**PAPER TITLE:** A Tale of Two Uprisings: Bahrain in 1956 and 2011  
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**ABSTRACT:**

This paper will compare the political and social causes and consequences of two uprisings in Bahrain, separated by more than five decades, yet exhibiting some interesting parallels. It will draw on the Lebanese sociologist Fuad Khury’s analysis of the 1956 uprising in Manama, which argues that the leaders of the then opposition failed to make headway in negotiations with the government, largely because of the structure of the opposition: the leaders were afraid of being outflanked by more rejectionist factions with support on the street, but in the meantime they were weakened by sectarian divisions, skilfully exploited by the authorities. The paper will argue that this has striking parallels with the uprising of 2011, including the failure of dialogue efforts. By contrast, however, the 1956 uprising was led by Sunni Bahrainis, who worked together with Shia opposition leaders but were unable to build strong grassroots support among the Shia community in Bahrain. This again has parallels with 2011, but with the respective roles of each sect reversed. The paper will draw some conclusions regarding the practice of basing political movements on religious identity in a religiously diverse country such as Bahrain, while also analysing some of the barriers to building non-sectarian political movements (which have generally been less popular in the past three decades).