revised Set of Codes Prior to Start of Data Collection & Analysis



## C: Final List of codes

