

# IN SEARCH OF LEGITIMACY IN TIMES OF CRISIS

## **Governance Transfer by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)**

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## **Abstract**

At first sight, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) seems to be a least likely candidate for a regional organization (RO) prescribing and promoting (good) governance in its member states: It consists of authoritarian monarchies and is a strong proponent of the principles of national sovereignty and non-interference. This paper, however, shows that the GCC does engage in governance transfer. Reacting to a crisis of legitimacy, the rulers of the GCC states have resorted to governance transfer as a strategy of legitimation. In certain policy fields they prescribe and promote good governance standards to suggest to their respective citizenry as well as to external investors that they are actively trying to tackle their governance problems in these fields. Governance transfer by the GCC can be conceptualized as an institutional choice by the rulers of the GCC states which is supposed to ensure their regimes' survival in times of a crisis of legitimacy.

## Vorwort / Foreword

Tanja A. Börzel

Dieses *Berliner Arbeitspapier zur Europäischen Integration* ist eines von dreien, die auf der Grundlage von herausragenden Projektkurs-Arbeiten zum Governance-Transfer von Regionalorganisation entstanden sind. Der Projektkurs „Governance Transfer by Regional Organizations“ fand im Wintersemester 2011/2012 und im Sommersemester 2012 unter der Leitung von Tanja A. Börzel und Vera van Hüllen am Otto-Suhr-Institut für Politikwissenschaft statt. Unter Rückgriff auf den gemeinsam entwickelten konzeptionellen Rahmen leisten Maria Haimerl (Golf-Kooperationsrat), Sebastian Schneider (Shanghai Organisation für Zusammenarbeit) und Lena Wegener (Mercosur) einen Beitrag zur Vergleichenden Regionalismusforschung. Diese Forschungsagenda hat in den letzten Jahren auch im Umfeld des Jean Monnet Lehrstuhls und der Arbeitsstelle Europäische Integration an Bedeutung gewonnen und weist mit ihrem vergleichenden Blick auf regionale Integration weltweit über unsere Erfahrungen mit Europa und der Europäischen Union hinaus. Die drei Arbeiten beleuchten aus unterschiedlicher Perspektive, inwieweit Standardsetzung im Bereich von (Good) Governance auf regionaler Ebene von den Mitgliedstaaten zur Legitimierung ihrer (autoritären) Regime oder auch der Regionalorganisation selbst eingesetzt wird.

This is one of three *Berlin Working Papers on European Integration* that are based on excellent term papers investigating governance transfer by regional organizations. Maria Haimerl (Gulf Cooperation Council), Sebastian Schneider (Shanghai Cooperation Organization), and Lena Wegener (Mercosur) conducted their research during a one-year course at the Otto Suhr Institute for Political Science under the supervision of Tanja A. Börzel and Vera van Hüllen. Drawing on a jointly developed analytical framework, they all contribute to the current research agenda of comparative regionalism which has gained prominence over the past few years. It has also taken root in the context of the Jean Monnet Chair and the Centre for European Integration, challenging students of regional integration to go beyond our experiences with Europe and the European Union. The three papers investigate in how far member states use the reference to (good) governance standards at the regional level as a strategy of legitimation for their (authoritarian) regimes or the regional organizations themselves.

## 1. Introduction

Since the 1990s in particular, regional organizations (ROs) have started to prescribe and promote standards for legitimate governance institutions<sup>1</sup> in their member states. In their founding treaties and political declarations many ROs have included a commitment to democracy or human rights, they have developed suspension clauses for the protection of democracy and human rights or have defined the respect of common values as precondition for membership in their organizations (Börzel et al. 2013: 9-11). The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), which was founded by the six gulf monarchies<sup>2</sup> Oman, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Qatar in Abu Dhabi in 1981, can be considered as a least likely candidate for governance transfer. First, all of its member states are authoritarian monarchies (Lucas 2004: 103). In the Supreme Council Meetings the rulers congratulate each other to their anniversaries of ruling:

„Their Majesties and Royal Highnesses [...] expressed their sincere congratulations to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Fahd bin Abdul Aziz Al-Saud, King of Saudi Arabia on the occasion of completion of 20 years of his rule” (GCC 2001a).

Well illustrated by this quote, the GCC can be defined as guardian of the traditional forces of the region (Richter 2011: 5). This characteristic has *inter alia* recently been confirmed by the intervention of the GCC “Peninsula Shield Force” (forces from Saudi Arabia and UAE) in Bahrain to suppress an uprising against the ruling family (Tétreault 2011: 632) and the invitation to the monarchies Jordan and Morocco to join the “club of monarchies” (Colombo 2012: 10). Second, together with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the League of Arab States (LAS), the GCC can be considered as one of the strongest proponents of the principles of national sovereignty and non-interference, rejecting interference in internal affairs (GCC 2009: 13). Finally, the

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<sup>1</sup> Governance institutions are defined as “norms, rules, and procedures that are the basis for the provision of collective goods and collectively binding rules (what), defining the who (governance actors: state and non-state), how (modes of social coordination: hierarchical and non-hierarchical), and for whom (governance collective) of governance” (Beisheim et al. 2011).

<sup>2</sup> Formally, only five out of the six states are monarchies. The UAE are a federation of seven emirates. However, to define it as a “republic” would be a fallacy, as the competences are exclusively diffused among the seven dynasties (Schmidmayr 2010: 66). Therefore, all of the GCC countries will be defined as monarchies.

GCC remains a “loose framework” (Solingen 2009: 38). The GCC bodies do not possess supranational powers and decision-making procedures “generally reflect those of the six national governments in their opaque and informal nature” (Legrenzi 2008: 112). Considering these characteristics by the GCC, one would expect that the organization does not engage in governance transfer. Indeed, analyzing basic documents like the GCC’s founding charter (1981) or political declarations by the Supreme Council, there are no instances in which the GCC demands or promotes the building or modification of its member states’ governance institutions with reference to the concepts of human rights, democracy or rule of law. Nevertheless, in this paper I claim that the GCC *does* engage in governance transfer: Having a closer look at different policy fields, it becomes obvious that the GCC actually demands and promotes the building and modification of its member states’ governance institutions, the concept of good governance being the point of reference.<sup>3</sup> Starting from this initial empirical observation, this paper seeks to elucidate *under which conditions* the GCC has started to engage in governance transfer and *how* it exactly engages in governance transfer – which policy fields it engages in, which standards it promotes and which instruments it applies. The period of analysis will encompass the time between 1981 and 2011.

The paper proceeds in six steps: First, I will review the state of research and conceptualize governance transfer as a strategy of legitimation by the authoritarian rulers of the Gulf states. Second, the methodology will be clarified. Subsequently, I will map and discuss governance transfer by the GCC. In the conclusion, I will point out which lessons can be drawn from the results about governance transfer by ROs of authoritarian regimes in general and how the findings of this paper relate to findings about governance transfer of other ROs.

## 2. Strategies of Legitimation and the GCC

In order to find an answer to the question under which conditions and how the GCC engages in governance transfer, two strands of literature have to be reconsidered. First, I review works on authoritarian regimes and what they can tell us about the conditions under which authoritarian regimes resort to governance reforms as strategies of

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<sup>3</sup> By the term good governance I refer to a narrow conceptualization, which is comparable to the concept as originally proposed by the World Bank and focuses on strengthening the output legitimacy of governance institutions (Börzel et al. 2011: 7).

legitimation. This literature also points out how authoritarian regimes pursue these reforms. Thereby, I will mainly focus on the literature about the Gulf countries. In the second part of this chapter I will review the literature on regionalism and regional cooperation in the Gulf. Under which conditions did the GCC states start to cooperate? What have been the driving forces and characteristics of the authoritarian regimes' regional cooperation? In the third part I will draw on these findings in order to conceptualize governance transfer as a strategy of legitimation.

## 2.1. Strategies of Legitimation by Authoritarian Regimes

Any authoritarian regime – as any other political regime – needs to create and maintain legitimacy in order to survive over time (Murphy 1998: 72; Schlumberger 2010: 233; Bank 2004: 157). In addition to repression and institutional cooptation, strategies of legitimation<sup>4</sup> are seen as an important explanatory factor of the stability<sup>5</sup> of authoritarian regimes (Gerschewski 2010: 47). The importance of legitimacy and the rulers' different strategies of legitimation have been examined in many works on authoritarian regimes (for example Bank 2004; Al-Rasheed 2009; Yamani 2009). As Murphy elaborates, “in times of crisis the need to establish the legitimacy of both the ruling elites and the political system itself becomes all more important” (1998: 72). In these times of crisis of legitimacy, authoritarian regimes often resort to economic and/or political governance reforms in order to re-establish or regain legitimacy. When pursuing strategies of legitimation, rulers usually address different audiences: they can target the citizenry at large, elites or certain social groups as well as different international and external actors (Bank 2004: 160; Schlumberger 2010: 236-237).

Referring to the question of how they usually pursue these strategies, authors speak of “survival strategies”, a term coined by Brumberg (1995): “These survival strategies essentially consist of initiating only minimal, and sometimes simply contrived, reforms in the economic and political fields that do not touch upon vested interests and that leave the political status quo largely intact” (Bank 2004: 158f). Thus, the term “survival strat-

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<sup>4</sup> Barker conceptualizes legitimation as “[...] an active, contested political process, rather than legitimacy as an abstract political resource. Since it is an activity, not a property, it involves creation, modification, innovation, and transformation” (2001: 28).

<sup>5</sup> In the 1990s the research on authoritarian regimes has mainly focused on the potential for democratic transitions. In the 2000s the research's focus has shifted towards the perceived stability of authoritarian regimes (literature reviews by Bank 2009; Kailitz 2009a; Köllner 2008). Many assumptions of this research have been criticized in view of the Arab uprisings of 2011, for example Harders (2011: 11).

egy” emphasizes that the interest of authoritarian rulers in solving the problems which have caused the crisis of legitimacy is compromised by the wish not to endanger their own position of power.

Examining authoritarian legitimacy in the Arab Middle East, Schlumberger claims that traditional, material, ideological and religious legitimacy are the “four key pillars” on which the non-repressive survival strategies of Arab autocracies have rested over the past decades (2010: 246). As for the Gulf states, authors define three main sources of legitimacy: traditional, religious and material legitimacy (Weiffen 2008: 2588; Albrecht/Schlumberger 2004: 377). Thereby, material legitimacy, which equates to output legitimacy<sup>6</sup>, is considered to be “the cornerstone of these regimes’ legitimacy and viability” (Solingen 2009: 3; also Gray 2011: 32). The 1990s have been a time of a crisis of legitimacy for the Gulf states, inducing the rulers to engage in reforms. This crisis has primarily originated from economic problems associated with population growth, economic mismanagement and world economic conditions such as the fluctuation of oil prices (Najem 2003: 14).

The respective conceptual literature dealing with material legitimacy is the “rentier state approach”. Its most basic assumption is that, since a state receives external income in form of oil rents and distributes it to society in form of welfare benefits, it is relieved of having to impose taxation, meaning that it does not have to offer concessions to society such as a democratic bargain (Wiese 2012: 213). The assumption of a “ruling bargain” (Wiese 2012: 213) or “national contract” (Etheshami 2003: 60) rests on this practice. In how far this “ruling bargain” meets actual consent by the population is difficult to ascertain (Wiese 2012: 213) and the approach has been criticized on many accounts.<sup>7</sup> Either way, one can argue that the effectiveness in a mainly economic sense or the output of the system are a central pillar for the legitimacy as they are the basis for the functioning of the “contract” between the rulers and the ruled. If the effectiveness of the regime is compromised this can have serious consequences for the perceived legitimacy among the population.

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<sup>6</sup> Output legitimacy “refers to the extent to which the effects of political decisions are perceived to be in the interest of the people. In this view, good governance is about solving societal problems in an effective and efficient manner” (Börzel 2009). Input legitimacy “(...) requires political decisions to correspond to the preferences of affected people. (...) good governance must ensure that the preferences of the people are translated into political decisions” (Börzel 2009).

<sup>7</sup> It is inter alia questioned that a rentier economy automatically depoliticizes the population (Mitchell 2010: 279; Tétreault 2011: 631). Gause argues that depoliticizing effects are real, but are only seen at the beginning stages of rentier state development (1994: 81). Gray stresses that rentierism has to be seen through a dynamic lens, taking into consideration changing socioeconomic demands by the population (2011: 23).

In the Gulf states, the economic problems of the 1990s limited the ability of these states to fulfill their “national contract” as they made financial cuts in social services and the introduction of taxes necessary (Schmidmayr 2010: 69; Etheshami 2003: 60). This resulted in protests and the rise of mainly Islamist oppositional forces, especially in Bahrain and Saudi-Arabia – challenging the legitimacy of the incumbent regimes (Najem 2003: 14). Due to grave economic difficulties and social tensions, the rulers had to consider the introduction of economic and political reforms (Etheshami 2003: 54). Thereby, they mainly addressed their citizenry. However, while this crisis of legitimacy found its expression in internal instability (protests, uprisings), it also resulted in external consequences: The Gulf states were (different to most other Arab states) not dependent on the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) or other aid donors. Yet, they were (and are) heavily dependent on international trade,<sup>8</sup> especially in the face of declining oil rents (Najem 2003: 14). As Solingen suggests, the regimes’ need for economic prosperity as the cornerstone of their legitimacy requires *inter alia* capital, investments and domestic stability (2009: 3). Therefore, with the reforms they also aimed at international actors (mainly foreign investors), conveying the impression that they were actively trying to get out of economic and political crises.

With regard to the content of reforms, the rulers were referring to “internationally recognized ‘indicators’ associated with ‘good’ governance, including transparency, accountability, absence of corruption [...]” (Etheshami 2003: 55; also Najem 2003: 14).<sup>9</sup> However, with the exception of Kuwait, reforms in the Gulf countries were widely characterized as “survival strategies”: “[...] we see less substantial meaning to these reforms and more superficial manipulation of democratic symbols meant to appease domestic demand and appeal to the international mindset” (Mitchell 2010: 277; also Weiffen 2008: 2597; Schmidmayr 2010: 72).

The literature offers important insights under which conditions and how authoritarian rulers in general and the Gulf rulers in particular have resorted to strategies of legitimation which mostly take the form of “survival strategies”. Yet, the authors exclusively focus on the national level, when analyzing the Gulf countries’ reforms in the 1990s (Weiffen 2008; Mitchell 2010; Schmidmayr 2010). The regional level and the GCC are not taken into consideration. This is quite surprising, as the GCC should be understood

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<sup>8</sup> Bahrain and Kuwait have become members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1995, the UAE and Qatar in 1996, Oman in 2000 and Saudi-Arabia in 2005 ([http://www.wto.org/english/thewto\\_e/whatis\\_e/tif\\_e/org6\\_e.htm](http://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/whatis_e/tif_e/org6_e.htm); last access 21.3.2013).

<sup>9</sup> Due to the limited scope of this paper the reforms taken in the countries cannot be analyzed in detail (see for example Etheshami/Wright 2007; Niethammer 2008; Quilliam 2003; Tétreault et al. 2011).

as a “source of collective legitimisation for the traditional monarchies of the Gulf” (Bellamy 2004: 122).<sup>10</sup>

## 2.2. The GCC as Source of Collective Legitimation

There are different explanatory approaches for the foundation of the GCC (Lawson 1999: 7-15). Neo-realist approaches emphasize manifold security threats like the Islamic revolution in Iran, the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan and the Iran-Iraq war. It is argued that the GCC has to be understood as an alliance which has been founded to re-establish the balance of power towards Iran (Gariup 2008: 81). In earlier works authors interpret the GCC’s foundation as “natural” consequence of perceived social, cultural, political and religious commonalities, thereby rendering the GCC’s official discourse (Braibanti 1987: 205, cited in Holthaus 2010: 32). However, most authors emphasize that the GCC rulers perceived regional cooperation as a useful means for coping with their domestic challenges, countering common threats to internal security (Acharya 1992: 149; Holthaus 2010: 37). Growth trends in the economy, technology and urban lifestyles, reflecting the impact of modernization, and the infusion of oil revenues to the Gulf states following the global oil crisis of the early 1970s resulted in an erosion of central traditional values – “Islam, tribe and extended family” (Acharya 1992: 154) – at the end of the 1970s. Communist, radical nationalist and Islamic fundamentalist opposition movements arose, challenging the conservative Gulf regimes (Acharya 1992: 154). By the time of these developments, the Iranian revolution took place in 1979. The problems with oppositional movements influenced the perception of the events in Iran: The revolution was not seen as a military threat but its political and ideological implications caused disquiet and alarm, especially among the Saudis (Acharya 1992: 156). These fears were largely confirmed by the Khomeini regime: it did not only criticize the Gulf monarchies’ pro-western foreign policy, but also questioned the legitimacy of their ruling and its religious and traditional justification (Holthaus 2010: 35). Iran even directly intervened in the domestic affairs of the smaller Gulf states by exacerbating Shi’a unrest and potential uprisings (Solingen 2009: 35; Holthaus 2010: 36). These events induced the rulers to react to their shared problems at home by starting to cooperate at a regional level. Their shared concerns were reflected in the GCC’s

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<sup>10</sup> Bellamy applies the word “legitimation”, in this paper the term “legitimation” is used. No differences in meaning exist among them.

agenda: Even though it did not state it in its founding treaties, internal security cooperation was the main concern of the regimes (Abdulla 1999: 157). Behind a “façade of economic cooperation” (Solingen 2009: 36), they mainly cooperated on security and intelligence matters to deal with domestic subversive forces (Solingen 2009: 36).

Turning to the driving force behind cooperation, most authors argue that economic integration has gained importance since the 1990s (Richter 2011). Solingen stresses that the rulers have shared an interest in maximizing access to global markets, capital and investments, as well as political and economic, domestic and regional stability. These interests are related to the need to ensure their regimes’ economic prosperity as the basis of their regimes’ legitimacy and have therefore apparently “overwhelmed other competitive drives, for the most part and have resulted in cooperation between the states” (Solingen 2009: 1). As mentioned in the introduction, the rulers congratulate each other to their anniversaries of ruling and express their solidarity with each other whenever uprisings take place, denouncing them collectively as “terrorist activities” (Holthaus 2010: 92). Beyond this rhetorical support, they even assist each other in suppressing internal upheavals, as recently illustrated in Bahrain (Tétreault 2011: 632). However, cooperation among the Gulf states faces many obstacles. Most studies point to the dramatic gap between the Charter and the actual operation of the GCC (Alasfoor 2007; Legrenzi 2008). Intra-regional tensions over territorial issues have existed since the beginning (Solingen 2009: 38). As pointed out in the introduction, the regimes fear to give up sovereignty, resulting in institutional structures which do not foresee any autonomy for the Secretary General or any other GCC body. This finds its expression in informal decision-making procedures (Legrenzi 2008: 112). Illustrative for this is a quote by former Secretary General Abdullah Bishara: “Rules are there to serve a purpose. If a particular purpose is better served by ignoring the rules [of the GCC] they will be ignored” (Bishara, November 2000, cited in Legrenzi 2011: 27).

In conclusion, Bellamy’s analysis that the GCC as a “source of collective legitimisation” (2004: 122) for the monarchies of the Gulf is not only confirmed when analyzing the background of the foundation and the driving force behind cooperation, but also when looking at current rhetoric and practices by the ruling elites.

### 2.3. Governance Transfer as Strategy of Legitimation

Reconsidering the state of research, a crisis of legitimacy has been defined as key condition under which authoritarian regimes resort to strategies of legitimation. In the

case of the Gulf states, these strategies have taken the form of economic and/or political governance reforms. Furthermore, the state of research suggests, that the Gulf states have pursued a regional strategy whenever the perception of a crisis of legitimacy or interests have been shared. The crisis of legitimacy has, on the one hand, direct implications at the national level, as protests and oppositional forces might arise which directly endanger the regimes' stability. On the other hand, this internal instability has also effects on the way how the countries are perceived by external actors. If the countries are not perceived as being stable, this will have consequences: As Solingen has pointed out, domestic and regional stability are essential to attract investors. Benefits of Foreign Direct Investments (FDIs) are inter alia attracting capital, technology, increasing employment and increasing balance of payments (Samimi et al. 2011: 18). Thus, they are important for the regimes' economic prosperity which is the cornerstone of their legitimacy. Therefore, resorting to governance transfer as a regional strategy of legitimation, rulers not only address their citizenry, but also international actors and mainly international investors.

These assumptions are also confirmed in the literature about other ROs. There is a growing body of research on the role of regional organizations for democracy and human rights at the national level. It is argued that states use regional organizations to "lock-in" democratic developments (Pevehouse 2005). Using ROs to lock-in domestic institutions does not only work for democratizing states. Authoritarian governments have instrumentalized their membership in the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to bolster the sovereignty and legitimacy of their regimes (Levitsky/Way 2010: 363-364; Söderbaum 2004, cited in Börzel et al. 2013: 24). In the course of governance transfer, regional organizations define what governance should look like at the national level in order to be legitimate (Börzel et al. 2013: 7). The Gulf states' rulers have not ceded any national sovereignty to the GCC. Therefore, I assume that it is mainly the rulers' view and what they perceive as suitable standards for governance institutions. This does, however, not preclude that they resort to concepts or discourses discussed at an international level. Taking the findings about other ROs and the findings about the GCC states into consideration, governance transfer is here conceptualized as an institutional choice by authoritarian rulers (Koremenos et al. 2001, cited in Börzel et al. 2013: 23). It is assumed that the crisis of legitimacy has created a demand for governance transfer: In order to bolster their legitimacy towards their citizenry and as a signaling mechanism

by committing themselves to certain standards external donors or investors care about, the GCC rulers have included good governance standards in certain policy fields as a strategy of legitimation. Thereby, the authoritarian regime type of the Gulf states (Lucas 2004; Freedom House 2012) influences the way *how* the GCC states engage in governance transfer. As the reviewed literature suggests, the interests of authoritarian rulers in solving the problems which have caused the crisis of legitimacy is compromised by the wish not to endanger their own position of power. Thus, it can be expected that governance transfer as a strategy of legitimation will take the shape of a “survival strategy”.

A crisis of legitimacy is one central condition under which authoritarian regimes resort to strategies of legitimation. Authoritarian regimes pursue a regional strategy when the perception of a crisis of legitimacy is shared among the rulers. Depending on which “main” source of legitimacy their authoritarian rule rests, an erosion of this specific source of legitimacy can be defined as an important condition under which regimes resort to strategies of legitimation. As material or output legitimacy is defined as the “cornerstone” of the Gulf regimes’ legitimacy (Solingen 2009: 3; Wiese 2012: 213), it can be assumed that an erosion of the regimes’ economic prosperity will have serious consequences for the perceived legitimacy among the citizenry, undermining the “authoritarian contract”:

**Hypothesis 1:**

If authoritarian regimes – cooperating in a RO – are facing a shared “crisis of legitimacy” (with regards to their “main” source of legitimacy) they resort to governance transfer as a strategy of legitimation.

A crisis of legitimacy has internal and external consequences: Internal instability is an immediate threat to the regime, as protests and oppositional movements directly challenge the regimes’ claim to power. At the same time, it also has external consequences for the reputation of the regime, as stability is needed in order to attract international investors and ensure economic prosperity. Thus, rulers will engage in governance transfer in respective policy fields in which a lack of effectiveness and capability of the political and economic system has become most apparent, trying to convey the impression to both internal as well as external actors that they are actually trying to deal with the causes of the crisis. However, due to their authoritarian regime type, it can be

assumed that governance transfer will not take place in areas which are closely associated with their sovereignty or the interests of the ruling families.

**Hypothesis 2:**

If authoritarian regimes – cooperating in a RO – are facing a crisis of legitimacy, they engage in those areas in which they can convey the impression to the targeted audience that they are actually trying to solve the crisis, without endangering the political status quo and vested interests of the ruling families.

With regard to the content of governance transfer or the precise standards for domestic governance institutions, the rulers will also address the two audiences. As the crisis is one of a lack of effectiveness and capability of the political and economic system, it is likely that the regimes will pursue standards which are internationally associated with the improvement of governance (Etheshami 2003: 55). Therefore, they will focus on reforms of good governance to suggest to the public and external actors that they are trying to solve their problems of ineffective governance. However, due to their authoritarian regime type, it is assumed that no norms will be pursued which would touch vested interests or which would change the political status quo. Therefore, it can be assumed that the norms promoted will be output-oriented, as input-oriented reforms would potentially change political power structures.

**Hypothesis 3:**

If ROs – consisting of authoritarian regimes – engage in governance transfer, then they demand “output-oriented” standards of “good governance”.

As the rulers want to convey the impression that they are responsive to the causes of the crisis of legitimacy, but are at the same time concerned about their own interests and power, it is likely that the GCC mainly engages in the prescription of governance standards but less in their promotion. If standards are actually promoted, it is likely that the instruments applied will be “soft” instruments, not interfering with the sovereignty of the authoritarian regimes of the Gulf. “Soft” instruments are instruments such as dialogue and exchange (chapter 3).

#### **Hypothesis 4:**

If ROs – consisting of authoritarian regimes – engage in governance transfer, they mainly engage in the prescription of standards. If they promote standards, they only apply “soft” instruments.

### **3. Methodology**

All documents available on the English homepage of the GCC, covering the period from 1981 until 2011, have been analyzed. Taking the basic definition for governance transfer as a starting point, all available documents have been screened for instances of governance transfer. As a result of this screening process, instances of governance transfer have been found in the policy areas of education, population/employment and environment. The governance standards which have been found are: efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability, which are core norms of good governance<sup>11</sup> (Börzel et al. 2011: 7). After the first screening process two other basic standards have been added, which appear to be important in the context of the GCC: sustainability and juridification.

Sustainability has been added, as the GCC mentions this term in many instances and as the GCC’s understanding of sustainability exceeds the normative standards of effectiveness, efficiency, accountability and transparency. The first and most important definition for sustainability or sustainable development was given by the United Nations in 1987. Sustainable development was defined as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (United Nations 1987: unpaginated). The GCC’s definition of sustainable development builds on the principle

“that the outcome of human interaction with the existing resources as well as prevailing conditions cause constant advancement of society and increases the efficient use of human, material and technological resources” (GCC 2011: 18).

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<sup>11</sup> Good governance as a concept originated in a World Bank report of 1989 (Najem 2003: 1). As Börzel et al. suggest, there are two main approaches with regards to GG: The first approach corresponds with the output dimension and focuses on strengthening the output legitimacy of institutions: “GG refers to an administrative core with the proper functioning of the state administration at its centre” (2011: 7). The second approach focuses on strengthening the input legitimacy of governance institutions. As stated in the introduction, I focus on the first approach, a rather narrow perspective comparable to the concept offered by the World Bank.

This concept exceeds the rather environment-centered approach by the United Nations regarding its objectives which are among others: the optimal utilization of available resources, enhancing understanding of the modern functions of government, participation of all community institutions in the development process, activating market forces, economic reform and combating financial and administrative corruption (GCC 2011:19).

Also the standard of “juridification” (Blichner/Molander 2005) has to be taken into consideration: In many instances, the GCC is very insistent about the member states following certain rules or standards, without specifying its exact contents. In its documents, the GCC demands the regulation of activities by certain norms, rules, laws or standards, without further specification of their contents. This equates in principle one central dimension of “juridification”<sup>12</sup> (Blichner/Molander 2005: 12). I want to stress the fact, that the GCC does not specify any content in most cases, its demands are limited to the most formal elements and it does not prescribe any objectives relating to state organization, promulgation, law enforcement or the like as the rule of law concept as defined by Börzel et al. suggest (2011: 8). I argue that these two added analytical categories can be subsumed under the concept of good governance. There is necessarily some overlap between the different standards. This poses no problem, as objectives of governance transfer usually address more than one norm (Börzel et al. 2011: 7).

For an operationalization of these normative standards, the definitions have been taken as a basis and “key words” within these definitions have been identified, which can be a reference to the respective standard. With the help of a thesaurus, synonyms for these key words, which can be an indicator for the normative standards as well, have been added. Additionally, the found objectives have been matched with the basic definitions of the normative standards and of governance transfer to ensure that the respective standard actually qualifies as an instance of governance transfer. Subsequently, all the respective documents of all policy fields have been screened for the normative standards and it has been examined whether normative standards for legitimate governance institutions are prescribed in the respective policy field or not.

Standards are – potentially – not only prescribed, but also promoted (Börzel et al. 2011: 11-12). Therefore, other dimensions of governance transfer have been considered, after prescribed standards have been identified. Promotion can be sub-divided into policy, adoption and application. Hence, in the analysis of the documents it has

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<sup>12</sup> Blichner/Molander differentiate among five dimensions of “juridification”. One of them is defined as “a process through which law comes to regulate an increasing number of different activities” (2005: 5). For the other dimensions of juridification see Blichner/Molander 2005.

been examined whether the RO has specified strategic guidelines and has formally adopted measures as well as applied these measures.

Also the instruments with which the RO seeks to induce compliance have to be analyzed. Börzel et al. (2011) distinguish among four different instruments or mechanisms: litigation and military force (coercion), sanctions and rewards (incentives), assistance (capacity-building), dialogue and exchange (persuasion and socialization). To examine the instruments, guiding questions on basis of Börzel et al.'s description of potential instruments have been developed (Börzel et al. 2011). The instruments have been analyzed for the different dimensions of governance transfer. Next to the available documents, reports, interviews etc. and the homepages of national institutions/ministries and online media have been analyzed in order to find out whether the RO has actually promoted its prescribed standards and which instruments it has applied.

As Schlumberger points out, legitimacy is not only hard to define but also to operationalize (2010: 234): In general, research on legitimacy of regimes/political systems among the population<sup>13</sup> draws on survey results or opinion polls as relevant sources (Pickel/Pickel 2006: 29-47).<sup>14</sup> In authoritarian regimes, these methods are not applicable due to a lack of independent surveys, opinion polls and free media (Bank 2004: 158). Therefore, one needs other indicators for a crisis of legitimacy. Indicators for a crisis of legitimacy in general are: different forms of protests, riots or the rise of oppositional forces, questioning the legitimacy of the ruling regimes. It is important to consider that these expressions of discontent as indicators for a crisis of legitimacy are seriously restricted under authoritarian regimes, due to extensive coercive apparatuses (Bellin 2004). If protests take place, the substantive demands as well as the criticism of the oppositional forces can indicate which source of legitimacy has eroded.

Authors define the Gulf states as monarchies whose rule is based on three main sources of legitimacy: tradition, religion and material or output legitimacy (Weiffen 2008: 2588; Albrecht/Schlumberger 2004: 377). Thereby, "output legitimacy" is interpreted as the "cornerstone" of the Gulf regimes' legitimacy (Solingen 2009: 3; Wiese 2012: 213; Gray 2011: 32).

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<sup>13</sup> Referring to an *empirical* understanding of legitimacy (in contrast to a *normative* understanding) as represented by Max Weber's re-definition of legitimacy as *belief* in legitimacy (Schlumberger 2010: 235).

<sup>14</sup> These surveys are, however, also afflicted with many methodological problems and challenges (Pickel/Pickel 2006: 29-47; Schlumberger 2010: 35-36).

Apart from demands of the protesting population postulated during protests, indicators for a crisis of “material” or “output legitimacy” are: declining rents and consequences which can be felt by the citizens such as the introduction of taxes, declining subsidies, cuts in social services, job cuts in the public sector, as they indicate that the rulers do not fulfill their “side” of the “authoritarian contract”. Next to these factors indicating a crisis of legitimacy at the national level, the reflection of this crisis at the international level can be seen *inter alia* when having a look at the amount of FDI. A decline of FDI suggests that investors perceive a country or a region as unstable (Samimi et al. 2011: 18).

## 4. Governance Transfer by the GCC in Different Policy Fields

### 4.1. A Crisis of Legitimacy in the 1990s

For the Gulf states, the 1990s were characterized by declining rents, resulting in increasing fiscal pressure (Najem 2003: 12). These developments limited the ability of the states to fulfill their “authoritarian contract” as it made financial cuts in social services and the introduction of taxes necessary (Schmidmayr 2010: 69). Adding to these financial problems, the countries faced increasing population pressure and unemployment, especially among the youth (Najem 2003: 12). Insufficiencies of the education system were often criticized by the private sector, which showed reluctance to hire nationals as opposed to cheaper migrants, thereby contributing to the high levels of youth unemployment. At the same time, there were great numbers of foreign employees: In the 1990s foreign workers accounted for 50 percent of the national workforce in Bahrain, 70 percent in Oman, and 80 and 92 percent in Saudi Arabia and Qatar respectively (Solingen 2009: 34). The issue of foreign workers and their impact on the social life in these countries was widely discussed and the great amount of foreign workers was (and is) negatively perceived by many citizens (Wiese 2012: 217). These problems, in combination with economic mismanagement and endemic corruption in the public sector, resulted in increasing public dissatisfaction with inept governance. These discontents found its expression *inter alia* in protests: “Political protest and opposition to the spending policies and rampant corruption [...] was manifest in a series of workers’ protests throughout the decade” (Milton-Edwards 2006: 87). The 1990s also saw the rise of mainly Islamist oppositional forces, challenging the legitimacy of the regimes (Najem 2003: 14). The reflection of this internal crisis at the international level can be seen

*inter alia* when having a look at the amount of FDI. Throughout the 1990s the level of FDI was very low compared to the level of the 1980s (Solingen 2009: 60). Apparently responding to this shared crisis of legitimacy, the Gulf rulers started to engage in governance transfer from 1997 onwards. The following analysis shows that the GCC has prescribed and promoted governance standards in the area of environment (1997), population/employment (1998) and education (2002).

## 4.2. Environment

The most relevant document in the area of environment in which the GCC prescribes standards for legitimate governance institutions is the document “General Regulations of Environment in the GCC States”. The regulations have been agreed upon by the Ministerial Council consisting of the ministers responsible for environmental affairs (authorized by the Supreme Council) in 1996 and have come into force in 1997 (GCC 1997: unpaginated). In these regulations, the Ministerial Council addresses the relevant public bodies in the member states, meaning “any ministry, department or governmental or semi-governmental agency” (GCC 1997: unpaginated) that is responsible for environmental issues. The prescribed objectives deal with the application of environmental standards, assessment and monitoring and with the use of technologies and resources. With reference to standards, assessment and monitoring the GCC prescribes the following objectives:

- a) “**Environmental considerations** should be taken into consideration and given foremost priorities. These priorities should be merged with all stages and levels of planning so as to make environmental planning an integral part of the **comprehensive development** planning in all industrial, agricultural, constructional and other fields [...]”; “loans for projects”;
- b) “**Monitoring the application of the environmental regulations and standards and compliance** with them on their own projects or projects their **supervision** or licensed by them and **preparing periodic report** about their **effectiveness** and **the extent of compliance to them**”;
- c) “**Environmental assessment** of projects should be adopted and environmental **assessment studies** should be included in the feasibility studies. The licensing of projects and facilities with the agreement of the concerned authority should

be linked to the environment protection in the light of the result of such studies” (GCC 1997: unpaginated, own emphasis).

The prescribed standards refer to juridification, sustainability, transparency and effectiveness.

With regards to the use of best technologies and the use of resources the following standards are prescribed:

- a) “All new facilities and projects and any major change in an existing project should use the **best available technologies to control pollution and prevent environmental deterioration**”;
- b) “**Technologies** in use should be **reconsidered** so as to be **more compatible with the environment**. The importance of revival and development of suitable traditional technologies should be emphasized within this framework”;
- c) “The licensing authority should make sure that new projects and major alterations to existing projects **use the best available technology for control of pollution and prevention of environmental deterioration**”;
- d) “Within the context of **sustainable development**, all public bodies, each within its competence should endeavor to **rationalize the use of natural resources**, living or non-living to conserve and **develop the renewable resources**, and to extend the lifetime of the non-renewable resources **for the benefit of the present and future generations**. This includes preparation, development and application of **appropriate regulations** to realize **coordination between the patterns and rates of utilization of the recycling and re-use technologies and conservation of energy and development** of the traditional technologies and **regulations** which are compatible with the local and regional environments” (GCC 1997: unpaginated, own emphasis).

The prescribed standards refer to juridification, sustainability and efficiency.

The GCC neither specifies strategic guidelines for governance transfer nor does it have a policy for promoting standards for legitimate governance institutions. The member states are free to formulate their own policies on the basis of the standards prescribed. The framework regulation represents the “minimum basics required for preparing and developing similar national legislations in the member states” (GCC 1997: unpaginated). In the regulations, an ultimate goal of the promoted standards is stated:

It is pointed out that sound economic development and a healthy environment are closely linked and that further economic growth, as essential basis for providing output legitimacy, is only possible if environmental considerations are taken into account and if the public bodies comply with the standards. No instruments to induce compliance are foreseen in the document. However, there is one ad hoc measure, which has been found in an article about energy policies in the Gulf (Reiche 2010) and by analyzing different Gulf newspapers, available online: the “environment week”. This measure can be subsumed under the instrument of dialogue and exchange. The “environment week” is “part of efforts by GCC countries to coordinate environment protection measures, including regulations and environment legislations in Gulf countries” (Oman Tribune 2012). It is organized by the Secretary General and is held every February (Reiche 2010: 6). In 2007, the Supreme Council of the GCC has also adopted the “Green Environment Initiative” with the aim “to upgrade the efficiency and performance of environmental institutions in GCC countries to protect environment and natural resources” (Gulf News 2007). Unfortunately, neither by searching on the homepage of the GCC nor by searching with different internet search engines, any further information about this initiative has been obtained.

In theory, the Secretariat General is responsible for monitoring implementation of the proposed standards. There is an environmental coordination unit within the Secretariat General which is supposed to support individual GCC countries in implementing their environmental policies (Reiche 2010: 6). However, the Secretariat General lacks any autonomy or means to enforce compliance (Legrenzi 2011: 38). As additional instrument it can be mentioned that the Supreme Council sometimes calls upon the member states to comply with prescribed standards (for instance, GCC 2004).

The GCC has prescribed standards for legitimate governance institutions in the policy field of environment referring to efficiency, sustainability, juridification, transparency and effectiveness. It has not adopted specific policies to promote these standards. With the “environmental week” (and presumably since 2007 also the “Green Environment Initiative”) the GCC offers fora for exchange and dialogue with which it seeks to induce compliance. These instruments have apparently been introduced a few years after the prescription of the normative standards.

### 4.3. Population/Employment

The most relevant document in which the GCC prescribes standards for legitimate governance institutions is the “General Framework of the Population Strategy for the GCC Member States” (GCC 1998a). The document has been prepared by the Secretary General and its “competent committees” and has been adopted by the Supreme Council in 1998 (GCC 1998a: unpaginated). In this document, the Secretary General and its “competent committees” (in the name of the heads of the member states) address the member states’ responsible ministries. These are the institutions which are supposed to implement the prescribed standards. The prescribed standards deal with the recruitment of workers (foreign and national) and statistics and surveys which shall be conducted in the area of population.

With regards to recruitment, the GCC prescribes the following standards:

- a) “**Efficient** organization of recruitment of foreign workers”;
- b) “**Optimum utilization** of the Gulf work force”;
- c) “**Rationalizing** and **controlling** the recruitment of household workers and evolving appropriate mechanism to do away with illegal workers in the GCC States”;
- d) “Recruitment of immigrant workers in **accordance with specific standards** on the basis of age ensuring employment of manpower in jobs commensurate with age”;
- e) “Recruitment of foreign work force **in accordance with legal standards** – both quantitatively and qualitatively – based on real needs and **in consonance with the demands of development**, social stability and demographic homogeneity” (GCC 1998a: unpaginated, own emphasis).

These prescribed standards refer to efficiency, sustainability, effectiveness and juridification.

With regards to surveys and statistics about population matters the GCC prescribes the following standards:

- a) “Developing population statistics and compiling data on the job market and **raising the level of its accuracy** and **comprehensiveness** and to update it on a regular basis and make uniform the statistics related definitions and meaning”;

- b) “Conducting population census, demographic surveys and analytical studies on a regular basis and **publishing their results**” (GCC 1998a: unpaginated, own emphasis).

These prescribed standards all refer to transparency and efficiency.

The GCC neither specifies strategic guidelines for governance transfer nor does it have a policy for promoting standards of legitimate governance institutions. The member states are free to formulate their own policies and population strategies on basis of the standards prescribed in the framework (GCC 1998a: unpaginated). However, the GCC specifies an ultimate goal: ensuring economic development and homogeneity of the Gulf society while “affirming its Islamic and Arab identity” (GCC 1998a: unpaginated), to maintain stability and cohesiveness and to increase the level of economic participation of their citizens (GCC 1998a: unpaginated).

In terms of instruments the document foresees regular fora for exchange and dialogue: “Regular meetings of the representatives of the GCC shall be held every three years to discuss the population situation, policies and achievements” (GCC 1998a: unpaginated).

The suggested instrument is implemented in practice: Since 2001, meetings of the national Permanent Population Committees (PPCs) take place at the Secretariat General in Riyadh, Saudi-Arabia. At these meetings the different national PPCs discuss together in how far they have implemented the standards set in the general framework (Qatari PPC 2012).<sup>15</sup> The meetings do not take place every three years, as suggested in the general framework, but are held annually. According to the Qatari Population Committee’s homepage the national PPC consists of representatives from government agencies and non-governmental organizations dealing with population issues in Qatar. Next to representatives of different ministries they mention representatives of Qatar Petroleum and the Qatar Chamber of Commerce and Industry as non-governmental actors (Qatari PPC 2012). However, close relations exist between business and ruling elites in the Gulf states. In the case of Qatar in particular, the ruling Al Thani family holds the

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<sup>15</sup> Please note that no matter which homepage of the Qatari PPC you open, always the same link appears.

chairmanship and other prominent positions of the Qatar Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Mitchell 2010: 287).<sup>16</sup>

The last meeting of PPCs has taken place in October 2011:

“The present annual meeting dealt with the **follow up** of the general framework draft development for the population strategy and the design of population data questionnaire of GCC countries” (Qatari PPC 2012, own emphasis).

Apparently these meetings have the purpose to provide a forum for exchange and dialogue. The Secretariat General tries to support the member states in complying with the normative standards as prescribed in the general framework.

The GCC has prescribed standards for legitimate governance institutions in the policy field of population/employment referring to efficiency, sustainability, juridification, transparency and effectiveness. It has not adopted specific policies to promote these standards. But with the PPC meetings the GCC’s Secretariat General applies a measure to facilitate compliance with the standards by bringing together different (mainly) governmental actors. At these meetings they can exchange their views and potentially a transfer of knowledge and expertise can take place.

#### 4.4. Education

Cooperation in the field of education is very central among the GCC states and can be traced back to the time before the foundation of the GCC (GCC 2007). The most important document with regards to governance transfer is the document “Comprehensive Development of Education”, which is “an implementation of the Supreme Council resolution in its twenty-third (23) session (Doha, December 2002)” (GCC 2002). The objectives and standards promoted deal with the organization, administration and evaluation of educational institutions, as provider of the public good education:

- a) “[...] need for educational systems to [...] adopt **global standards** in **evaluating** the **output** of education while, at the same time preserving the Arab and Islamic identity [...]”;

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<sup>16</sup> However, Mitchell emphasizes that research on the business communities in the Gulf shows, that the grip of the rulers on economic opportunities is weakening, an independent bourgeoisie is emerging and that these actors engage in a discourse of reform (2010: 285-286).

- b) “**effective** organizational development to ameliorate the **performance** of the educational institution and to achieve the **criteria of quality**”;
- c) “keeping pace on the part of educational institution with **technological and scientific advancement** especially in the field of information and communication technology, and making use of technological applications and scientific research in the educational and administrative fields”;
- d) “[...] system of **supervision, monitoring, and accountability** in the educational systems especially in the field of teachers’ performance”;
- e) “adoption of sophisticated methods in organizational development in educational institutions, for the realization of **effectiveness** and **efficiency**, ameliorating performance level, establishing **rules** of the organizational relation with the central authority and (sic!) local educational authorities, including the executive directorate on school level or its counterpart in university education, and allowing the application of the concept of **accountability**”;
- f) “[...] sophisticated administrative models which **effectively** and **efficiently** realize the educational objectives and lead to the **ideal use** of human and financial **resources** in the educational institutions” (GCC 2002: unpaginated, own emphasis).

The prescribed standards are efficiency, effectiveness, accountability, transparency, juridification and sustainability. With regards to juridification it is interesting that the GCC refers to “global standards”, thus slightly extending the otherwise narrow concept of juridification, which does not specify any content of the legal regulation.

As in the other policy fields, the GCC applies the instrument of offering fora for exchange and dialogue. Different formats are suggested in the document “Comprehensive Development of Education” (GCC 2002). The first program mentioned is the program for educational process development and addresses the relevant units of the national ministries of education. The second section deals with education professionalization and addresses ministries of education and higher education institutes themselves. Development of administrative and organizational performance is the subject of a program which aims at the development and improvement of administration of educational institutions. The project of partnership between education institutions and society tries to activate joint institutional action between actors from the business and education sector. Additionally universities and research institutes have been called into consulting committees (GCC 2002). There is no information available on the GCC’s homepage,

however a separate research in media of the Gulf indicates that some of these commission meetings are actually taking place (for example Dubib 2012). These meetings in different commission offer national ministries and educational institutions fora for exchange and dialogue.

## 5. Discussion

The following table provides an overview of governance transfer by the GCC. It summarizes the results of the analysis set out above, which I will discuss in this chapter.

### Overview of governance transfer by the GCC

Standards Policy fields	Efficiency	Transparency	Effectiveness	Accountability	Sustainability	Juridification	Dimensions of governance transfer	Instrument
Environment (GCC 1997)							prescription/ application	dialogue and exchange
Population/ Employment (GCC 1998a)							prescription/ application	dialogue and exchange
Education (GCC 2002)							prescription/ application	dialogue and exchange
Economy (GCC 1998c, 2001b)	<b>No governance transfer</b> Additionally no governance transfer in : Statistics, Agriculture/Fishery, Health; Patent; Youth/Sports; Forests/Wildlife, Transport and Communication							
Security	No documents available Additionally no documents are available for: Media, Health, Water and Electricity, Arts/Culture, Petroleum and Energy							

Standard prescribed = green; Standard not prescribed = red

**Hypothesis 1:** As the empirical results suggest, the first instance of governance transfer can be found in the field of environment in 1997 and in other fields in the following

years.<sup>17</sup> The 1990s have been characterized by a crisis of legitimacy indicated by declining rents, increasing unemployment, problems in the education sector, a high number of foreign workers, protests and uprisings as well as a low level of FDIs, pointing to external consequences of the perceived instability.

As described in the second chapter, the GCC has also been founded as a reaction to a crisis of legitimacy. However, as proposed in the first hypothesis only a crisis of legitimacy with regards to their “main” source of legitimacy induced the leaders to adopt reforms at a national level and also to allow interference in their governance structures by developing common standards for legitimate governance institutions at the regional level. The crisis of traditional legitimacy at the end of the 1970s/at the beginning of the 1980s (chapter 2.2.) has not been a sufficient condition for the GCC states to engage in governance transfer.

	crisis of legitimacy	regional strategy
t0: 1981	crisis of traditional/ religious legitimacy	cooperation in internal security– targeting internal oppositional forces
t1: 1997 onwards	crisis of material legitimacy	governance transfer

(Source: own compilation)

**Hypotheses 2 and 3:** The GCC states have started to engage in governance transfer in the policy fields of education, population/employment and environment. These are areas in which the GCC member states have faced great problems, in which a lack of effectiveness and capability of the political and economic system has become most apparent (chapter 2.1.). They are also the ones in which the rulers can convey the impression towards their citizenry and international investors that they are actually trying to solve the crisis and the causes of the crisis, without endangering the political status quo and vested interests of the ruling families. This can also explain why governance transfer is not taking place in one central field of cooperation – the area of economy. In all states except for Kuwait it is still very difficult to distinguish between the ruling family and state interests (Legrenzi 2008: 111). The state is most powerful in the field of

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<sup>17</sup> It can be assumed that there have been discussions or considerations before 1997. However, as there are no documents available which give more information about the decision-making process among the GCC states, it is not possible to find out in how far governance transfer has been an issue before.

economy, it controls all or the most valuable sectors and companies. The huge ruling families make their living from the exploitation of state resources and are dependent on the control of oil rents (Niethammer 2011: 16). Taken together with different national economic structures and interests (Holthaus 2010: 65), this can explain why no common governance standards have been prescribed or promoted, as this would have interfered with the sovereignty and interests of the ruling families.

For the area of security, no documents are available in English. In the literature a “GCC Counter-Terrorism Agreement” is mentioned, which has been adopted in 2004 (GCC 2009: 35-36; Holthaus 2010: 73), but could not be found on the GCC’s homepage. This lack of available data is an important constraint for the results of this paper. I would argue that no governance transfer is taking place in the area of security as it is the sphere “most closely associated with sovereignty” (Legrenzi 2008: 111). Cooperation and exchange among intelligence agencies or ministries of interior in these fields can be beneficial. Having common standards for legitimate governance institutions, on the contrary, would rather endanger vested interests and seriously interfere with the sovereignty of the regimes. However, this cannot be verified empirically. No documents are furthermore available for Media, Health, Water and Electricity, Arts/Culture, Petroleum and Energy. Other fields in which governance transfer is not taking place are Statistics, Agriculture/Fishery, Health, Patent, Youth/Sports, Forests/Wildlife, Transport and Communication.<sup>18</sup> These are no fields in which a lack of effectiveness and capability of the political and economic system has become apparent.

While the fields of education and population are important with regards to both – internal and external - audiences, I argue that governance transfer in the area of environment mainly targets international actors. The member states of the GCC face many environmental challenges like water scarcity, land degradation and desertification, and pollution related to the oil and gas industry (Raouf 2011). These developments definitely had (and have) effects on the population. Yet, it is questionable, whether they directly connect this with the perception of an ineffectiveness of the system. It can be argued that the GCC mainly aims at attracting foreign investments when engaging in governance transfer in the area of environment. This would also explain why they prescribed the standard of sustainability as an additional good governance standard.

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<sup>18</sup> <http://sites.gcc-sg.org/DLibrary/index-eng.php?action=Subject>; last access 20.2.2013.

The standards encompass all norms of good governance (efficiency, effectiveness, transparency, accountability). Additionally the GCC prescribes the standards of juridification and sustainability, which can be grouped under the concept of good governance as well. All in all, there is little variation within the fields.

One interesting result with regards to the promoted standards can be stated in the field of education. First of all, the standard of accountability is mentioned here. Accountability implies that state action should be answerable and that state officials are responsible for their actions (Börzel et al. 2011: 7). Even though this standard addresses educational institutions and not the ruling families and therefore does not endanger their position of power, it is nevertheless interesting that they prescribe this standard as it could – if applied in other areas – undermine the rulers' interests and power.

A second interesting point with regards to the standards is a reference to “global standards” in the area of education, thereby slightly extending the analytical category of juridification, which has been defined as a norm not mentioning any content. This again supports the argument, that the regimes explicitly do not only aim at its domestic audiences, but increasingly (education as the latest instance of governance transfer) also at international actors, which regularly complain that the Gulf's youth is not adequately educated to be employed in the private sector (Wiese 2012: 216). Due to the limited scope of this paper changes over time with regards to governance transfer cannot be considered in detail and are not in the focus of this analysis. However, this result suggests that changes over time have taken place.

A final important result can be found in the area of education as well as in the area of population: one of the objectives in the field of education states the “need for educational systems to [...] adopt **global standards** [...], at the same time **preserving the Arab and Islamic identity** [...]” (GCC 2002: unpaginated, own emphasis). In the area of population they also refer to the importance of “affirming [...] **Islamic and Arab identity**” (GCC 1998a: unpaginated, own emphasis). This points to a dilemma, the regimes actually face and which has not been considered in this paper so far: With regards to reforms at a national level Najem argues that the regimes have to “reorient or reinvent themselves [...], generally with reference to both externally and internally derived ideological poles” (Najem 2003: 5). While most authors emphasize the importance of material legitimacy, this result points to the fact that the Gulf rulers apparently also perceive religion and tradition, the two other sources of legitimacy of their rule (Weiffen 2008: 2588; Albrecht/ Schlumberger 2004: 377), as important. Apparently, there are also demands among certain segments of the population to adhere to Is-

lamic law or values (Najem 2003: 12-13). Additionally, the main oppositional movements in the Gulf states consist of Islamist movements, questioning the legitimacy of their ruling and their religious and traditional justification (Holthaus 2010: 35). These factors can explain why the rulers make Islamic or Arab references when prescribing standards for legitimate governance institutions.

**Hypothesis 4:** As expected, the GCC mainly engages in the prescription of governance transfer and if it promotes standards it exclusively applies the “soft” instrument of “exchange and dialogue”. Generally, the GCC has only started to apply instruments a few years after it has prescribed the standards.

## 6. Conclusion

The findings of this paper suggest that the GCC has resorted to governance transfer as a strategy of legitimation facing a crisis of legitimacy. The rulers of the Gulf have tried to sustain their legitimacy by endorsing standards of good governance – targeting their respective citizenry but also using governance transfer as a signaling mechanism towards external actors, by publicly committing themselves to certain standards these external investors care about. This result supports the theoretical assumptions by Börzel et al. (2013): They have conceptualized governance transfer as the institutional choice of member state governments (Koremonos et al. 2001, cited in Börzel et al.: 2013: 23). The wish by authoritarian regimes to bolster the legitimacy of their ruling has been identified as an important demand factor which can explain why and how ROs engage in governance transfer and has been confirmed in works about other authoritarian regimes (Levitsky/Way 2010; Söderbaum 2004) as well as organizations of authoritarian regimes, such as the Arab League or the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (Schneider 2013; van Hüllen forthcoming).

The assumption that governance transfer is used as a strategy of legitimation is reflected in the way *how* the Gulf states have engaged in governance transfer: Standards have been prescribed and promoted in those fields in which problems of their governance institutions have become most apparent. Furthermore, they have referred to certain norms of good governance trying to convey to the populations of the Gulf as well as to international actors that they are actively trying to solve the problems, which have caused their shared crisis of legitimacy. This result is in line with findings by Börzel/van

Hüllen/Lohaus (2013): ROs are not following a “global script”, their adoption of governance standards is rather “localized” (Acharya 2004, cited in Börzel et al. 2013: 5). “ROs choose from a menu of standards and instruments rather than simply ‘downloading’ the whole package” (Börzel et al. 2013: 5).

At the same time, the way how the GCC engages in governance transfer also reflects the authoritarian regimes’ concerns about their position of power, their families’ vested interests and a threat to the political status quo. The result of these concerns might be that governance transfer by the GCC does not serve as an effective means to improve member states’ governance institutions and thus to support the solution of problems in certain policy fields. Rather, governance transfer as a strategy of legitimation could be characterized as a “survival strategy”, which does not make governance institutions substantially more effective. To find out, further analysis, tracing the potential impact of governance transfer in the states of the GCC, is necessary. Yet, some empirical observations indicate that the rulers have apparently been “pushed further” than they intended to: As described, they have for example prescribed the normative standard of “accountability”, which is rather surprising as it contradicts the idea of a “survival strategy”. Important limitations of this paper have to be mentioned: Firstly, the conclusions have to be drawn with caution. In many instances it is very difficult to find information or data about the GCC’s practices, especially as many documents are only available in Arabic. This seriously constrains the explanatory power of this paper. Additionally, it is very difficult to gain information with regards to the instruments applied. Secondly, this paper has focused on the questions *under which conditions* the GCC has started to engage in governance transfer and *how* it engages in governance transfer, while changes over time have not been analyzed in detail. Besides, I have not taken into account developments which are currently taking place at a prescriptive level: For example there is apparently a joint human rights declaration being discussed at the GCC level (Kuwait News Agency 2012).

In the end, the particularities of the GCC as stated in the introduction – its member states’ authoritarian character, its lack of autonomous supranational institutions, the non-intervention-clause and the emphasis of sovereignty – do not prevent the GCC from engaging in governance transfer. Similar to the SCO or the LAS, the GCC is a least likely case which nevertheless engages in governance transfer. Its authoritarian characteristics only strongly influence the way *how* the GCC engages in governance transfer.

Important transformations are taking place in the Gulf and the economic and socio-economic problems already apparent in the 1990s have aggravated (Niethammer 2011: 14). In 2011, protests have taken place in all of the Gulf countries except for Qatar (Niethammer 2011: 14), pointing to a serious crisis of legitimacy. These developments and the discussion on a joint human rights declaration suggest that the GCC states will further engage in governance transfer, maybe extending the prescription of standards to other concepts such as human rights or the rule of law. It is unlikely that these measures will help to solve the crisis of legitimacy – they will probably take the shape of “survival strategies” and not appease the demands by many of the protestors and opposition movements in the Gulf monarchies.

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