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Partnerships and power in the 2030 Agenda

Multistakeholder partnerships are considered critical to the 2030 Agenda. This Panel considers the ways in which partnerships may/ may not produce transformative spaces for partners; co-produce transformative solutions to development problems; or reproduce existing power asymmetries.

Studies of 'partnership' also often assume that establishing a 'partnership' automatically mitigates existing power inequalities. But what happens in practice? How partnerships are established and enacted will impact more or less positively on sustainable development for all. Yet, conventional partnerships research tends to elide the politics of, and operation of power in, partnerships. In the absence of such research, we are left with an inadequate analysis that creates the conditions for ill-informed policy decisions and the perpetuation of extant power hierarchies.

Papers should examine the implications of these power asymmetries to the functioning of the partnership and/or the external impact of the partnership.

Dynamics of rentier bureaucracies: why Abu Dhabi is more committed than Qatar to the international partnership on climate change

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Word count: 10 100

Abstract

Why is it that similar rentier states decide to take different paths in the multilateral realm? Why is it that whilst the UAE has in the past decade opened its doors to the International Renewable Energy Agency; Qatar has in the meantime shunned the UNEP and failed to make any significant commitment to the multilateral agenda for climate change?

Renewed interest in external relations of rich Gulf states shows that this subclass of actors is less inclined to cooperate than most states. Political economists demonstrate that the rentiers' favourable position in trade relations and capacity to weather the costs of international isolation guarantees their (relative) autonomy from international constraints. International relations scholars' studies of rentier states' museum politics point to Gulf states' narcissism, which promotes bilateral ties over multilateral commitments.

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Yet one major caveat is left unanswered: Why is it that very similar rentier states knowing similar incentives and constraints (with regard to the price of natural resources in particular) display different degrees of commitment to international cooperation?

I expand on rentier state theory to argue that different degrees of power concentration in the UAE and Qatar cause different bureaucratic dynamics. These in turn impact the degree and continuity of these states' commitment to international partnerships. Using the case of SDG 13 (former MDG 7), I argue that while Abu Dhabi's iterative relationship with Dubai within the federal context of the UAE has led to increasing and incremental international cooperation on climate change, Qatar's centralized power structure has made cooperation weak and sporadic. I rely on a process-tracing methodology at the meso-level of ministries, agencies and companies; and fifty elite interviews conducted during a 5-months fieldwork in the Gulf.

Introduction and puzzle

“Emerging powers” and the “BRICS” are the new buzzwords of contemporary international relations. There is much ado about how new actors will impact global governance. In the context of the search of an institutional framework to ensure climate change governance (Francioni 2012: 1), it is left undecided to what extent emerging actors support or contest existing international partnerships. There are different ways to approach the factors that determine why states join multilateral partnerships. One can give the prime role to the influence of the international system, of international organizations, of powerful states; or to domestic, internal features. In this contribution, I stress the latter by exploring a specific category of states, the Gulf rentier states, in the international partnership for climate change.

Though largely understudied compared to the BRICs, as a result of lack of data and lack of interest, policy-makers now display an increasing interest for the contribution of these states, not least of because Gulf states are both (1) ultra-sensitive to the environmental impact of climate change and (2) historically the most obstructionist countries to the international governance of climate change. Academics too have a specific and recent interest in the multilateral endeavours of *rentier* states because it appears that these cooperate less than the average. Political economists demonstrate that the rentiers' favourable position in trade relations and capacity to weather the costs of international isolation guarantees their (relative) autonomy from international constraints. Joining the predicament that rentier states 'go bilateral' are

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international relation scholars, who stress the emergence of “branding” foreign policies in the Gulf that favour the bilateral over the multilateral.

Academics and policy-makers alike assume for their major part that rentier states are a class of actors that behaves uniformly. Yet a caveat is left unanswered by these recent contributions: why do similar rentier states - like the UAE and Qatar, display different degrees of contribution to multilateral endeavours, such as the international partnership climate change? A second, less obvious, question is also left unanswered. Why is it that since their creation in 1971, Qatar has demonstrated less consistency in its cooperation within the international partnership for climate change – in other words, why has Qatar been a more volatile partner within the international partnership for climate change?¹

¹ Borrowing from other fields of research is not an optimal solution. But the point of volatility is crucial to this contribution. That Qatar's cooperation on climate change has known more variation/volatility over time than Abu Dhabi's – in other words, on more occasions and with greater intensity has Qatar cooperated more *and* less than Abu Dhabi.

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Tableau 1: Status of Gulf Co-Operation Council states in major international conventions on the environment and climate change (compiled by the author)²

Country	<i>CITES</i>	<i>CBD</i>	<i>Cartagena Protocol</i>	<i>Nagoya Protocol</i>	<i>UNFCCC</i>	<i>Kyoto Protocol</i>	<i>Vienna Convention</i>	<i>Montreal Protocol</i>	<i>UNCCD</i>	<i>POPs</i>	<i>Basel</i>	<i>Heritage</i>	<i>UNCLOS</i>
Saudi Arabia	A 1996	A 2001	A 2007	X	A 1994	A 2005	A 1993	A 1993	A 1997	R 2012	R 1990	A 1978	R 1996
Qatar	A 2001	R 1996	A 2007	X	A 1996	A 2005	A 1996	A 1996	A 1999	A 2004	A 1995	A 1984	R 2002
U.A.E	A 1990	R 2000	A 2014	A 2014	A 1995	A 2005	A 1989	A 1989	A 1998	R 2002	R 1992	A 2001	S 1982
Kuwait	R 2002	R 2002	X	X	A 1994	A 2005	A 1992	A 1992	R 1997	R 2006	R 1993	R 2002	R 1986

² In this table, 'X' means that the country has not acceded nor ratified the international text ; 'A' refers to status of accession, while 'R' indicates a superior state of ratification. Dates are included and correspond to the entry in force of the international convention.

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Measuring volatility in Abu Dhabi and Qatar

It is not an easy task to assess the degree of commitment and volatility of the Gulf states, not least because environmental multilateralism is itself a fragmented sector. However, estimates are made increasingly possible thanks to the continuity of environmental governance enacted within the meetings and conferences of the parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Montreal Protocol on the ozone layer (Francioni 2012: 5).

The table above of accession and ratification of the major environmental international conventions ratified by the states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) provides some information as to the commitment of Gulf states in the past two decades. For instance, the UAE has ratified and signed more conventions than Qatar. This says little. Following measures established by M.E Smith³ as well as Ross and Voeten (2016) based on financial, political (and symbolic) and legal actions taken by the states, I consider the cooperation of the UAE to have been more systematic, coherent and sustained over the past decade. Several indicators point to this. One is the funding of climate change regimes. Remarkable is the lack of commitment of Qatar compared to its fixed obligations within some environmental agreements (see example of...QUOTE). Observation of negotiations also points to the growing commitment of the UAE both within the GCC as well as within the UN framework;⁴ while Qatar, when not organizing international negotiations on the topic of environment, has made little progress in committing to those international negotiations, as displayed at the recent COP21. In partnering with international organizations in the country, the UAE is also more advanced than Qatar. Abu Dhabi welcomes the UNEP-CMS secretariat;⁵ while Qatar still refuses to open a UNEP office in Doha.

Research questions

Why is it that similar states cooperate more or less in the international partnership for climate change? More importantly, why is this cooperation more or less volatile across the countries?

³ These measures are used in a very different context – the construction of a European Defense Community, but there is nothing to leads to think that it is not generalizable, see M.E Smith,

⁴ Interview, Qatar University, Doha, 11/02/2016

⁵ Interview, Environment Agency, Abu Dhabi, 25/10/2015

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Literature Review

Environmental specialist have mostly described GCC states' involvement in international partnerships on climate change (Anrouf 2008; Reiche 2010; Bachellerie 2012). The most elaborate contribution is Mari Luomi's attempt to identify causes for the recent increased contribution of Gulf states to climate change regime (Luomi 2014). By listing a wide range of factors (domestic politics, the demise of Saudi Arabia as regional power,⁶ the material effects of climate change on Qatar and Abu Dhabi's sea levels and provision in drinkable water, etc.), however, Luomi succumbs to a methodological trap: "if everything explains it, then nothing explains it".

Conversely, International Relations (IR) theorists have not taken Gulf states seriously when it comes to multilateralism. Building their analysis on two of their major characteristics – their (1) small size and (2) authoritarian regime, IR scholars have assumed the unitary "black box" of the Gulf emirates. Because they are small, scholars argue that these states succumb to a Freudian 'narcissism of the smaller difference', expressed through their quest for international visibility. Through gigantic – and sometimes short-lived – projects (museums, stadiums, towers, etc.), Gulf states in particular are closely associated with the concept of "branding" (Peterson 2006; Kazerouni 2015). "Branding" authors that have dealt with the Gulf states, however, have said little about the ways these international strategies, may affect domestic dynamics (Gulf states may also pursue international partnerships for domestic reasons);⁷ or be affected by domestic dynamics.⁸ Similarly, another strand of IR, the small states literature, assumes that given their limited means, the Gulf emirates were likely to seek protection within multilateral fora (Smith 2004, 20; Moravcsik 2000; Vogel in Ingerbriten 2006: 11). This is not the case here. One could go as far as agreeing with small state scholars that their small size does not enable small states to create alternative multilateral settings to contest existing ones.⁹ But it does follow logically that this literature cannot explain why such multilateral implication would vary across similar states.

⁶ The influence of Saudi Arabia (or its decline) (LUOMI): surprising because the UAE is closest to Saudi views on importance of hydrocarbons (Raval, Oil, and Correspondent 2014) (and on other things, such as terrorism)

⁷ see Aronczyk 2013: 16 for a generalist argument, see Eggeling *forthcoming*, for an application to Qatar. A look at the British archives compiled by successive British residents in Qatar and the UAE also reveal how important international membership – notably the UN – in the 1970's was for rulers to domesticate opposition (QUOTE British archives Qatar/UAE).

⁸ importance vis-à-vis domestic actors to be credible actor outside (given division of labour giving foreign relations to federal state) – hence importance of diplomacy in government. There is where I depart from those who focus on "branding". Luomi mentions "but I see it as domestic-oriented in this context"

⁹ As Keohane wrote "the conditions for maintaining existing international regimes are less demanding than those required for creating them" (Keohane 1984: 50)

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The authoritarian nature of the Gulf emirates has comforted both IR scholars and area-specialists to assume once more the unitary action of the Gulf emirates. Indeed, the latter maintain that politics should be understood by “seeing through the eyes of the autocrat” (Anrouf 2008; Luomi 2014; Jones 2015). In the area of climate change for instance, the UAE is assumed to be ahead of other GCC countries because its leaders are supportive of such schemes (Anrouf 2008: 13). I agree with this departing point, but will make the argument using other bodies of literature, that leaders’ autocratic power does not determine how their cooperation unfolds thereafter (see theoretical argument below).

If most IR scholars and area-specialists have left the “black box” of the Gulf states closed, political economists have done otherwise. More interestingly, it has started to reflect on the international implications of the rentier nature of these states (Colgan 2014; Ross and Voeten 2016; Hertog *forthcoming*). Political economists provide the best entry-point in how international partnerships are affected by power asymmetries existing between rentier states’ and the international community. Literature has shown that dependence on oil can explain fluctuating cooperation or “globalization” of these countries: the higher oil prices, the less the need for cooperation because of (1) favourable trading terms – states continue buying hydrocarbons regardless of multilateral engagements (Ross and Voeten 2016); and (2) high elite autonomy in rentier states to engage or contest existing multilateral frameworks (and engage in populist foreign policies, such as Iran or Venezuela at certain time-junctures)(Hertog *forthcoming*). Making oil a quasi-automatic predictor of international cooperation of rentier states (the more oil, the less cooperation; and vice-versa), the international political economists fail to explain some outliers.¹⁰ In short, as argued by Herb (*POMEPS* 2015), oil makes some things possible, others not. It is then worthwhile to fine-grain and mainstream the rentier state literature, to study its interactions with other factors.

Recent contributions that do not overlook the size and authoritarianism of the Gulf emirates, while taking into account the international dimension of the rentier state, are few. They provide the backbone of my argument.

¹⁰ Two observations are not explained by this literature : (1) there are instances of cooperation when oil prices rise (UAE, Norway): this contradicts Ross and Voeten, not Hertog ; (2) there are instances where dropping oil prices is not followed by higher cooperation (Oman): this contradicts both Ross and Voeten, and Hertog.

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Theoretical argument

In this literature review I've stressed the lack of attention paid to *domestic factors* in examining rentier states in international partnerships. How are domestic power asymmetries affecting the international partnerships of the Gulf emirates? The research questions I've posed, notably that of volatility, requires a dynamic approach as an answer. I cannot only focus on a "picture" of Gulf bureaucracies at a specific point in time. I must provide the dynamic of "evolution" of a given administration. Path dependency¹¹ must also be central to this analysis.

Within the scholars of the rentier state – and of the Gulf states in particular – some have advanced dynamic approaches to the study of rentier "contracts" in the Gulf. They examine the relationship between rulers and various groups (clergy, expatriates, business, tribes, etc.) that may affect the distribution of hydrocarbon-derived rent (Beblawi 1987; Ismael 1993; Yates 1996; Skocpol 1982; Lacroix 2011; Herb 2014). It is this strand of domestic-oriented literature that I tie with international politics in this contribution. To do so, I build on notably on the landmark contribution of Steffen Hertog, using a historical institutionalist approach that gives the primacy to path dependent trajectories. In *Princes, Brokers and Bureaucrats* (2010), Hertog explains why the bureaucratic apparel of Saudi Arabia develops at different speeds, why coexist in the same administration decrepit and top-notch departments. His main argument is that the more the rentier state co-opts society through the rentier contract (and notably by providing stable, well-paid public jobs),¹² the heavier and reform-averse the bureaucracy becomes. As the state bureaucracy grows (for developmental and demographic reasons), the harder it becomes to "re-engineer" the state.

On the one hand, pressure to reform dysfunctional services is blocked at the mid-level as (1) low-tier bureaucrats are (1) *de facto* protected by their patrons (usually eminent members of close relations of the ruling family) (Hertog 2010: 29); and (2) as the very vertical nature of the authoritarian autocratic regime impedes the circulation of information and the swiftness of decision-making (Hertog 2010: 30). Put simply, in the Gulf, first, "you cannot fire a local"; second, every minor decision takes time because "it has to be validated at the very top" (Interview, EU Delegation, Abu Dhabi, 29/10/2015). Reforms are often partial, rarely complete.

¹¹ In a few words, path dependency asserts that what comes earliest is the most important to define what happens afterward (Hertog 2010 PAGE NUMBER)

¹² As argued by Michael Herb (2014: 19), "the creation of new jobs in the bureaucracy became an objective in its own right, with little regard to what new appointees should or could do".

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On the other hand, the concentration of power- characteristic of an autocracy – gives a happy few leverage to take on individual enterprises. Those who decide to take on reforms, and those who decide to linger on to their bureaucratic fiefdoms increasingly segment the bureaucracy. *Fragmentation is thus paradoxically a result of power centralization.*

How do these combined dynamics affect international cooperation of the rentier state? In a last chapter, Hertog argues that the fragmented nature of the rentier bureaucracy favours the adoption of external reforms, if the interests of the international organization and of rulers are aligned (Hertog 2010: 32). Indeed, the same way that segmentation blocks through and out reforms, the same does it allow for very quick partial reforms when central power decides to reassign jurisdictions.¹³

Hertog demonstrates an acute understanding of the verticality of decision-making in the Gulf. Yet, while vertical links enhance the segmentation of rentier bureaucracies, they may be mediated by different power structures. Other Gulf scholars have identified horizontal links at work in these authoritarian polities (Herb 2014; Young 2014). They consider them as impediments to reform, bureaucratic consolidation and international cooperation. Herb, in his analysis of Kuwaiti politics, shows how horizontal disputes between the Emir's cabinet (the *emiri diwan*) Diwan and the elected Parliament, have prevented economic reform in the past decade. For her part, K. E Young establishes that economic policies in the UAE are impeded – by formal and informal¹⁴ - federal arrangements.¹⁵

While these authors consider horizontal dynamics as impediments to policy-making; I argue that at the international level at least, horizontal setups lead to more sustained and stable cooperation within the framework of international partnerships. Because reform is negotiated horizontally between equals – rather than along a vertical hierarchy – they are more likely to be unmovable thereafter. This is not to say that reforms demanded by international partners do not take time, or that they are positively responded to. Rather, it implies that once a commitment is

¹³ external pressure may help lock-in and force change at the meso-level, meaning in mid-level management, in the country, but that it is very rare. These factors are cumulative: there is more chance that reforms take place if government pressure and external pressure are aligned. Hertog's focus is internal and makes distinction national-external. In practice, segmentation is also driven by external pressures of diverse nature. Path dependencies also arise from external pressures, not only from what Hertog sees as internal resistance.

¹⁴ The focus of Young on informal tribal politics – captured in the title of her book, *Between the Majlis and the Market* – considers that tribal practices have negative effects on policy-making: they create inefficiencies, notably through nepotism. Interestingly, Young considers these practices as preventing in particular the emergence of a coherent domestic energy (and renewable energy) policy in the UAE (Young 2014: 100).

¹⁵ Along the domestic factors, Young also mentions international political alliances and demographic challenges (Young 2014: PAGE NUMBER).

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made, it is more likely to be followed-up. Hence, the more horizontally policies are designed in the Gulf states, the less volatile international cooperation is likely to be.

From this domestic based-outlook I sustain the following empirical claim: cooperation between a rentier state and international organizations is best served when power is not in the hands of a concentrated executive. Thus the UAE counterintuitively outperforms Qatar in cooperating within the international partnership for climate change precisely because Abu Dhabi must deal with Dubai, because horizontal decision-making interacts with the vertical nature of Gulf bureaucracies. The counterintuitive aspect that belies this relationship is that *more* centralization means *less sustained* cooperation with international organizations. Conversely, more horizontal, decentralized power, means more sustained cooperation with international organizations.

Research design: a most-similar case study

I have argued that centralization of power affects the international cooperation of rentier states. To demonstrate this point and control for a number of factors, I use a most-similar case study¹⁶ of the construction and evolution of the climate change bureaucracy of two rentier states, Qatar and the UAE.

In many ways, Qatar and the UAE are similar. They share (1) a small resource-rich territory¹⁷; (2) both actors were independent simultaneously (1971) and are thus in the process of state-building, notably through the emergence of a diplomatic activity; (3) their economic structures, despite natural resource diversity (gas in Qatar, oil in Abu Dhabi), are very similar (Luomi 2014: 12); (4) their elite has a hold on the business sector (Luciani 2013); (5) they face similar international incentives and constraints sensitivity to hydrocarbons oil prices, etc.), (6) similar environmental constraint, being both (a) sensitive to climate change (Luomi 2014); facing tense projections for their future energy consumption needs (Young 2014: 79-80) (b) among the top 25 emitters of carbon dioxide emissions worldwide (Reiche 2010: 2395), (7) both are

¹⁶ Summarize the most-similar design (George and Bennett QUOTE)

¹⁷ The Emirate of Abu Dhabi is specifically isolated within the UAE throughout this paper. Abu Dhabi and Qatar are indeed comparable units with (1) legally both a. autonomous resources (oil belongs to the UAE emirate in which it was discovered and Abu Dhabi has 95% of UAE reserves (Reiche 2010: 2398) b. an autonomous foreign policy as this is not clearly defined within the Constitution, giving leeway for Abu Dhabi to act in its own name or in that of the UAE.

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autocratic states where power is “all in the family” (Herb DATE) and where vertical decision-making is the rule of thumb.¹⁸

However, a major difference emerges, as to extent to which power is concentrated in these two states. In the uniquely homogeneous state of Qatar (Roberts 2012), characterized by a small and very wealth population, centralization of power is great – since the Father Emir Sheikh Hamad's coup in 1995, the small emirate's polity is under control the Al Thani family.¹⁹ Their control is such that that most reforms applauded by progressive Western policy-makers (women empowerment, liberal education, voting rights, etc.) are not demanded by the people (Bishara; Roberts 2012 + QUOTE). In the UAE, each of the seven emirates is also extremely centralized, with an autocratic ruler at their head. However, at the federal level, state-building has been the work of Abu Dhabi, over the preferences of other emirates, and notably, of Dubai (Herb 2014). These internal dynamics I argue affect the way the state behaved in international politics.

As a slice of international cooperation I have chosen the international partnership for climate change; and particularly the very sensitive issue of data collection and sharing on climate change by Qatari and Emirati bureaucracies (Reiche 2010; Luomi 2014).²⁰ Originally fragmented across sectors (Francioni 2012: 3) and different generations of multilateral agreements (Andredesen in Ambrus 2014: 118), climate change governance has progressively been embodied in common goals – first, through the Millenium Development Goal 7; now as the Sustainable Development Goal 13. Methodologically, because climate change as an international issue was really coined in 1992 at the Earth Summit, it limits the scope of this work. I can trace more easily the emergence and evolution of a diplomatic and domestic response of Qatar and the UAE towards this international partnership, in particular in the field of data collection. Empirically, Qatar and the UAE are often overlooked or thrown into the same category. With this study I hope to fine-grain the analysis and point to avenues through which cooperation with these emerging actors may be, if not increased, at least better understood. Theoretically, Qatar and the

¹⁸ Alike to other GCC states of Saudi Arabia, Oman, Bahrain; and even Kuwait to some extent.

¹⁹ In Qatar, the family of the current ruler, the Al Thani's, have been favoured by the British during the time of their protectorate. They have managed to establish the continuity of a state notably thanks to the discovery and exploitation of hydrocarbons (REF+ ADD STORY AL NAHYAN).

²⁰ In the context of the authoritarian state, it is consensual that data collection, and more generally, transparency, are great challenges for the international cooperation of these states. This has been mentioned in numerous studies about the Gulf (for aid statistics, see Nonneman 1988 ; Barakat 2010 ; Carroll and Hynes 2013 ; for public health, Stimson 2008 ; for populations and demographics, see Fargues 2008, 2011 ; Kamrava and Babar 2012 and Bel-Air 2014 ; for economic development, see Espinoza et al. 2013 ; the list can go on...)

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UAE provide an interesting comparative ground to test the interaction of vertical and horizontal decision-making that Gulf scholars have identified, separately, in the past decade.²¹

Some researchers are often concerned with “learning more and more about less and less”. Studying small – for some microscopic – states does not impede developing further comparisons with a broader range of rentier states (see Hertog 2010). The advantage of such a research strategy is to be able to gain quite in-depth comparative across- and within- knowledge of these two countries. In this study

Data

Studying the international cooperation of the UAE and Qatar in climate change is precarious in practice. Data are often flawed, recent and incorrect: to draw conclusions from them is risky (Neumayer 2003). More importantly in our study, a quantitative approach to Gulf states in particular is ill-advised. Quantitative indicators that are not conceptually-driven can give wrong views of what cooperation means. This also applies to the valuable contribution of Ross and Voeten: what does it mean for Qatar's commitment to climate change, to have a hundred embassies? Next to nothing, as they are poorly staffed and more than often bypassed.²² This justifies my choice to favour fieldwork over statistical analysis.

I conducted more than sixty elite interviews in Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Doha over a period of five months. I consulted national archives at the UAE Federation Library as well as at New York University Abu Dhabi. For more empirical depth, I also use secondary sources, notably Mari Luomi's *The Gulf Monarchies and Climate Change: Abu Dhabi and Qatar in an Era of Natural Unsustainability* (2014).

Power centralization and international cooperation: insights from climate change diplomacy in Qatar and the UAE

Giving context: a brief history of Gulf states' (non) cooperation in the international partnership for climate change

²¹ To this I might add that focussing on the small Gulf states of Qatar and the UAE is a test for the generalizability of Hertog's argument on rentier state bureaucratic dynamics. His conclusions are case-driven, but could be proven right in the case of smaller states and smaller administrations.

²² Interview with Christian Koch, Director, Gulf Research Foundation, Geneva, 16 June 2015.

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Path dependency is key in understanding the evolution of Gulf states' attitudes towards international climate change partnerships. Evidently, Qatar and Abu Dhabi's current climate change diplomacy is shaped by the way the hydrocarbon sector has shaped their bureaucracy over the years (Reiche 2010: 2401).

Despite the obvious risks implied for the small coastal Gulf states, rulers and elites of the small coastal Gulf states gave little attention to climate change and environmental degradation because they favoured the economic growth of the new-born nations. Sustaining the environment was no one's business. Interestingly, some professionals had already pointed out to the environmental impact of hydrocarbon-based economies. They were, however, isolated; and also often Westerners working only temporarily in the region, and therefore devoid of sustained influence on policy-making circles. The development of a climate change diplomacy had to be articulated with the long-standing defence of the fossil fuel economies, under the umbrella of the Organization of Petrol Exporting Countries (OPEC) and of Saudi Arabia (Luomi 2014: 13; 199).²³ The Ministries of Energy led *de facto* the obstruction to climate change negotiations until 2009 (Luomi 2014: 212). Environmentalist specialists representing Gulf states were indeed themselves trained engineers. As recorded by a former representative of the UAE in international negotiations, with a doctoral degree in biotechnologies:

“(...) I was working both as a technician and a diplomat. Just for the COP, I attended three meetings as expert for the UAE. When I worked for the UAE, at the end, there was what we could call a delegation. But when I started out with them, there was not anyone but me. I went alone. (...) I had some know-how that was quite rare in the Arab world”²⁴

Within the UN arena, all GCC states, along with members of the G77+China Group, showed little cooperation on the grounds of their status as developing countries. Considered for example as Non-Annex 1 countries under the UNFCCC (Reiche 2010: 2399) – the UAE and Qatar avoided costs of transition and even, ironically given their immense wealth, were given priority to access credits to develop clean energy projects domestically (QUOTE). Despite such incentives and facilitated access to environmental-friendly technologies, little reforms took place. In the 2000's for instance, Gulf states still did not carry out the basic cooperative tasks, such as data collection on environment and the effects of climate change (AFED in Reiche 2010: 2396).

²³ This meant for instance under the UNFCCC, opposing any mitigation measures.

²⁴ Interview, ADNOC, Abu Dhabi, 5/11/2015

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Mind-sets evolved as the effects of economic and demographic growth unveiled important domestic pressures on water and energy consumption (Luomi 2014: 10).²⁵ It accompanied the realization in some policy-making circles, of the natural unsustainability of a hydrocarbon-based economy. Yet, Ministries of Energy and energy specialists continued to dominate Gulf delegations to climate change summits. Far more experienced and connected than emerging pro-climate change technicians, these bureaucrats weighed on negotiating positions, often to the detriment of pro-climate change policies (Luomi 2014: 206).

As environmentalism became mainstreamed in international relations after the Rio summit of 1992; so has it been in the domestic and international relations of the Gulf states. Incorporation of “sustainable development” in the numerous Gulf national visions (UAE vision 2020, Qatar Vision 2030 for instance) – announced the transition of the hydrocarbon-based economies GCC states towards a desired “knowledge economy”. Leaders shaped narratives according to which they were at the forefront of the fight against climate change.²⁶ Incrementally, GCC states adopted a more lenient diplomatic stance on climate change – promoting mitigation measures more actively (QUOTE). While the OPEC created a fund to support a cleaner environment (Anrouf 2008: 5), the Qatari and Emirati foreign ministries picked up the issue in 2009 and 2012 respectively (Luomi 2014: 199). For instance, the UAE successfully campaigned to host the International Renewable Energy Agency; while Qatar hosted the UNFCCC COP18 conference in Doha.²⁷

In the eyes of many observers, nonetheless, these diplomatic efforts have been superficial. The diplomatic visibility of these initiatives has not infiltrated the domestic sphere. Most GCC states developed a “culture of committees” (Luomi 2014: 212), adding layer upon layer of institutions (Agencies, supreme committees, taskforces, etc.) dealing with climate change. Also, if leaders, aware of climate challenges, are increasingly facing the indifference of their constituencies (Young 2014: 88; Luomi 2014: 14).²⁸ For the latter, the increasing pressure on energy and water resources, and the degradation of the environment must be shouldered by the majority of expatriates working in the GCC states (Hertog 2015).

²⁵ Interview, Food and Agriculture Organization, Abu Dhabi, 2/12/2015

²⁶ Thus, a book will soon be published in Abu Dhabi presenting the founder of the UAE, Sheikh Zayed, as an enlightened environmentalist (QUOTE).

²⁷ Indeed, in 2009, a report published by the Arab Forum for Environment and Development stated that “virtually no work is being carried out to make the Arab countries prepared for climate change challenges” (AFED in Reiche 2010: 2396).

²⁸ Thus, an 2009 report indicated that while 94% of GCC nationals answered that their country would benefit from climate change policies; 51% wanted their governments to better address the question (Reiche 2010: 2397).

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At the diplomatic level, the cooperation of these states on climate change remains quite low, as testified by their National Indicative Plans in preparation for the Paris COP21. The most negative observers consider that both Abu Dhabi and Qatar continue “throwing money at problems” (Luomi 2014: 23). IRENA in Abu Dhabi for instance, is considered by some as the example of wealthy Gulf states’ faculty to “purchase” their reputation.²⁹ More indulgent critics consider that Gulf states are going through a learning process; and that their inability to be diplomatically active is due to their limited administrative and expert capacities. As summarized by Anrouf (2005: 9), “due to the relatively new environmental authorities and lack of institutional capacity, many GCC countries first join international agreements and then seek solutions to fulfil commitments”.

[Qatar: a typical case of erratic cooperation due to centralization of power and dominance of vertical links](#)

In a historical account of Qatar, Fromherz (2012: 2) states that Doha does not have clear positions on international affairs. On climate change, this is the case. Despite what Qatari leaders want to convey – notably by promoting sustainable development as one of the three pillars of Qatar’s National Vision 2030 - the country’s cooperation on climate change has been extremely superficial. Qatar makes higher claims on its constructive participation to the fight against climate change; yet it has not done more, if not less, than its GCC neighbours.³⁰ Overall, there seems to be little support at the highest level of the state – in the *emiri diwan* – to develop a coherent and innovative policy on climate change. In practice for instance, Qatar has never showed any interest, according to a UN official, to work and welcome the United Nations Environment Program in Doha.³¹ The punctual attention paid to the issue of climate change in Qatar appears to be part of the state’s branding strategy. Thus, Qatar, one of the most polluting states in the world (per capita) has welcomed COP18.³²

²⁹ Abu Dhabi convinced a majority of the international community to vote for the Emirate by promising that the office space for IRENA will be free of charge and that USD 135 million will be donated to help the agency in its incubation period until 2015. Additionally, an annual sum of USD 50 million from the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development has been allocated to support IRENA-endorsed projects in developing nations over 7 years “to move the world to a renewable future” »(Reiche 2010: 2399); Interview, Environmental Specialist, Dubai, 28/10/2015

³⁰ Interview, Qatar University, Doha, 11/02/2016 ; Interview, ADNOC, Abu Dhabi, 5/11/2015.

³¹ Interview, UNESCO, Doha, 26/02/2016

³² The most important result of which has been, the establishment of a Directorate for Climate Change at the Ministry of Environment

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More interestingly, Qatar's cooperation has been uneven: it stood forward to welcome COP18, created a Directorate for Climate Change (DCC) in its midst, and then lapsed into inertia. Qatar is a case in point of the paradoxical effect of the concentration of power in a few hands, which leads to a more fragmented action both domestically and internationally. Unsteady, inconsistent cooperation in international negotiations and representation stems from internal Qatari bureaucratic rivalries and a segmented administration.

Regarding Qatar's cooperation on data collection and mainstreaming, the appointed interlocutor was since 2009 – and to this day – Qatar's Ministry of Environment and its Directorate of Climate Change. Unlike Ministries that preceded it, however, it grew with limited human and material capacities to address its tasks. Path dependency plays a strong role in limiting the Ministry's consolidation as the focal point of Qatar's administration to support the international partnership on climate change. The Ministry of Environment has grown out in the shadows of other administrations. It continues to have little means to collect its own data regarding Qatar's progress on diverse topics (CDM, etc.). In early 2016, an engineer from the DCC mentioned that the department's capacities to monitor the implementation of environmental indicators developed under the MGDs and SDGs will still in the making.³³ Instead, the Ministry relies on the goodwill of other Ministries, such as the Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics for the collection of primary data; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the production and the gathering of environment-related indicators for the former Millennium Development Goals, the Ministry of Energy; as well as non-administrative actors, such as the research branch of Qatar Petroleum (closed during the financial crisis).³⁴ Symbolically, COP18 was not chaired by the Ministry of Environment, but by two leaders, the Minister of Energy, and the former head of Qatar Petroleum.³⁵

The Climate Change Directorate has however never been able to impose a direction to these other actors nor take over their data-collection tasks. In rather blunt terms, a French diplomat indicated that "the Ministry of Environment is appalling in its poor record".³⁶ But has the Ministry ever tried to take the lead? This is an important dimension of the rentier state: the lack of a record might be the result of bureaucratic rivalries – other Ministries refusing to hand

³³ Interview, Department of Climate Change, Ministry of Environment, Doha, 21/01/2016.

³⁴ Interview, Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics, Doha, 17/02/2016; Qatar National Research Fund, Doha, 18/02/2016

³⁵ Interview, Arab Youth Movement for Climate, Doha, 15/01/2016

³⁶ Interview, French Embassy, Doha, 10/02/2016

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over new competences to the newcomer – as well by sheer inertia of the Ministry itself. First, at the highest level of power, the *emiri diwan*, no one seems to promote and represent the pro-climate change line of thinking. As claimed by a youth activist:

“For influence you need to get back to the Emir’s cabinet and I don’t think that they have anyone there who has any particular views on climate change, the way they have with Sultan Al Jaber in the UAE.³⁷ Here if you want to change, you have to have the approval of the emir’s office.”³⁸

It appears in this case that the DCC’s management had done little to expand. In human terms, out of 14 people working for the department, only 3 are dedicated to multilateralism and international partnerships.³⁹ Reforms are blocked by the inertia of lower levels of administration, here rather by lack of skills than commitment. On the one hand, the DCC relies on young inexperienced graduates. In early 2016, when I visited the Ministry of Environment I was received by a Palestinian engineer. He had been taking care, alone, of coordinating the action of all Qatari ministries in preparation of the Paris COP21.⁴⁰ The engineer was a young man of 24 years’ old and had just graduated from university... On the other hand, a characteristic of the rentier bureaucracy, the Ministry is still home to older generations of civil servants that lack fundamental knowledge and interest in the topic of climate change. According to other Ministries, its personnel is in great need of training.⁴¹ This enabled one of my interlocutors to conclude that “The people who work at the Ministry of Environment don’t count so much”.⁴²

The Ministry of Environment and the DCC appear as minor actors rather as a result of lack of self-drive than because of bureaucratic competition. But the dynamics of the rentier state, enable other, pro-active, to develop alternative ways to reinforce Qatar’s participation in the international partnership on climate change. Here, the concentration of power into the hands of the Al Thani’s, has enabled the creation and coexistence of different fiefdoms, some active – what Hertog terms as the “islands of efficiency”; others alike to the DCC, inactive.⁴³ On the

³⁷ I shall come back to this famous persona later on.

³⁸ Interview, Arab Youth Movement for Climate, Doha, 5/01/2016

³⁹ Interview, DCC, Ministry of Environment, Doha, 21/01/2016

⁴⁰ That was, according to him, the reason why Qatar was one of the last countries to submit their INDCs in preparation for the conference.

⁴¹ Interview, Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics, Doha, 17/02/2016

⁴² Interview, Arab Youth Movement for Climate, op. cit.

⁴³ Having dwelled already on the passive Ministry of Environment, I add here the similar behaviour of other actors: the Abdallah Foundation – which has produced only one report – or Qatar Petroleum (which has closed its research branch).

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active side,⁴⁴ most notable is the environmental initiatives of the Former Emir's first wife, Sheikha Mouza and of her Qatar Foundation. Nested within a specific legal framework that prevents any overview from the Qatari administration, the Foundation has managed to appear as, to the detriment of ministerial bureaucracy, as Qatar's interlocutor on climate change issues in Qatar. Initiatives such as research on environmental systems (the Qatar Environment and Energy Research Institute), or the promotion of new environmental standards in the construction sector (Musheireb Properties) at the national level, are credited to this organization (Qatar Foundation 2012).⁴⁵ Similarly, Kahramma, a state-owned company specialized in the distribution of electricity, took further importance in Qatar's dialogue within the international partnership on climate change. With the blessing of the *emiri diwan*, Kahramma took up on Qatar's public relations campaign in preparation of the COP21 – because again, the Ministry of Environment showed little interest in exercising its competence to do so, despite leading the delegation to the conference.⁴⁶ Finally, many of the domestic achievements falling under the Ministry of Environment have in fact been completed – in parallel to the action of the Ministry – by a private engineering organization, “tasked by the Emir to implement projects in a short span of time – and that duplicates the work that Ministries should be doing themselves”.⁴⁷ These elements illustrate how segmented the sector of climate change is in Qatar. Information is increasingly compartmentalized. Little do civil servants in the Ministry know what is being done at Qatar Foundation, or at Kahramma (and vice-versa).

Such bureaucratic dysfunctionalities might appear common to any sizeable bureaucracy. In Qatar, however, an autocratic country of 300,000 employing about 45,000 (GLMM 2014)⁴⁸ civil servants, this is more surprising. Indeed, could a reform not be taken to reinforce the state apparatus, firing and replacing people? Remarkably, while all criticize the Ministry of Environment, no one has dissolved it. Instead, it has been buried under additional ministerial layers in early 2016; when it merged with the Ministry of Municipality and Environment (QNA

⁴⁴ Are not presented here, but only mentioned other interlocutors on climate change: the Qatar Water and Electricity and a research cluster at Qatar University.

⁴⁵ If Qatar Foundation has had the leeway to initiate policies in many different fields (including environmentalism), this was not always with a great managerial success. At the time of my visit in Doha early 2016, Qatar Foundation was being restructured and some costly projects abandoned (Interview, French Embassy, 10/02/2016).

⁴⁶ Interview, Kahramma, Doha, 3/02/2016

⁴⁷ Interview, French Embassy, Doha, 10/02/2016. This institutional set-up is typical of the « islands of efficiency » described by Hertog : a small team of young Western-educated experts protected by a reformist patron.

⁴⁸ 45,000 corresponds to the number of economically active people working in Qatar (Qatari and non-Qatari) and occupying positions as « Legislators, Senior Officials and Managers ». This provides an estimate of the top-tier administration of the country.

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2016). This is in line with findings on the dynamics of the rentier state: because Qatar's bureaucracy has become heavier, it becomes more difficult to re-engineer. Rather than the full re-foundation of a climate change diplomacy in Qatar, we see the coexistence of an administrative patchwork, that overlaps between the strictly administrative (Ministry of Energy, Kahramma) and the private initiative (Qatar Foundation).

From this we may understand that a segmented bureaucracy in Qatar creates compartmentalized information, which is an impediment to sustained partnership on climate change. Different administrations apply different procedures to their cooperation with international bodies. As noted by a UN representative working in Doha: “this is honestly a nightmare. The administration is complicated (...). This creates specific conditions that are extremely complicated for us!”⁴⁹ In the process of data collection and mainstreaming, this state of affairs is likely to endure under the new partnership framework established with the SDGs. A total of 169 indicators will have to be monitored. If this task is considered – yet again – as a governmental priority in Qatar,⁵⁰ a clear hierarchy between the different actors involved in this task is not yet established. In its place, an ill-defined new institutional layer, the “High Committee”, will coordinate the work of different ministries”.⁵¹

To what extent is this mechanism at work in a most similar case such as the UAE? The striking difference being the UAE's federal structure, I shall examine how this in turn affects the latter's international cooperation, by investigating the horizontal links existing notably between Abu Dhabi and Dubai.

Centralization, federalism and state-building in the UAE

Why Abu Dhabi, not the UAE, is similar to Qatar

Alike to its neighbour, the UAE's approach to climate change is also superficial and slow-paced.⁵² It reflects at time a quest for visibility rather than in-depth cooperation. In the 2000s's for instance, the UAE simultaneously supported “Saudi/OPEC positions, perceived by other parties as obstructionist, while Abu Dhabi simultaneously sought international credibility for its

⁴⁹ Interview, UNESCO, Doha, 25/02/2016

⁵⁰ technical meetings will now be set up on a monthly basis to discuss these indicators

⁵¹ Interview, Ministry of Development Planning and Statistics, 17/02/2016

⁵² It took 6 years for the UAE, between 2000 and 2006, to present its initial national communication to the UNFCCC, partly due to lack of data availability (Luomi 2014).

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alternative energy leadership aspirations” (Luomi 2014: 201). The Janus-faced approach of the UAE to climate change reflects the segmentation of its bureaucracy. Indeed, the dynamic of the rentier state may explain both the lenient and obstructive policies that emerge simultaneously on climate change.

Similarly to Qatar, the UAE's Ministry for Environment and Water is not central to the production, collection and mainstreaming of data regarding climate change. Initially created to back an increasing interest in the UAE for climate change after the 1992 Rio Summit, the ministry was soon reduced to a mere rubber-stamping role and a poor policy entrepreneur. It continues to depend on the *bon vouloir* of the Ministry of Energy – the successor to the Ministry of Petroleum – on Abu Dhabi's oil companies, Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC), and Abu Dhabi Company for Onshore Petroleum Operations (ADCO), and the Environment Agency Abu Dhabi, to collect its data. Climate change and environment are by large, still considered as derivatives of energy production, rather than a field of interest in their own right. Thus, most initiatives are taken within the research programs of major energy actors in the country that are more “focussed on rules than on real impact”.⁵³ While the environmental competences of the Ministry of Environment are increasing, its autonomy is somewhat contested by its predecessors, such as the Ministry of Energy. The latter for instance also hires trained environmental-savvy experts⁵⁴ within its Directorate of Clean Energy and Climate Change. In addition, the Ministry of Energy still supplants *de facto* the Ministry of Environment in the preparation and negotiation of international conferences, as in the case of the last COP21.⁵⁵

The question I asked about Qatar also holds for the UAE: is the Ministry of Environment's weakness due to competition from other bureaucracies, or rather to its own inertia? My study tends to favour the last option. Indeed, notwithstanding the given institutional constraints (the weight of the Ministry of Energy and oil companies), the Ministry of Environment has decided *not* to take further initiatives on climate change. A testimony to this is the case of the CITES convention, which shows the coexistence of pro-active and passive bureaucracies in the same country:

⁵³ Interview, Petroleum Institute, Abu Dhabi, 10/11/2016

⁵⁴ Interview, Directorate of Clean Energy and Climate Change, Ministry of Energy, Abu Dhabi, 19/11/2015

⁵⁵ In practice, most working groups preparing COP21 worked under the guidance of the Ministry of Energy (interviews).

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“CITES for instance was first under the authority of the Fisheries Ministry who through its inaction has pushed the UAE out of the convention. The Environment Agency Abu Dhabi took over and because this could only be a governmental issue taken at federal level, entrusted the Ministry of Environment and Water with it – pushed it to do it. Hence it was not the ministry which was trying to take over and centralize but rather Abu Dhabi level which was pushing for federal level. Still to this day, if the Ministry of Environment has the authority over CITES, the Environment Agency Abu Dhabi keeps its scientific authority over the scientific content of the convention”.⁵⁶

And, eloquently concluding to the role of the Ministry of Environment and Water in working with UNEP on the UNEP-CMS: “we [the EAD] still host them because they [the Ministry] don’t care!”⁵⁷ Have the repeated failures and apathy of the Ministry of Environment condemned its civil servants? While the heads of the administration were removed recently (QUOTE), again, the dynamic of the rentier state, ever more difficult to “re-engineer” as it expands, has deterred bottom-down reforms. Rather, duplications of efforts through parallel tracks have emerged, as in Qatar.

Climate change policy enterprises may be summarized in one name, that of Sultan Al Jaber (The National). This policy entrepreneur, building on his multiple hats (a reformist Minister, a diplomat and a businessman) has been able to influence the UAE’s stance on climate change.⁵⁸ As a reformist Minister first, Al Jaber has successfully set up the Masdar Institute, a research and education centre specialized in renewable energies. This set-up provides a space for alternative proposals to policy-makers (to those formed by the oil companies), as well as a training schools for environmental specialists working in the relevant Ministries. In the international partnership for climate change, the Masdar Institute is a pillar of the “the Designated National Authority (DNA) for the CDM, a precondition for participation in the mechanism” since 2006 (Luomi 2014: 213). As a diplomat secondly, Al Jaber successfully bypassed the overweight Emirati administration by promoting within various Ministries a small team of young, educated and pro-active followers. First within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’, Al Jaber imposed a Directorate for Climate Change. Then once the small team had proven its

⁵⁶ Interview, EAD, Abu Dhabi, 25/10/2015

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Such accumulation of public mandates is common currency in the Gulf : in the autocratic context, there are very few policy-makers, and the collusion of private and public activities is not considered as a necessity (save, to some extent in Kuwait) (Herb 2014 : 185).

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worth, it took over the leadership of the Ministry of Environment. a small group of pro-active experts capable of implementing policies rapidly, in contrast to the burdened bureaucracy. Al Jaber brought these different elements – Masdar and a more visible climate change diplomacy – together in the successful “diplomatic campaign” organized to win over the International Renewable Energy Agency in Abu Dhabi. As a result, external observers perceived as of 2008 a change in the international stance of the UAE in the international partnership for climate change (Luomi 2014: 212). Third, as a businessman, Al Jaber promoted renewable energy business in the UAE by setting up Mubadala, a state-owned company largely tied to the diplomatic action of IRENA and of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Directorate for Climate Change.⁵⁹

Comparing and contrasting the entrepreneurship of Al Jaber and the Ministry of Environment confirms the dynamic of the rentier state bureaucracy and its impact on international partnerships. Like Qatar, Abu Dhabi is characterized by bureaucratic duplications, partial reform of institutions (Al Jaber has “taken over” the Ministry of Environment leadership, but second- and third-tier civil servants are protected by the unstated rentier contract). In the UAE more than in Qatar, the rentier dynamic is at stake. Despite the activism of an important member of the ruling elite, reforms are partial. At this point in time, despite Al Jaber’s reformist efforts, the UAE’s domestic coalition to support the international partnership for climate change remains fragmented. In 2014 for instance, the aforementioned DNA was still composed of two committees, one by the Ministry of Energy; and the other, by the Environment Agency Abu Dhabi (Luomi 2014: 213). This supports Hertog’s claim that the concentration of power leads to further fragmentation and inertia, to the detriment of a well-defined international cooperation.

Why the UAE is strikingly different from Qatar

Abu Dhabi and Qatar illustrate rentier state dynamics and ensuing administrative mayhems. However, taken as the whole seven emirates, the UAE does not exactly follow Hertog’s dynamic. I argue that the federal-like structure of the UAE interacts with the rentier dynamics described above. Federalism in the UAE is associated with the redistribution of rent and is increasingly important to clarify as the state modernizes (Young 2014: 24). Indeed, given the

⁵⁹ Indeed, one will interestingly note that aid projects channelled through IRENA (and funded by the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development) mobilize Abu Dhabi-based know-how. Projects under the IRENA-ADFD Pacific Partnership Trust Fund do not therefore proceed through ordinary tender procedures, but are the monopoly of Mubadala, the state-owned company.

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uneven distribution of oil across the country (95% of reserves belong to Abu Dhabi), distribution of rent is central to the relationship between the wealthy centre, Abu Dhabi, and, save for Dubai, the poorer periphery of the emirates of Ras Al Kaimah, Fujairah, Sharjah, Umm Al Qawaim and Ajman (Herb 2014: 108).

In her contribution of federal dynamics in the UAE, Young argues that the UAE was created to distribute wealth and avoid dissent in a conflict-prone region, not because of a shared pre-existing Emirati identity (Young 2014: 29). In a more nuanced account, Herb identifies Abu Dhabi’s strive to build the UAE federal state, a dynamic obtruded in particular by the centrifugal force of Dubai. Young and Herb are interested in domestic politics and overlook the implications this “federalism-in-the-making” may have on international relations of the UAE.

I argue that Emirati mechanisms of internal governance, whether formal (a strict separation of competences, as in the UAE Constitution) or informal (tribal, “family” practices) are likely, in the case of the UAE, to stabilize its international cooperation. This argument is simple: because reforms are negotiated within the UAE (notably between its major stakeholders, Abu Dhabi and Dubai), once they are adopted, it is more difficult to retract, withdraw from commitments made.⁶⁰ Crucial in explaining this effect is that in the UAE the “internal need to domesticate conflict has been far more difficult than to lead external relations” (Young 2014: 6). At times thus the role of Dubai has also weighed on the UAE’s capital, Abu Dhabi, to promote and *lock-in* a more favourable stance towards the climate change international partnership.

On the one hand Abu Dhabi desires to establish a functioning federal state (in which of course it has the prime role, notably in international affairs). I have showed how Abu Dhabi has been crucial in transferring and centralizing environmental competences to a federal Ministry of Environment, first through the work of the Environment Agency Abu Dhabi, second through the reforms led by Sultan Al Jaber. In that respect, the international partnership for climate change may be interpreted in different ways. Is Abu Dhabi’s IRENA campaign a mere “branding strategy”, the act of a “prestige-hungry” state? Rather, I’m inclined to think that if this is the case, it does not exclude the fact that this campaign is an instance of “state-building in a hurry” (Young 2014: 83). Indeed, a domestic actor may also seek international legitimacy for purely domestic reasons (Wolfers XXX; Nonneman 1988). Thus, federalist Abu Dhabi may seek

⁶⁰ This argument builds rooted in particular in the works of Sophie Meunier on federalism implications on international negotiations (with the case of the European Union negotiations within the framework of the World Trade Organization), see Meunier 2006.

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international recognition to establish a legitimate state, and seizes various opportunities, including environmentalism, to serve its own legitimacy, but also that of the UAE (Luomi 2014: 25).

On the other hand, what role does Dubai play in this forceful tango, and how does it affect the UAE's contribution to the international partnership on climate change? Structurally, Dubai's limited distribution of hydrocarbons has sook early on alternative sources of revenue. Alongside its objective of developing a knowledge, touristic and financial economy, Dubai has promoted the "green economy", thanks notably to its reformist cosmopolitan skilled labour and encouraging elite.⁶¹ In Dubai, unlike Abu Dhabi, there is some proto-form of a "green civil society" that is progressively spilling-over to its hydrocarbon-rich neighbour.⁶² Thus, the ideology supported in Dubai is one that is more lenient towards adaptation and mitigation of climate change.

Secondly, as regards policy-formulation, Dubai has been key in reforming and consolidating the UAE's federal bureaucracy. Increasingly, Abu Dhabi and Dubai have reached some internal, informal, division of labour by which Abu Dhabi focusses on diplomatic functions, while Dubai supervises domestic reforms, including in Abu Dhabi.⁶³ On data collection and processing, for instance, Dubai has taken a leadership role. A fundamental weakness of the UAE's international cooperation, data quality and transparency, has been at the forefront of the Emir of Dubai's domestic reforms. While the federal Ministry of Environment was incapable of providing detailed data to the UNFCCC in the early 2000's, the ruler of Dubai decided to reform first the dysfunctional federal agency for the collection and mainstreaming of data, the National Bureau of Statistics. First created within the "incubator" of the Ruler's cabinet, a new agency, the Emirates Competitiveness Council was then transferred to the Federal Government under a Ministry of State, before being merged in early 2016 with the National Bureau of Statistics under a new Federal Statistical Authority.⁶⁴ In parallel, the Emir of Dubai has increased pressure on the Ministry of Environment to monitor the application of international requirements on the collection of environmental data. As indicated by a civil servant:

⁶¹ Interview, Lootah Biofuels, Dubai, 19/11/2015

⁶² The UAE is indeed a more fertile setting for the flourishing of « civil society » than its Qatari neighbour (Anrouf 2008: 10). Civil society however is somewhat of an exaggeration to describe the corporate responsibility branch of major companies based in Dubai, and to some extent in Abu Dhabi.

⁶³ Interview, Ministry of International of Cooperation and Development, Abu Dhabi, 24/10/2015

⁶⁴ Interview, Emirates Competitiveness Council, Dubai, 11/11/2015

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We are in charge and responsible of the work of (...) six working groups, which we do under the direct authority of the Prime Minister. (...) Performance is key here. It all cascades from the international level to the local level. For each different things we have a series of indicators that are very very precise and we need to respond to these”.⁶⁵

These brief accounts summarize the interactive relationship between Dubai and Abu Dhabi. The former experiments policies; while the second approves and mainstreams them at the federal level. This domestic aspect is crucial in laying the foundations of the UAE's international cooperation on climate change: at the international level, Abu Dhabi cannot negate the policy efforts taken by Dubai; similarly, the international arena is useful venue for Abu Dhabi to consolidate the competences of the UAE federal structure.

Luomi thus intuitively picked up an important difference between the UAE and Qatar and its consequences for their contribution to the international partnership on climate change, stressing that “in the case of the UAE [as opposed to its GCC neighbours], changes at the domestic level interacted with the international level, creating new foreign policy priorities (...) while in Qatar, owing to the strong ownership of external climate policy by the country's energy sector, in the absence of major domestic developments in the area the country's external climate policy remained static” (Luomi 2014: 199).

Conclusion

Abu Dhabi and Qatar, two very similar actors, are treading diverging multilateral paths. Qatar's way is full of zig-zags, two steps forward, one backwards. The UAE, despite similar initial reluctance to walk the line, has moved forward more smoothly. I have argued that the interaction of vertical and horizontal links; of state-building and federalism lead to different outcomes.

Centralization of power in an elite, or elites, is therefore a factor in the shaping of international cooperation policy. On the one hand, Qatar's greater power concentration has more extreme impacts (positive or negative for that matter) on cooperation. Internal institutional duplications are overall weakening Qatar's consistency in international cooperation. The multiplication of interlocutors, the frequent yet partial merging of public authorities, the

⁶⁵ Interview, Department of Green Strategy, Ministry of Environment and Water, Dubai Office, 19/11/2015

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circumvention of existing rules by actors make it a IMPREVISIBLE hard interlocutor to follow. Contrary to Abu Dhabi, which for internal reasons strives for international cooperation, Qatar is more led by the aforementioned ‘branding’ strategy that sees in international cooperation, as crudely put by a UN official, ‘a way to get our logo unto their conference brochures’.⁶⁶ The UAE, on the other hand, has a different institutional set-up. The iterative relationship between Abu Dhabi and Dubai probably bring about slower,⁶⁷ but more sustainable, change. The UAE is not immune however to change. If I argue that its federal dynamics are favourable to locking-in preferences in the international arena more durably, there remain some issues to make the UAE cooperation more effective. The use of informal networks in policy-making strategies is one of those: the private circulation of information in the country, that often disregards transparency when the different emirates negotiate, does not facilitate international organizations’ work: these are often informed at the last minute of projects or initiatives; and do not necessarily know where the decision-making power lies.

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⁶⁶ Interview, Senior official, UNESCO Office, Doha, 25 February 2016.

⁶⁷ Herb describes the UAE as the country of the “triumph of status quo” (Herb 2014: 126-129)!

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