CHAPTER 5

Understanding Input and Output Legitimacy of Environmental Policymaking in the Gulf Cooperation Council States\textsuperscript{15}

This chapter analyses environmental policymaking in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, with a focus on the output legitimacy of renewable energy uptake. While most environmental policy research so far has either focused on Western industrialized countries with established democracies or developing countries with either democratic or autocratic policymaking systems, few studies have yet analyzed the overall effectiveness of these monarchies in environmental decision-making. The degree of this policy effectiveness is hence the focus of this chapter. Specifically, the chapter argues that although there are a number of input legitimacy deficits in the six GCC countries (United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Oman), there has been progress regarding renewable energy uptake. Thus, these monarchies may be relying more on output legitimacy than input legitimacy. Following up on the studies on input and output legitimacy, the main argument is that in certain cases useful policy results can be reached in the presence of not so strong input legitimacy, and other factors also have an impact on policymaking. The chapter bases its analysis on an extensive study of primary and secondary sources, specifically institutional publications, international organization reports, newspaper articles, and academic papers. With its analysis, the chapter contributes to larger debates in environmental governance research on the relative effectiveness of renewable energy uptake in monarchical, resource-rich, rentier states.

\textsuperscript{15} This chapter is based on Atalay, Y. (forthcoming) Understanding Input and Output Legitimacy of Environmental Policymaking in the Gulf Cooperation Council States. Environmental Policy and Governance
5.1. Introduction

Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries make up a sub-region within the Middle East, with their sui generis rentier character which stems from fossil resource abundance. The constant reliance of these countries on such resources has consolidated a particular state system over the years, which fostered patron-client relations, preferential treatment of the hydrocarbon-related sectors, and weakened the motives towards diversification of the energy sector by embracing more sustainable governance schemes. However, this situation has been changing since the early 2000s, with the introduction of renewable energy research programs, an increasing number of joint ventures and higher levels of foreign direct investment in the renewable energy sector, as well as supporting sustainable policy tools, such as the Green Building Codes. Recent initiatives in the Gulf countries towards a more sustainable, less carbon emitting and more diverse energy mix, as well as other environment-friendly regulations in urban planning mechanisms are substantially promising for the region.

This chapter aims to assess whether strong governance indicators on the input legitimacy side lead to more successful environmental policy results on the output legitimacy side in the GCC states. To measure the environmental policy output, I analyze the progress of each GCC state in renewable energy uptake and see whether the variation in their governance characteristics can explain their levels of uptake. If there is a variation among the six GCC states regarding their renewable energy uptake, can it be explained by their differences regarding democratic dynamics?

Looking from a larger perspective of policymaking, at first glance GCC countries seem highly similar to each other regarding their governance structures. Lack of effective nongovernmental organizations, and robust and efficient opposition parties, and the extensive political control of monarchical families over legislation, jurisdiction, and execution are some of the commonalities. As a result, the processes of adopting and applying policies function differently than those in western developed countries. I argue that the interaction between their input-side policy-making characteristics and output-side policy performances with respect to environmental policy making is worthy of
analysis because with the ever growing impacts of global climate change, the need to act fast is more urgent than before. This urgent need calls for a study of system-specific polity performances.

This chapter analyses environmental governance in the GCC from the perspective of renewable energy policy and highlights the impacts of input legitimacy on policy outputs. It also investigates the roles played by rentierism and its ruling elite on policymaking at large. Before going into further detail regarding the empirical analysis, the chapter first outlines the theoretical framework of rentierism and, input and output legitimacy. Secondly, the chapter seeks to evaluate the efficiency of renewable energy policy by looking at the installed renewable energy capacities of these countries concerning their current installment levels, as the empirical indicator. Then, it investigates these countries regarding their government effectiveness, transparency, and freedom parameters (political rights and civil liberties). Thereby, it aims to assess whether any variation in their renewable energy adoption levels can be explained by how well they are doing in terms of these governance indicators. Lastly, the key decision-makers of the monarchical system and their influence over policymaking and environmental governance are discussed.

The central research questions of the chapter are “To what extent is input legitimacy, defined as the effective and efficient governance structures, influential for output legitimacy, which is defined as the effectiveness of a policy adoption, in the case of environmental policy outputs in GCC States? What other factors play a role in the environmental decision-making process?”.

Some studies question whether there is a positive correlation between democracy and good environmental governance. Winslow makes a reference to these works and seeks to find out whether it is true that democracy can no longer address the challenges of resource scarcity and environmental degradation. She highlights that authoritarian regimes are less likely to protect the environment when compared with the democratic systems. Accordingly, “the lack of accountability for leaders, the concentration of power in a small elite who might use this power to personally profit from activities associated with high levels of environmental degradation, restrictions on the free flow of
information, and the need for coercion and/or legitimacy, which limits long-term investments in environmental quality” are impeding factors (Winslow, 2005: 772). Unlike Gilley, who argues that authoritarian regimes can conduct efficient environmental policymaking (Gilley, 2012), Winslow is rather skeptical about authoritarian environmentalism. However, one notable characteristic of studies on authoritarian environmentalism is that the elites are strong determinants and the main actors of decision-making processes. The role of elites (be they scientific, technocratic, or social) acts as one of the primary determinants in the environmental governance of authoritarian regimes.

The following sections investigate the stages of their renewable energy policy progress (output side), their governance indicators (input side), and to what extent the input side is influential on the output side, as well as the role of elites as an alternative explanatory factor.

5. 2. Theoretical Background: Legitimacy and Rentierism

Before going into further investigation on environmental policymaking in the GCC, I first carry out a conceptual literature review of input and output legitimacy, and then focus on the rentier characteristics of GCC states.

5. 2.1. Input and Output Legitimacy

Legitimacy can be defined as “being in accord with established legal norms and requirements, or conforming to recognized principles or accepted rules and standards of behavior” (Biermann and Gupta, 2011: 1858). It can also be defined as the combination of an input dimension, “government by the people,” and output dimension, “government for the people” (Scharpf, 1998). It is not only about the policy process itself, but it is also linked with the outcomes of this policy process. The process hypothetically affects the result (Weiler, 2012). When the input dimension is weak, for instance, the output dimension can be affected by that, making the policy or decision-making output less effective. Each of these dimensions has been the subject to various debates.
There has been some criticism about input legitimacy, for instance, and how misleading it can be to assess the outcome of a decision-making process based on just this dimension. One example is with regard to the environmental policymaking in the European Union (EU). Some scholars point out that effective environmental policy delivery in the EU is virtually impossible due to the public discontent over “lack of transparency and the remoteness of policymaking from the constituency” (Newig and Fritsch, 2009: 205), and even in optimal settings where active civil society involvement is present, the result may not be fully efficient and effective in every case. For instance, in societies with environmentalist administrations and less environmentally aware and/or friendly citizenry, “participatory decision-making can also lead to watered-down environmental standards” (Newig and Fritsch, 2009: 210). This does not mean that civil society involvement in the decision-making processes can be risky per se; however, it should be noted that the conditions that assure strong input legitimacy are not a panacea that fits every society type. It is also argued by some that stakeholder participation-oriented approach may curb output legitimacy by “making decision-making less efficient” (Lindgren and Persson, 2010: 463). While trying to strengthen input legitimacy, policymakers should be wary of possible negative implications on the output side. The way in which the link between input and output legitimacy is constructed is of significant importance. If this link is established on “synergy”, instead of a “trade-off”, reforms aimed at the input side can also increase output legitimacy (Lindgren and Persson, 2010: 450).

Public policy studies have been focusing more and more on policymaking schemes in democratically weak countries. The “authoritarian environmentalism” concept of the public policy literature mostly refers to the environmental policy experiences of China, whereas there is still no study that specifically focuses on the GCC region. Nevertheless, the research that has been carried out regarding the Chinese experience gives one important and clear ideas as to how environmentalism is experienced in the absence of a strong democracy. In one of the most comprehensive and widely cited works on this subject, Gilley focuses on this concept and defines it and its main characteristics as such: “authoritarian environmentalism can be defined as a public policy model that
concentrates authority in a few executive agencies manned by capable and uncorrupted elites seeking to improve environmental outcomes. Public participation is limited to a narrow cadre of scientific and technocratic elites while others are expected to participate only in state-led mobilization for implementation. The policy outputs that result include a rapid and comprehensive response to the issue and usually some limits on individual freedoms,” (Gilley, 2012: 288). How policymaking plays out in democratically weak state systems is further elaborated in the following parts, with an emphasis on renewable energy policies of GCC states.

5.2.2. GCC Monarchies and Rentier Policymaking

Monarchical regimes are often mistaken for “sultanistic regimes”, which are “based on personal rulership, but loyalty to the ruler is motivated … by a mixture of fear and reward to his collaborators” (Chehabi and Linz, 1998: 7). Furthermore, the ruler is not constrained by an ideology or a value system (Chehabi and Linz, 1998: 7). In the case of Middle Eastern monarchies, they have certain defining attributes: “The King (or amir) stands at the center of a regime coalition that may be diverse and can include a broad social base. A degree of political pluralism is allowed –if not encouraged– both within the regime coalition and the legitimate opposition. The mass population generally remains politically quiescent or may be mobilized along communal or clientelistic lines. The monarchy is generally constitutionally organized and legitimized, but the constitution formally grants the monarchy unchecked power,” (Lucas, 2004: 108). Herb describes the monarchical system in the GCC states as a “dynastic” one with the exception of Oman, where the rulers distributed key offices to their family relatives in the beginning of the oil era, creating “a dynastic domination of the new petro-state”. As a result of this dynastic monopoly of important state posts, GCC monarchies have been experiencing resilient regimes (Herb, 1999: 236). However, as seen in the case of Saudi Arabia, with this resilience came fragmentation as well, as different state agencies are controlled by different senior princes (Hertog, 2010b). The Monarch has the last word on all state matters, and the room for maneuver for other political actors of the state is very little. He is the primary distributor of resource revenues, so he pays lip service to all sorts of
opposition factors and political challenges, in return for providing shares from those resources.

The political legitimacy of these monarchies stems from three main factors: “First, ... these royal houses have historically mobilized cross-cutting coalitions of popular support, coalitions that have helped to forestall mass opposition have emerged, ... Second, most have also reaped ample rents from oil or foreign aid, allowing them to pay for welfare and development programs meant to alleviate public discord, ... Finally, ... these kingdoms have enjoyed the backing of foreign patrons who assist them through diplomatic assurances, economic grants, and military interventions,” (Yom and Gause III, 2012: 75-76). For GCC countries, hydrocarbon revenues are the main financial tools of political legitimacy. Utilizing these revenues for diversifying certain industries or facilitating them as consumer subsidies help consolidate public support towards the rulers as well as fostering regime resilience. One example regarding this relationship was Bahrain’s reaction to the Arab Spring uprisings in the country. Bahrain was indeed the only GCC country where there were public uprisings. To suppress these uprisings, Bahraini King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa deposited 1000 Bahraini Dinars in every family’s bank account (Al Sharekh, 2011). In cases like this, calls for democratization, extension of civil rights and liberties are simply avoided by the resource wealth, and such reactions and state behaviors have been consolidated all through the decades, making old habits die hard. Where the rulers are primarily responsible for the allocation of resources, rather than production, the development of a political opposition or improvement of democratic trajectories may only be possible if the allocation process shows signs of failure (Luciani, 1987: 75). In GCC states, because there is no democratic experience, higher levels of economic development are associated with the survival of authoritarian rule, and the reliance on oil, natural gas, and other mineral resources for national income substantially decreases the likelihood of a transition to democracy (Ulfelder, 2007: 1012). In a way, rentierism and the autocratic characteristics of the monarchical state system breed off each other, and as a result, such countries have little chances of experiencing structural changes in their political systems. Another important point about Rentier State Theory is that, while the State distributes the resource revenues to the public, it also does not feel
the need to impose taxes, and in the absence of taxation, it simply “does not have to offer concessions to society such as democratic bargain or a development strategy,” (Gray, 2011: 1). With the absence of taxation comes the absence of representation. Hence, the introduced policies mostly reflect the personal preferences and future aspirations of the ruler, rather than aiming to meet public demands and needs.

GCC elites, who are well- (and Western-) educated technocrats coming from the ruling and associated business families who are also at the center of decision-making processes in these countries, are pivotal at all levels of democratic procedures. Such figures occupy key positions in the political sphere, like the Ministries and important Councils. Regarding the private sector, there is very limited employment of nationals, and large numbers of expatriates. This characteristic has implications on civil society and non-state bodies. As for the energy sector, for instance, the small number of employees makes it easy to prevent the formation of unions (Luciani, 1987: 75). The Gulf elite that formed the capitalist class in these countries have been substantially influential not only in the domestic sphere, but also at the global level where they internationalized that very capitalist class, and they are expected to further internationalize and consolidate the rent accumulation processes of the region (Hanieh, 2011: 186). While a “transition toward more open societies and polities” is possible with effective civil societies (Tétreault et al, 2011: 13), in their absence these elites are substantially influential in shaping the policymaking mechanisms of these countries.

The concentration of authority in a few executive agencies stands as a trend which is also observed in GCC states, most of which lack the variety of subject-specific environment-related institutions and they prefer to leave such matters to controlling governmental bodies like Ministries of Petroleum, Mineral Resources, Water and Irrigation, etc. There, in line with Gilley’s argument, the technocratic elite occupies the leading roles of the decision-making process. The role of these elites in GCC monarchies’ environmental policymaking will be further investigated in the coming sections. Policy outputs being rapid and comprehensive remedies to the issue at hand indeed happens to be at the expense of limitation of individual liberties. This is mostly because, in authoritarian states, civil society organizations are substantially weak even if they exist. Opposition
parties (then again, even if they exist at all) lack the power to challenge the decisions that are taken by the ruling party (in the case of the GCC, the Monarch and his associated representatives in the Parliament). Gilley also underlines that no environmental policy model is 100% democratic or authoritarian. Authoritarian regimes, for example, “may have significant informal participation by social elites and may experience dispersed decision-making, as a result of the dynamics of factional politics,” (Gilley, 2012: 289).

What needs further investigation at that point is the degree of competence of these social elites when it comes to environmental policymaking, because if they tend to act and think like laypeople, then their participation can be considered negligible, or even harmful to the policy process. Social elites might also serve as technocrats in certain cases. Hence their knowledge level is crucial for making efficient environmental policies.

Regarding the prospects for democratization in these monarchies, Herb underlines that even the most incremental step may lead to a variation in policy making. In Kuwait, for instance, the majority of citizens can have a say in economic policies at the parliament, thereby experiencing different policy trajectories than the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Qatar (Herb, 2014). However, political participation, even when possible, brings out other important debates such as the large expat populations and strictness of naturalization laws. In the case of Kuwait, where only one-third of the residents are Kuwaiti citizens, the possibility of a democracy is a clear subject of further debate (Herb, 2014). Nevertheless, there is room for optimism for the rentier states of the GCC. The idea that rentierism and resource curse inhibit economic diversification and development is being challenged in the past decade as a result of the formulation of a Gulf-specific development model. Luciani underlines that “The absence of a populist ideology has arguably allowed GCC regimes to keep specific parts of the public sector lean, depoliticized, and oriented towards clear managerial (As opposed to political) targets,” (Luciani, 2012: 137). How this factor plays out in specific sectors is worthy of policy-specific analyses.

When rentierism is combined with the monarchical state system, the result looks like a slippery slope for an efficient and effective environmental policymaking mechanism. Rentier states are primarily defined by their over-reliance on resource rents (export
revenues) or strategic rents (tariffs of a Canal, as in the case of Suez Canal for example). In these states, large portions of national income come from these rents. To illustrate this more concretely, the International Monetary Fund reports that the average share of oil revenues in total government revenues in GCC states is more than 50% (IMF, 2016: 8). This is a sign that these economies rely heavily on the hydrocarbon sector and that they also need significant diversification efforts. On the other hand, this dominance of the hydrocarbon sector is also a sign that there are severe environmental consequences in these countries.

The following section takes a wider look at how environmental governance takes place in monarchical countries of the GCC.

5. 3. Environmental Policy Outputs in GCC States

There are various studies in the literature which show how output legitimacy can be evaluated. For the subject matter of this research, the environmental policy focus will be renewable energy policy. To detect the empirical application of whether efficient policy outcome is possible in the absence of strong input legitimacy, the following questions will be investigated in the following sections:

- Indicator 1: To what extent have Gulf Cooperation Council states been able to meet their renewable energy targets since they set them?
- Indicator 2: Is there a variation in the governance indicators of these states? Are they equal with each other, or are some of them performing better than others?
- Does the variation in Indicator 1 match that of Indicator 2? That is, do the countries with the better governance characteristics have more successful policy achievements in renewable energy?

This part evaluates the link between input and output legitimacy of environmental policymaking in GCC states by focusing on these research questions.
5.3.1 Output Legitimacy: Renewable Energy Targets and Current Uptake in the GCC

Being faced with a number of factors such as low oil prices, drastic currency fluctuations, and increasing awareness of the need for further climate change adaptation and mitigation, GCC states have been investing more in the renewable energy sector since the early 2000s. Renewable energy uptake is adopted as the primary indicator of a successful environmental policy output in the context of this chapter. Previous research has shown that, based on three measurement indicators (intensity of renewable energy as a percentage of total energy mix, total installed renewable energy capacity, and installed renewable energy capacity per capita), the United Arab Emirates and Qatar are leaders, while Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, and Oman are laggards when it comes to renewable energy uptake (Atalay et al., 2016). However, particularly for this chapter, it is important to check what the uptake figures show with respect to the initially set government targets (Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Renewable Energy Target(^{16})</th>
<th>Installed Renewable Energy Capacity as of 2014 (MW)(^{17})</th>
<th>Wind</th>
<th>Solar PV</th>
<th>CSP</th>
<th>Biomass and waste</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>2022: 9.5GW</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2040: 54GW (41GW solar, 9GW wind, 3GW waste-to-energy, 1GW geothermal)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Arab Emirates</td>
<td>2021: 24% clean energy</td>
<td>134.9</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2020: (Abu Dhabi) 7% of capacity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2030: (Dubai) 5GW solar PV</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td>2030: 20% of capacity (1800MW)</td>
<td>28.2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>2020: 5% of generation</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2030: 15% of generation (5.7GW CSP, 4.6GW solar PV, 0.7GW wind)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{16}\) Source: IRENA 2016. Renewable Energy Market Analysis – The GCC Region, (original sources: Based on (Lahn, Stevens and Preston, 2013); (RCREEE, 2015a) and others) p.12

\(^{17}\) Source: IRENA 2016. Renewable Energy Market Analysis – The GCC Region, (original sources: Based on (Lahn, Stevens and Preston, 2013); (RCREEE, 2015a) and others) p.58
Table 5.1. Renewable energy targets and installed renewable energy capacities of Gulf Cooperation Council States

While the variation regarding installed renewable energy capacity remains unchanged, with the United Arab Emirates and Qatar as the leading countries, Saudi Arabia is the country with the most ambitious renewable energy target. The country aims to generate 54GW from renewable energy resources by the year 2040. The United Arab Emirates, on the other hand, seeks to achieve 24% of its total energy from clean resources by 2021. Qatar’s target for 2030 is 1.8GW, and Kuwait’s is 11GW for the same year. While Oman is yet to declare a precise renewable energy target, Bahrain is planning to have 5% of its energy capacity generated from renewable resources.

Renewable energy uptake data shows that, while the most ambitious renewable energy target belongs to Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates has made the most progress among the six countries, and has therefore covered a larger part of its targeted uptake. Qatar is the second leader when it comes to installing renewable energy, and even though it has the same target date with Kuwait of 2030, so far it has generated almost 140 times the amount of renewable energy as Kuwait. Saudi Arabia has the third largest uptake with 25MW. However, when its target of 54GW is taken into consideration, it is a small share of what still needs to be achieved. Kuwait, Bahrain, and Oman remain as laggards with installed renewable energy capacities of less than 1MW each.

5.3.2. Input Legitimacy: Governance in the GCC States

Governance characteristics of GCC states can be indicative, as they show which states are performing better than others regarding democratic parameters. Assessing efficiency and performance specifically for environmental policy in general is not easy. However, governance characteristics can give us ideas about what one can expect from a given
policymaking process in that country. This section investigates whether good governance performance indicators can explain the success of a country in a particular field of environmental policymaking.

The World Bank’s Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) index covers governance indicators of more than 200 countries in six main categories: voice and accountability, political stability and absence of violence/terrorism, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, the rule of law, and control of corruption. Estimates that vary from -2.5 (weak) to 2.5 (strong) show perceptions of these issues in each country, based on data which is collected from survey institutes, think tanks, non-governmental organizations, international organizations, and private sector firms (World Bank, 2016). According to the 2015 estimates of WGI, there exists a variation among GCC states for each category (Table 5.2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Voice and Accountability</th>
<th>Political Stability and Absence of Violence</th>
<th>Government Effectiveness</th>
<th>Regulatory Quality</th>
<th>Rule of Law</th>
<th>Control of Corruption</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>-1.76</td>
<td>-0.54</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Arab Emirates</td>
<td>-1.07</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>1.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td>-1.01</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>-0.65</td>
<td>-0.11</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>-0.16</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>-0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahrain</td>
<td>-1.32</td>
<td>-1.08</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oman</td>
<td>-1.03</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.2. 2015 Estimates of GCC States’ World Governance Indicators
(Source: World Bank, 2016)

Even though none of the GCC states has very strong ratings in the six categories, there is still notable variation in each category. The two leader countries in renewable energy uptake, United Arab Emirates and Qatar, have the highest estimates in four of the six indicators, namely political stability and absence of violence, government effectiveness, the rule of law, and control of corruption. In the other two categories, either one of these leaders has the highest estimate. Qatar has the highest rating in voice and accountability,
and United Arab Emirates in regulatory quality. These two leading countries also perform better than others in the majority of the categories. Freedom House’s Freedom Index is another way of looking at certain characteristics of GCC states to see if there is a causal relationship between a strong input legitimacy and effective policy outputs. Having identified the two most successful countries when it comes to policy output in a particular field, checking the input side of the policymaking processes’ characteristics is important. Freedom Index’s questions on ‘political rights’ put emphasis on factors such as electoral process, political pluralism, and participation, all of which are integral elements of a system that is legitimate on the input side. ‘Civil liberties,’ on the other hand, reflect the degree of freedom of expression and belief, associational and organizational rights, the rule of law, personal autonomy and individual rights. Finally, ‘freedom rating’ is the average of the ratings of political rights and civil liberties (Freedom House, 2017). GCC states have ratings that vary between 5 and 7. According to the Index, Kuwait has the highest freedom rating, followed by Oman, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia. In the worldwide score ranking the best position belongs, again, to Kuwait, followed by Qatar, Oman, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia (Table 3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Political Rights</th>
<th>Civil Liberties</th>
<th>Freedom Rating</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United Arab Emirates</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahrain</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oman</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


With freedom ratings varying between 5 and 7, none of these countries are in the highest percentile. Nevertheless, some are freer than others. For the subject matter of this chapter,
however, there does not seem to be a convincing link between higher ratings of political rights and civil liberties, and better performance in renewable energy uptake.

Another integral part of input legitimacy is transparency. Transparency International, an international non-governmental organization which aims to fight corruption, defines transparency as “characteristic of governments, companies, organizations, and individuals of being open in the clear disclosure of information, rules, plans, processes, and actions” (Transparency International, 2017). A clean, transparent system enables more efficient policymaking in the public sphere, as well as better management schemes in the private sphere. In a 2015 ranking of 168 countries by Transparency International, Qatar has the highest ranking among GCC states as the 22nd, followed by United Arab Emirates as the 23rd, while the following GCC state is Saudi Arabia as the 48th country in the ranking (Table 4). The two most transparent countries are also the two leaders in renewable energy uptake.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Transparency Score (0 ‘highly corrupt’ to 100 ‘very clean’ public sector)</th>
<th>Rank (among 168 countries)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United Arab Emirates</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahrain</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oman</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.4. Transparency Performances of GCC countries in 2016


All GCC states, except Oman, have established renewable energy targets for the coming years and decades. It is hard to assess which of them have covered the most of their target because a regionally coherent future target scheme like the European Union’s 2020 goals is absent. Overly ambitious goals like the 54GW target of Saudi Arabia is striking. However, the leading countries in renewable energy uptake are United Arab Emirates and Qatar. Saudi Arabia has managed to generate 25MW from renewable energy resources, but it still has a very long road to reach its national target.
Why United Arab Emirates and Qatar have made the most progress could be explained by a matching variation in governance indicators, freedom ratings, and transparency performances. Worldwide governance indicators suggest that United Arab Emirates and Qatar are the highest-ranking countries among the six GCC states in political stability and absence of violence, government effectiveness, the rule of law, and control of corruption. For the two other indicators, Qatar ranks the highest in voice and accountability, and United Arab Emirates ranks the highest in regulatory quality. The results of the ‘control of corruption’ indicator are also similar in the Transparency Index performances. Qatar and United Arab Emirates have the highest rankings in combatting corruption. The variation in these results matches with the variation in renewable uptake in the region. The two leading renewable energy-producing countries have the best performance rankings.

Freedom House’s freedom ratings, however, present a different variation. Kuwait has the highest freedom ranking, followed by Qatar, and United Arab Emirates has the fourth highest freedom ranking. Regarding freedom indicators, it can be concluded that better safeguarding of political rights and civil liberties do not always indicate better policy performance in GCC states. The World Bank’s and Transparency International’s indicators can explain the more successful performance of United Arab Emirates and Qatar in a policy field. However, a substantial input side in a policymaking process cannot go by without strong political rights and civil liberties. Therefore, the overall picture of ‘strong input legitimacy’ is still not clear and convincing enough to suggest that the primary explanation for policy success in the region is the presence of such a strong input side.

The following section discusses alternative reasons for policy success that may be inherent in the monarchical state systems in the GCC.

5.4. Discussion

The previous sections sought to explain the relationship between the process side and result side of environmental policymaking in Arab GCC states. Although strong
democratic indicators that affect the policy process, such as higher governance ratings and transparency performances, have been observed in the two leader countries in renewable energy uptake, it is seen that freedom ratings indicate a different result. GCC monarchies have their sui generis characteristics. If strong input legitimacy alone cannot explain environmental policy success in the region, what other factors can be determining? This conceptual section discusses the various roles that are played by elites in the policymaking processes of the region.

Elites (scientific, technocratic, etc.) are influential actors of environmental governance in authoritarian countries. Their control over state affairs has a long background. The ruling tribal elites have always been at the center of decision-making, with the further support of strong armed forces and the emphasis on internal security to avert any domestic challenge to their position (Ehteshami and Wright, 2007: 914). For the last four decades, ever since Gulf monarchies won their independence, economic development became one of the top topics in their agendas. Elites found themselves in important positions in the governments, occupying different areas of governance. Their historical advantage did not wither away, but on the contrary, was further consolidated during this economic development process, because these elites also have significant degrees of distributive influence.

The fact that elites are responsible for the distribution of resource rents to different segments of their society empowered them to an important degree (Lam and Wantchekon, 2002: 2), enabling them to have a say in every matter that concerns the state. Since they are the ones who decide on how the rents are distributed, their power and responsibilities in governance are directly proportional. In fact, the key role they play defines one main difference between Gulf monarchies and Western states. In a region where governance structures are hierarchical, energy-related institutions are powerful, and national oil companies are dominant, policy changes are difficult to effect with tools that were developed by and for the Western states. This phenomenon is shaped by the fact that personal ties and person-client relationships with the members of the ruling elite have more decisive power than the “barely-existing independent public sphere” (Kumetat, 2012: 384).
Stakeholders of an environmental issue (or any issue that requires the involvement of state bureaucracy) cannot act independently or appeal to the relevant institutions by themselves without bypassing these elites. This further strengthens the elites’ influence in policymaking schemes. They are at the very center of the policy process, from the decision-making phase to the policy application phase. Hence, any change, reform, or transition cannot occur without their active involvement. Particularly in the case of climate mitigation, they have substantial responsibilities. Considering the vast resource revenues that compose large parts of national income, as the distributors of this revenue, elites play significant roles in shaping environmental and resource management policies.

On the one hand, these elites need to be actively involved in climate change policies (which includes investing more in non-hydrocarbon resources), yet on the other hand, they also need to make sure that the changing path dependencies would not lead to social unrest. Hence, the fossil fuel subsidy reform will be quite a sensitive policy topic for these elites (Spiess, 2012: 401). So far, policies that target combatting climate change have been incremental and subject-specific. However, a more systemic change is needed. Especially in the case of fossil resource subsidy reductions (if not removals at this stage), elites of Gulf monarchies have a lot to do, not only because they are the leading decision-makers, but also because they are responsible for the distribution and management of subsidies.

The rentier wealth management, environmental degradation, and strategic decision-making of elites are issues that are closely linked to each other. Mari Luomi argues that rentierism’s primary determinants are “the human element, or the top decision-makers” and that they shape and influence crucial strategic decisions by the political autonomy they have as a result of external rents and their positions. As a general trait of capitalist societies, mismanagement of resources remains a challenge that faces GCC states. Yet, the centrality of elites also affects the process. “Similar to CEOs of large companies, individual Gulf top elite members wield exclusive decisive influence in major strategic decisions,” (Luomi, 2012: 25). Then, if they simply act like top-level managers who work for large corporations, what is the political and historical significance of these elites? The answer lies in the culturalist tradition in the individualist paradigm of environmental governance. Accordingly, it is argued that environmental problems are the results of
historically consolidated cultural habits like the promotion of indulgence and waste (in the case of Gulf Monarchies, wastefulness that is thought to be compensated by vast resource revenues). Thus, a cultural transformation that would reverse such detrimental patterns is needed, and this transformation would be carried out by the “key agents of change in the cultural tradition... (who) are knowledgeable and enlightened leaders and individuals willing to accept their teachings,” (Sunderlin, 2003: 86). This is not only because these elites happen to be the main actors of that cultural tradition, but at present, they still hold their central status in the decision-making processes of these countries.

From the more general perspective, environmental authoritarianism may also be the very result of climate change mitigation efforts: “One possible consequence of environmental degradation is the development or consolidation of authoritarian rule as political elites come to privilege regime maintenance and internal stability over political liberalization,” (Beeson, 2010: 1). The way environmental threats and vulnerabilities are tackled by the elite can be used as a means for further centralizing their power. This may further fuel authoritarianism; and the more the state gets authoritarian, the higher the possibility of elites taking over the major part of environmental policymaking, leaving little or no room for other actors to step in.

Nevertheless, it is argued that authoritarian environmentalism has certain merits, such as enabling a fast and strong response to environmental challenges and mobilizing state and societal actors. Furthermore, in highly fragmented societies, ‘ecoelites’ face the risk of being undermined during the implementation stage (Gilley, 2012: 300). In Gulf Monarchies, where elites are members of the royal family, acting as its loyal representatives in the political sphere, and the Monarch has extensive control over both public and private realms, such an undermining is not likely to happen. To better understand how environmental policy-making is experienced in the GCC monarchies, the main actors of authoritarian environmentalism, who are the elite members of the ruling family, and the absence of substantial opposition factors, need further elaboration.
5. 5. Conclusion

When it comes to reaching efficient environmental policy outcomes, there are numerous exogenous factors that contribute to the success of the decision-making process, such as market pressure, position of the issue area within the general policy context, and availability of an advanced legislation with an international perspective (Schlyter et al., 2009: 380). More importantly, every state structure has inherent characteristics which directly affect the nature of policymaking.

This chapter looked at the role of input side dynamics on policy outputs. Based on the finding of variation among the GCC states regarding their renewable energy uptake, their governance indicators are assessed. Following up on legitimacy studies, it first checked to what extent the presence of a strong input side was effective in environmental policy outcomes of GCC states. To do this, a variation regarding to what extent GCC states have been able to meet their national renewable energy targets is investigated. Since a coherent targeting scheme is lacking in the region, and some states set targets in total GWs, and some others in percentages within planned future total energy generation, detecting a variation based on the degree of uptake completion was not possible. Hence, the variation which is based on installed renewable energy capacity is adopted, based on Atalay et al.’s previous work on this matter. Identifying United Arab Emirates and Qatar as the main leaders in renewable energy uptake, the six states were then analyzed in terms of their governance indicators, freedom and transparency ratings. The two leading countries had the highest governance ratings in four of the six categories of WGI index, and they also had the best transparency performances. However, their positions in the freedom ratings were not convincing enough to suggest that good governance and strong input legitimacy alone cannot explain the variation in the renewable energy uptake of these states. Hence, the following part of the chapter focused on certain characteristics of these states that have shaped their policy-making, both historically, and also currently. In line with this perspective, the ruling elite and their influence over state affairs are highlighted. A previous study on the relevance of input and output legitimacy in international environmental governance found that both sides of legitimacy are important for
international governance at large. However, from the perspective of citizens, output seemed to be more important (Bernauer, 2016: 23). The first conclusion of this chapter is that although a sound and effective input side plays a major role in environmental policy success concerning renewable energy initiatives in GCC states, output efficiency does not only rely on that. The ruling elite is also very important for the environmental policymaking in these states, not only because they are the primary decision-makers in key areas, but also because they are in charge of resource management, which has a direct impact on how environmental issues are tackled. Therefore, for efficient and effective environmental policymaking in GCC states, good governance should also be supported by the good governance of the elite. In a region where the line between private and public sphere is blurred by a network of close patronage ties, it would be enlightening to see detailed network analysis studies regarding the ruling elite of the GCC states, to see if there are factors that affect the efficiency of the elite’s governance of environmental affairs.

The second conclusion of this chapter is that democratically weak state systems are not doomed to experience weak policy outputs in energy transitions. While explaining the successful management of state-owned-enterprises in Gulf monarchies, Hertog emphasizes the role of “substantive regime autonomy in economic policy-making” as a key factor that empowers the related bodies with a special mandate and enables them to bypass the existing bureaucracies (Hertog, 2010a: 261). Thus, the ability to act fast stands as an opportunity in the case of GCC countries. When the provisions and requirements of global environmental governance are considered, it may be helpful for some states to take into consideration the fact that taking immediate action on climate policies can be easier than they anticipated. Especially in states like the GCC states where a substantial democratization process does not seem very likely in the foreseeable future, current weaknesses should not be considered as excuses for inaction in the environmental policy realm.
5.6. References


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