UNVEILING CLIMATE DISCOURSES

A Study of Saudi, Qatari, and Emirati Media

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Introduction

COP28 concluded with an agreement which, for the first time ever, included language to phase out fossil fuels. However, COP28 did not conclude in a timely manner; the final date of the conference was delayed by a cohort of countries that opposed the inclusion of language concerning fossil fuels. This controversial international moment revolving around language inspired me to answer the following research question:

How do state-affiliated news media outlets in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE construct their respective fossil fuel discourses?

The answer to this question can reveal the ideological underpinnings of these three states' discourse surrounding the growing demand to phase out fossil fuels. However, the secretive nature of these regimes makes it difficult to pinpoint ideological underpinnings. Though one can find officials from these countries stating their respective countries intentions, it is important to understand *how* they produce and reproduce their preferred reality through discourse, because each of these countries invests heavily in their own media outlets, and understanding how they operationalize their state-affiliated media outlets could provide a wide array tangible evidence for their preferred ideology. By deconstructing their respective discourses with Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the analytical outputs should provide categories for comparison, revealing similarities and differences between the case samples, and between the cases, to finally reveal the preferred discursive strategy of each country.

Background

Saudi Arabia

Throughout Saudi Arabia's experience with geopolitics, trends are apparent in the energy sector. The first significant instance of using energy as a tool of influence was the oil embargo against the west in 1973, when oil-exporting states met in Kuwait and decided to refuse to export oil to the United States because of its support for Israel (Al-Rasheed, 2010, p. 132). This participation of Saudi Arabia contained elements that were important within the structure of the Middle East at the time, mainly that each state was deciding how to go about demonstrating their willingness to contribute to common causes in the region, thus demonstrating each respective regimes' legitimacy inside and outside their own borders. However, this act of participation on the party of the Saudi kingdom both put them at the forefront of the Arab world and filled their state coffers because of the unexpected surge in oil prices (Al-Rasheed, 2010, p. 131). This latter point also demonstrated the new possibilities that energy insecurity. Though the Saudi

crown has been extremely hesitant to use oil as a weapon, the events of 1973 and the six months that followed demonstrated that energy could induce reactions abroad despite its failure to achieve the desired outcome of the west's abandonment of Israel. Funding of non-state actors (militant Islamists) has essentially been dropped from the Saudi strategy; that strategy was useful within the cold-war paradigm and the imminent threat of Iranian revolutionary exports, however such a strategy had become dangerous for Saudi Arabia when Al-Qaeda and ISIS attacked and threatened the Saudi state, not to mention the growing chorus of political Islam making demands from the Saudi regime, forcing the monarchy to seriously pursue counterterrorism and political repression, and instead Saudi Arabia is moving to compete with its neighbors such as the UAE (Mason, 2023, p. 17).

The demonstration of oil, and there for energy's, ability to force international actors to make tough decisions likewise demonstrated the converse: energy's stability and free flow would be preferable as a tool of influence abroad and state revenues rather than oil as a weapon. In 1960, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Venezuela formed the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) at the Baghdad Conference.[1] OPEC was founded by petrostates based on the basis of their existence as petrostates, as some of the member states were on opposite sides of the cold war between the west and the communist bloc, as well as on different sides of regional cold wars (Garavini, 2019). In the case of Saudi Arabia, they have used OPEC to forward their own geopolitical interest. In one instance, Saudi Arabia resisted suggested price increases in the late 1970's as a response to political and economic difficulties among their consumers, primarily the west (Garavini, 2019, p. 263). Francisco Parra (2009) commented that Saudi Arabia was keenly aware of its own weaknesses such as its weak military and domestic instability, and that the Saudi crown would expose itself to excessive risk if the kingdom were to be viewed as a leader of raising oil prices against the west, which at the time was challenged yet still maintained significantly more power over the Middle East rather than *vice versa*. This event, in turn, lead to the "Doha Split", when Saudi Arabia and the UAE each pushed to receive separate agreements that would limit their own price increases to 5% (Garavini, 2019, p. 263). Garavini (2019, p. 264) describes the UAE as having "lined up" behind Saudi Arabia in this Doha split, and furthermore Saudi Arabia wielded the threat of increasing its own oil production which would then dramatically increase the competitiveness of their oil on the global market (Garavini, 2019). The "Doha Split" was an early example of Saudi Arabia's ability and willingness to pursue and receive special treatment in collective energy

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[1] OPEC. (2024). Brief History. Retrieved from www.opec.org:
https://www.opec.org/opec_web/en/about_us/24.htm

policy, and furthermore demonstrates their tendency of leadership by way of maintaining a degree of power not afforded to its neighboring oil-producing states.

For the next decade, Saudi Arabia would continue to maintain a significant amount of influence in OPEC and oil prices at large, but more direct competition arose when the 1979 Iranian Revolution ushered in an Islamic theocracy that was determined to spread its revolution abroad at the expense of their secular and monarchical neighbors, accusing them of being subservient to western interest, partially evinced by their respective oil policies (Garavini, 2019, p. 336). Later, Iran would become exasperated at Saudi Arabia's behavior in the oil sector, accusing the kingdom of undercutting other OPEC states, to which Iran responded that they will retaliate to Saudi Arabia's alleged undercutting of oil prices and usurping of market share (Garavini, 2019, p. 337). Although OPEC had failed to become a *bona fide* cartel in the wake of the rise of non-OPEC producers like Norway in combination with falling oil prices, Saudi Arabia had solidified their energy production strategy as one that can be effective and insubordinate to U.S. interests (Garavini, 2019, p. 358).

Qatar

Although Qatar exists fundamentally within the RST paradigm, Qatar differs in terms of legitimacy in that the degree of nationalism that the house of al-Thani has carefully crafted over decades of rule. However, it is not just a concerted effort by the ruling family to create legitimacy out of thin air, but rather that Qatar's ruling family maintains their legitimacy by continuing a policy of independence and sovereignty, as it had done during the rule of the Ottomans and the British, and it was the al-Thani's pursuit of self-determination apart from the British that consolidated their rule and unified the most prominent Qatari tribes, and further prevented Saudi, Persian, and Omani encroachment (Fromherz, 2012). Currently, liquified natural gas (LNG) is the lifeblood of the Qatari state, but what makes Qatar unique is that only around three hundred thousand people in Qatar are citizens out of a population of over two million. The privileges and rights enjoyed by Qatari citizens in fact raises them above the rest of the mostly migrant population, thus creating a "citizen aristocracy," and combined with some democratic privileges not afforded to non-citizens, it becomes very clear who is and is not a legitimate Qatari (Fromherz, 2012, p. 157)

Belonging to such an in group comes with expectations: Qataris are liable to lose their citizenship for speaking out against the ruling family, or in cases where their loyalty is questioned, as was the case when 6,000 Qataris lost their citizen for belonging to tribes that seemingly failed to protect the border

against a Saudi invasion in 1992 (Fromherz, 2012, p. 92). The point is that Qatar differs from the other two studied countries, especially Saudi Arabia, in that the Qatari leadership heads a system that only receives input from the aristocracy, and likewise expects a degree of loyalty that is exceptional beyond what is expected of non-Qatari residents in Qatar. Simply, the Qatari leadership must maintain a system that satisfies only the Qataris—any other system is moot. While emerging LNG producers like Australia and the U.S. are not an immediate threat to Qatar's financial standing, the evolving global energy dynamics introduce uncertainty to Qatar's rentier future ; projections indicate Qatar may rely on the energy market for another 20-30 years, thereby potentially impacting Qatar's ability to rent power (Galeeva, 2022). Therefore Qatar, like its neighbors Saudi Arabia and the UAE, have undertaken a national strategy to reform titled Qatar Vision 2030, which similarly aims to in part to mitigate against climate induced change.

Qatar, like Saudi Arabia, fell under the auspices of the British Empire, likewise gaining independence later in 1971. Like Saudi Arabia, an infallible leader rules Qatar, Tamim bin Hamad. Also, like the two compared Gulf Arab states, Qatar heavily relies on hydrocarbons for its revenue, and furthermore its oil reserves are massively disproportionate to the geographic size of the small peninsula, allowing the tiny emirate to pursue extremely ambitious projects that bolster its standing on the world stage (Fromherz, 2012, p. 2). However, a mono-economy is not new to Qatar, as pearl diving was the main export prior to the first exported barrel of crude oil (Fromherz, 2012, p. 19). This familiarity with such reliance on a single commodity has not left the memories of the newly-wealthy, still tribal state. Like Saudi Arabia's previous foreign policy, Qatar's current foreign policy is based on balance of power (Galeeva, 2022, p. 32). As a tiny state, Qatar has no hope of militarily threatening or persuading its two primary rivals, Saudi Arabia, and Iran. Thus, Qatar has sought the protection of a distant power, the United States.

Although the protection of the U.S. makes a foreign incursion into Qatar highly unlikely, this physical security has not satisfied the Emirate. As such, Qatar has increasingly relied on two pillars of foreign policy to place itself higher on the totem pole of geopolitics: media and mediation (El Berni, 2021). Al-Jazeera, the world's most viewed Arabic language network, is an incredibly influential media network, as they host a wide range of viewpoints from a diverse cast of journalists, and broadcasts dissidents and exiles from around the world, much to the chagrin of Qatar's neighbors. So influential is Al-Jazeera that the Saudi-led coalition demanded that Al-Jazeera be shuttered when the coalition collectively embargoed the tiny Emirate (El Berni, 2021). Qatar is viewed as an upstart by its neighbors,

its power far overreaching its supposedly deserved capacity. However, dissidents and exiles are not all Qatar hosts and broadcasts, but also, ironically, terrorist networks opposed to its protector, the U.S. During the Global War on Terror, Al-Jazeera broadcasted Al-Qaeda messages to the point where the U.S. believed that Al-Jazeera was *the* mouthpiece for the terror group (Fromherz, 2012, p. 109). One would think that this seemingly cozy relationship with terror groups, Hamas included, would put Qatar on the path to pariah status. However, Qatar has buffered accusations of collusion with terror, firstly in their counterterror operations, but also in its pursuit of mediation, especially between entities in cases where one considers their counterpart illegitimate (such as terror groups), and to rather provide a platform where negotiation is at least possible, and such arrangements have been normalized throughout Qatar's tenure as a steady mediator (Galeeva, 2022, p. 58). Qatar's mediation is one strategy that Qatar uses to raise its importance in the region and the world and is therefore a strategy to ensure its own survival and sovereignty by demonstrating its usefulness to a diverse range of actors, ranging from a superpower to non-state actors.

Amongst these diverse actors, Qatar has special interests in maintaining sovereignty apart from key actors; falling prey to Hamas or the Palestinian Authority is an absurd notion, but maintaining a comfortable distance from Saudi Arabia is imperative.

UAE

The UAE had similar beginnings compared to Saudi Arabia, and particularly Qatar. Prior to the formation of emirates, the population of what is now the UAE engaged in subsistence activities, and their primary industry was pearl harvesting, incense, textiles, and other artisanal goods to trade on the Silk and Spice roads. What is now the UAE first came into contact with large-scale geopolitics after the first sea trade route to India was discovered, and the sparse Bedouin people of the future Emirates were made keenly aware of European colonialism. European powers fiercely competed to control, profit, and extract tax from the new route, and in this competition the British gained the prerogative in the region after imposing a General Treaty on the nine Arab sheikhdoms after having dealt with the rampant piracy in the region (Al-Suwaidi, 2023). This General Treaty was signed by the sheikhdoms, pledging to refrain from disrupting maritime activity and pledging to refuse to enter any agreements with any country other than Britain without their consent, and in exchange the British would guarantee their security, promising to

defend them. The UAE would form out of these sheikhdoms when the British withdrew from the region in the late 1960's. [2]

The withdrawal of the British opened the opportunity for state formation to begin in the Trucial States, in what would become the UAE. The union of emirates began as cooperation in fundamental state functions like military, and later the six Emirates would federalize into the UAE. These Emirates, while federalized, still maintain a high degree of autonomy, owing to the consensual nature of the agreement to federalize, yet it is the Shiekhs of the individual Emirates who continue to maintain power in their respective domains. This bifurcation, as Robert Mason (2023) observes, has led to the personalization of rule due to the shifting balance of power within the UAE. This personalization (sultanism) shares similarities with Saudi Arabia in that both regimes are becoming more assertive in realizing their respective country's' long-term objectives (Al-Suwaidi, 2023). One of the core goals of the UAE is to become a global hub for trade, tourism, and business (Al-Suwaidi, 2023, p. 84). However, like their neighbor in Saudi Arabia, the UAE had to wrestle with their own conservative Islamic group, al-Islah, a Muslim Brotherhood affiliate, which opposed the possibility of Westernization and secularization (Mason, 2023). The group was founded in the early 20th century by Muslim Brotherhood members who fled Nasser's regime during a crackdown, and thus does not bare the same historical importance as the ulema in Saudi Arabia, which was instrumental to the house of Saud's rise to power in the Arab peninsula.

To confront this threat to their long-term goals, the Emirati leadership has banned dozens of Islamist organizations under the guise of various national security laws, and furthermore began concerted efforts in producing narratives that push back against Islamist calls to action, a move that negatively affected the UAE's relationship with Qatar (Mason, 2023). In this way the UAE is following a similar path that Saudi Arabia has taken; although Islamic interests can be used to support a Gulf regime's Islamic credentials, and therefore legitimacy, Islamist activities and demands contradict the regimes' perceived path of modernization, as well as integration with the region's U.S.-based security apparatus, especially in cases where Emiratis have been implicated in terrorist activities, such as al-Qaeda's recruitment and utilization of two Emirati citizens in the September 11 plot (Al-Suwaidi, 2023). The assertion that the UAE pursued a crackdown on Islamism in order to reduce threats to the regime is buttressed by the leadership's repression of democratic progress, the calls for further democratization

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[2] gov.ae. (2022). The Formation and History of the UAE. Retrieved from gov.ae: https://adtt.dct.gov.ae/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Section-3-The-Formation-and-History-of-UAE.pdf

led the Emirati leadership to invest in underserved areas and allowing petitioning and other forms of suggestion as a way to address the demand for more political participation (Mason, 2023). The fact that the UAE will not give in to demands of democratic reforms is the norm for the region, and it shows that in general the social contract that the sheikhs in the region still holds firm: development, modernization, and distribution of oil wealth is still the primary key to maintaining support for their local populations, while at the same time willing to expand citizen rights in a piecemeal fashion.

Research Design

Comparative Case Study

The data set can be categorized on several levels; multiple articles are sources from their respected host countries: Al-Arabiya in Arabic and English from Saudi Arabia, Al-Jazeera in Arabic and English from Qatar, and the Khaleej Times and Al-Bayan from the UAE. At the top of the pyramid stand three countries, with two out lets each: at least one Arabic source and one English source for each country. The next question is what to compare. Do we compare the English source to the Arabic source within one country, or do we compare only English sources to other English source, and likewise with Arabic articles? The research question seeks an answer on a country-by-country basis. Additionally, the output of those in-country comparisons can also be compared, thus providing country-country comparisons, and the ultimate number of cases is three (3). Therefore, English and Arabic source counterparts will be compared within each country, and the analysis should provide three answers—one for each country. Commonalities can then be found amongst the three countries; it can be answered easily once the in-country comparisons have been performed. These are the possibilities for comparison, and the output of the analysis allows for easier comparisons, but the specifics must be addressed.

Firstly, the research question is not hypothetical, but rather it essentially asks *what can we learn given the cases we have* (Toshkov, 2016)? Toshkov (2016) describes this type of research design as producing a theoretical hypothesis, which can then be tested, though the variables within the cases limits inferred causal relationships, and if the output of the analysis provides unexpected results, then new theory could be generated inductively (Toshkov, 2016). Toshkov (2016) also reminds us of two sides to comparative research: *cross-case* reference and *within case analysis*. One of the biggest threats to the validity of this project is measurement error, or improper execution of the analysis, thus resulting in incomparable analytical outputs. To compensate for this limitation, the most obvious findings will serve as the strongest pieces of evidence to compare. Overall, the goal is to account for the analytical

outcomes of each within-case analysis, using RST's explanatory utility. The within-case (English-Arabic) comparisons are also viable for comparison given that the keyword for finding that data consists of the search keyword "fossil fuels", and furthermore these articles are published on the same websites, and assumedly have the same supervision structure that oversees publication. Although two different websites will be used in the case of the UAE, the authoritarian nature of the case countries narrows the possibility of vast differences between their Arabic and English counterparts. Operationalizing comparison is simple in this research design, and comparing the analytical outputs, category by category, should sufficiently answer the question. However, the output units of comparison may differ, and if an analytical output category is nonexistent, that non-existence is a sufficient unit of comparison compared to its opposite case that *does* have that output category. Then, the cases will be compared to attempt to generalize findings.

Limitations

This thesis has several significant limitations, and each of them will be addressed here. Here are the following limitations:

1. Technology translations
2. No knowledge of Arabic
3. Secretive governments belonging to the chosen countries.

The use of technology to translate sources originally published in Arabic is problematic, however it is certainly worth an attempt owing to notions that technology will continue to bridge language gaps. There are three possible ways to bridge the geographical gap in international relations regarding the Middle East: 1) read works in English published by area-experts, 2) learn Arabic, and 3) use technology to translate works from their original source. The first solution is thought to compensate for the failures of Western thinking in dealing with the Middle East. Calls to de-westernize Middle East studies comes from the failure of Western thought to predict significant events in the Middle East such as the Arab Spring (Collier, 2011; Lynch, Schwedler, & Yom, 2022). However, it is only in the past decade when significant interest in the Middle East has proliferated, and therefore interests in the works of area experts has proliferated, leading the author of this thesis to likewise seek works published by Middle East area experts, but the amount of published works in English concerning the Middle East pales in comparison to decades of Cold War-era works published in English (Lynch, Schwedler, & Yom, 2022). The benefit here is the opportunity to build upon knowledge generated by Middle East area experts, thus providing an avenue for innovation.

Another solution would be to become fluent in Arabic. However, for a Westerner pursuing an International Relations degree, the learning of Arabic would likely stem from some desire to become a Middle East area expert, which is not the case. This solution is beyond the scope of the author's studies, but it should be fully acknowledged that a fluent understanding of Arabic would be a significant improvement over using technology to translate Arabic sources. The third solution, using translators provided by Microsoft Edge, are viable in providing a general understanding of a translated source, however in a discourse analysis none of the conclusions derived from a translated source can be considered substantial evidence because translated text is not *exactly* what the author wrote, and therefore the author, writing in their first language, is not liable for the analyzed translations nor the conclusion that are drawn from it, thus harming the validity of findings. Additionally, translating from Arabic to English has its own unique difficulties, stemming from Arabic's flexibility in word order (Omar & Gomaa, 2020). Furthermore, this thesis is premature in its choice to use translations. Technology-provided translations are rapidly advancing, but far from perfect; different translating platforms consistently provide different translations of particular words throughout the text, and anecdotally the translations consistently provide the same general understanding.

To compensate for these translated discrepancies, some English articles published on state-owned English counterparts are used. Both Arabic and English articles are selected based on their inclusion of the phrase "fossil fuel" before, during, and after the COP28 conference, and it is doubly convenient that the governments of the three countries produce both Arabic and English content. However, the logic of RST and regional power struggle supposes that Arabic published content will vary in some ways given that these three countries have a high degree of interest in proliferating their preferred messaging and discourse to, firstly, their own population, and secondly to their near abroad which consists almost entirely of Arabic speakers. Therefore, this is one more reason that translated articles will produce insubstantial evidence when compared to their Arabic counterparts. However, it is certainly possible to yield results that show the difference between their English and Arabic publications. Lastly, it is necessary to at least try to find similarities between the English and Arabic publications; if close similarities in comparison are found then the English publications could serve as stronger evidence, however if they differ discursively, then the evidence is weaker overall if it were to be compared to the Arabic publications. Any comparisons in discourse between English and Arabic publications, however, is not fruitless, and any discrepancies in discourse would support the idea that Arabic discourse produced by state-affiliated media does indeed differ from their English publications.

The secretive nature of the studied countries and their affiliated media is a major barrier. In many countries, especially democracies, various insights can be provided by former government officials, academics, elected politicians, among others, are commonly found throughout what could be called a free and open society. However, this is not the case for Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE, all three of which are ruled by authoritarians that are continuously seeking to maximize their own power and influence, unconstrained in the absence of judiciaries. The tight control over the speech of the citizens of these countries, though varied, often results in harsh repression, reprisals, and punishments (Lynch, Schwedler, & Yom, 2022). This lack of published dissent became evident as the author of this thesis had to discard a prior research question, as its pursuit required a methodology which relied on a wider array of opinions from credible citizens of those countries. Thus, there were alterations in the research question and hypothesis that would revolve around the limited, observed lack of evidence commonly seen to answer research questions regarding policies and actions taken by democratic governments, among them: published works by academics, leaders, former officials, off-the-cuff comments, and interviews. Some of these do exist, but the prior limitations of translations make it difficult to pursue any Arabic-written data that is audio and video without accompanying translations, or any text that is not able to be translated by a browser, nor book-length sources than are too long to be inserted into a translator.

Method

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

The choice of CDA is guided by common characteristic that commonly pertains to countries in the Arab peninsula: censorship and tightly controlled flows of information. The lack of openness in the three chosen countries Gulf countries stands in direct contrast in the ways in which information propagates in more open societies, where investigative journalists are freer to poke and prod at hidden truths coveted by their country's rich and powerful, while the Gulf regimes employ pervasive surveillance regimes to keep a close eye on their citizens' media and social media activities (Lynch, Schwedler, & Yom, 2022). However, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE are not mute, in fact they invest huge sums into producing and disseminating news and media, albeit that news and media must be neutral, critical of others, or praise their own countries, and by analyzing this trove of state-controlled media CDA asserts that one should be able to arrive at some understanding of the messenger's intentions or goals (Abdulmajid, 2019).

Discourse analysis is not new in Middle East studies; other researchers have also realized the practical problems of trying to understand the goals, intentions, perceptions, and perspectives of the Gulf regimes. Adib Abdulmajid (2019) used critical discourse analysis in his study of Al-Arabiya and Al-Jazeera articles to demonstrate their respective use of discourse to craft antagonistic narratives toward their rivals, while at the same time painting their own regimes as benevolent, altruistic, or victims. Abdulmajid (2019) found that these two media sites consistently used manipulative strategies outlined by Blass (2005) to indoctrinate or further align readers' views to the views held by the respective regimes. The mere existence of indoctrination on the topics covered, one being the 2017 blockade of Qatar, by Abdulmajid can be interpreted as evidence for a high-water mark in manipulative discourse; both the perpetrator (Saudi Arabia) and the target (Qatar) disseminated news and media that was highly polarized in favor own preferred ideology, and at least in Qatar's case it was an instance of existential struggle.

The overall objective of CDA as described by Fairclough (2001) is ". . . to give accounts – and more precise accounts than one tends to find in social research on change - of the ways in which an extent to which social changes are changes in discourse, and the relations between changes in discourse and changes in other, non-discoursal, elements or "moments" of social life (including therefore the question of the senses and ways in which discourse "'(re)constructs' social life in processes of social change)" (p. 1). This description provides a basic understanding for the applicability of analyzing news-media from Saudi Arabian, Qatari, and Emirati media on the topic of climate change—that their respective media outlets reflect social change (or relations between the states), and in this case the scope of "social" is expanded to the geopolitical realm. Indeed, with the theoretical basis of NCR and RST, an analytical method that perceives discourse as an intermediary between non-discoursal 'moments' and what in the media suits the purposes of this paper well. Fairclough (2001) reiterates this sentiment in his study of "information society" and "knowledge-based economy" as a **strategy** to resolve the problems "regime of capital accumulation" and "political regulation" in the aftermath of a previous, failed strategy (p. 9).

The interdisciplinary nature of CDA is likewise well-suited for our needs. CDA goes beyond looking at just isolated words and sentences, and instead proposes that discourse should be a unit of measurement for more complex social phenomena, thus demanding an interdisciplinary approach (Meyer & Wodak, 2009, p. 2). In my previous project (Kinsler, 2024), I conducted manifesto analysis on three different anti-GMO groups, and in those cases the units of measurement were as small as syntax

and word choice, and from the analysis I derived conclusions purely from in-text interpretation while ignoring concrete data that may have operationalized any such discourse. CDA, however, is heavily interested in revealing the ways in which ideology is reproduced for the purposes of power projection, with the end goal of normalizing the purported ideology, thus positioning that ideology as being "neutral" (Meyer & Wodak, 2009, p. 9).

Such ideologies were found in Abdulmajid's (2009) study, and in the case of that study CDA would, theoretically, propose that the discourse employed by Al-Arabiya and Al-Jazeera was not simply an attempt at gaining the upper hand in only that moment in time, but to also gain an ideological advantage by producing a permanent, normalized discursive standard (or "neutral" orientation). Throughout the analysis one would expect previous discursive elements to continue to be found even in the emerging topic of global green transition, and while the 2017 blockade of Qatar presented an obvious set of demands made by the Quartet, it is so far unclear what each of the three states goals are with respect to climate change despite being united in their blockade effort.

The choice of operationalization is guided by the chosen theories, but also by the data. On the latter point, since the data (discourse) will be translated from Arabic to English using Microsoft Edge's translation feature, it will be assumed that the provided translations will be accurate enough to provide a general understanding regarding sentiment or narrative, but not accurate enough to perform an approach that uses individual word choices as the basis for analysis. Indeed, a cursory demonstration of discrepancies among translators can be performed by inserting the same text in to two different translators, for example Edge's translator feature and DeepL, which will yield two text that adequately provide the same **knowledge**, yet consistently vary in word choices or omit articles e.g., using the word "citizen" in place of "national", and vice versa. Therefore, the language used will not be analyzed in terms of word choice, but rather characterizations. For example, the word "evil"' carries extremely negative connotations, denoting a particularly malicious kind of "bad" as opposed to good. However, this thesis would simply interpret the word "evil" as simply being a negatively descriptive adjective. The idea that reducing word choice to characterization such as "negative" and "positive", should theoretically be adequate for interpretation because persistent use of certain characterization within discourse is, in of itself, a strategy to form and disseminate ideology. Such characterizations will be used to also characterize other content, such as pointing out rhetorical strategies like minimizing one's own culpability, while exaggerating your opponent's culpability.

Meyer and Wodak (2009) list one approach called Dispositive Analysis (DA) that fits this thesis' purpose well, primarily because it presents a two-pronged approach comprised of 1) structural analysis, and 2) fine analysis. Again, this approach is ideal because it synergizes both reality and discourse, the former which demands context specific knowledge, and the latter which demands the analysis of a strategic tool: discourse (Meyer & Wodak, 2009, p. 25). Meyer and Wodak list several components of a DA analysis: argumentation strategies, implicit implicatures and insinuations, particular sources of knowledge, symbolism and/or metaphors (p. 28). This approach contrasts to their other suggested "linguistic indicators" like Sociocognitive Approach (SCA) that looks at data points like intonation, word order, etc. Such small units of data are far too unreliable given that the data will be translated from Arabic to English. Amoussou & Allagbe (2018) describe Fairclough's SCA method as a three-dimensional process ". . . for the analysis of text and discourse: (a) the linguistic *description* of the formal properties of the text; (b) the *interpretation* of the relationship between the discursive processes/interaction and the text, and finally, (c) the *explanation* of the relationship between discourse and social and cultural reality" (p. 14). And like Abdulmajid's (2019) study on media and ideology in the Middle East, this thesis will likewise describe the data (text) using terms like **omission** and **commission**, use Van Dijk's *ideological square* (emphasize positive things about us and negative things about them, deemphasize positive things about them and negative things about us), and then explaining the relationship between the discourse and reality and RST.

Data

Meyer & Wodak (2009) provide commentary on the meaning of *discourse* and *text*, with meanings varying over time and from place to place. Teun van Dijk (1998) ". . . views "discourse" as structured forms of knowledge, whereas "text" refers to concrete oral utterances or written documents". Abdulmajid (2019) sufficiently demonstrated that published news stories indeed produce a discourse by breaking down their structural components using CDA. Published news stories produce a discourse that stands in contrast to a news wire, where one or two lines of text plainly state knowledge through text in an unstructured manner that lacks the structural characteristics like attempts to create a narrative—they make no attempt to reproduce social practices. Therefore, the absolute most basic criteria are that the chosen sample is actually discourse.

The data was chosen in a consistent manner: query the websites' search functions using the phrase "fossil fuels." For the Arabic websites, "fossil fuels" was translated from English to Arabic. From there,

articles were chosen loosely, yet on a topical basis; each article features substantial discourse on the topic of the energy transition most recently displayed at COP28. However, the articles vary widely in their focus: opinion pieces, science, and finance articles all revolve around the topic of the energy transition, yet the content and emphasis differ. The benefit to this data selection method is that the analysis is more likely to produce results and can offer generalizable findings specifically on the topic of the energy transition found using the phrase "fossil fuels," however it harms the generalizability of all articles based on the search phrase "fossil fuels". The selection of websites was chosen based on their English and Arabic counterparts. Both Al-Arabiya and Al-Jazeera have English websites under the same name, but Emirati sites do not have English/Arabic counterparts, and instead two websites under two different names were chosen to compensate.

Saudi Arabian sources

- The end of the pharaonic approach to the "energy transition"
- In the "Cup 28". Largest climate talks ever facing record heat
- Saudi Aramco CEO Amin Nasser says energy transition strategy 'visibly failing'

Qatari sources

- Historic COP28 deal agrees to 'transition away' from fossil fuels
- Cop 28. Western Utopia and Gulf Realism on Fossil Fuels

Emirati sources

- United Nations: "UAE agreement" is an unprecedented step
- COP28 has come and gone - But Its lessons on climate finance should not fade away

Theory

Rentier State Theory

It would be negligent to analyze two Gulf states without utilizing Rentier State Theory (RST); no theory has been used as extensively in any region as RST's application to the Middle East. However, just as onlookers failed to predict major events in the region with other theories, likewise RST failed to predict the oil crisis of 2014 or the new social contract that was formed afterward, and in the area-expert theme of this thesis, calls for critiques and revisions of RST have been made by those most intimately familiar

with the region (Shehab, 2021). Elmekdad Shabab, based in Doha, Qatar, reminds us that RST is often paired with Resource Curse Theory (RCT) to explain how and why Gulf states "buy" support from the populations through distributive practices (welfare and no taxes), and also that commodity based economies tend to slow development toward a strong, diversified economy supported by skilled workers, however Shehab (2021) argues that the oil price crash of 2014, and the lack of democratic movement in the Gulf, was not properly explained by the commonly combined theories of RST and RCT.

The previously held beliefs about the theory were that if Gulf states could not sustain their budgets through the rentier paradigm, then the governance model of the Gulf monarchies would be in peril. Overall, Shabab makes the case that the prior RST paradigm is outdated, and modifications and analysis provided by Jim Krane (2014) were, rather, the beginnings of new theory rather than modifications. In conclusion, Shabab states that the previous RST paradigm is outdated, and the complexities of the region were not fully understood, and thus calls for a new paradigm. This new paradigm heavily involves the de-westernization of theory in general (as it concerns the Middle East), and in doing so this thesis will echo Shabab's call to move away from previously held standards of modernity based on western experiences. Furthermore, limitations of RST have become apparent in recent years, especially in instances where RST overstated oil's salience and failed to explain domestic challenges and rapidly evolving state-society relations (Mason, 2023, p. 8). Mason's (2023) work likewise pursued a hybrid approach to deal with the shortcomings of RST by expanding the criteria and thus scope of traditional Middle East studies.

The key usefulness of RST is its ability to understand what ways rentier states rent power. In Saudi Arabia's case, their most powerful rented element is military, in which they use their enormous oil revenues to develop military ties with the U.S., but also to purchase American and other Western defense products. In Qatar's case, their also purchase foreign military goods, however their most powerful rented tool is media in the form of Al-Jazeera. It should be noted that Saudi Arabia is also pursuing their own media dominance through their own media network, Al-Arabiya, however the population, wealth, geographical size, and proximity to conflicts like the Iran-Iraq war and the 2003 invasion of Iraq have pushed Saudi Arabia to pursue military dominance (Al-Rasheed, 2010, pp. 238, 276). The point is that each state's choices of rented power will serve as starting points for detecting demonstrated preferences and positions in working toward answering the hypothesis. Diane Galeeva (2022) analyzed the ways in which Qatar rented power through media. Galeeva's assertion of rent is more advanced than the more direct methods of rent like purchasing military power. Renting power in

the media space goes far beyond simply investing in a media outlet by simply pouring money into it; rented power in the media space is manifested in the choice and frequency of the topics covered when broadcasted to a large audience. In the case of Al-Jazeera, their extensive media coverage in Arabic translates to a rented audience; rather than publishing in several languages to serve a broad audience, the Arabic focus of the network defines its audience (Galeeva, 2022).

The choice and frequency of topics covered by Qatar's media also demonstrates rented power. For example, Al-Jazeera's broadcasting of al-Qaeda messages, coverage that is favorable to one state over another (Iraq over Kuwait), etc. Constant coverage of the Arab Spring, combined with favorable coverage of Islamists like the Muslim Brotherhood, drew the ire of many states in the region—the Quartet in particular (Galeeva, 2022). The evidence of power is supported by claims by Arab leadership that Al-Jazeera's constant coverage and favoritism toward opposition groups resulted in prolonged protests and greater oppositional power over the narrative—two aspects that would have been less challenging for the Gulf regimes to deal with had Al-Jazeera either not existed, or had it chosen not to cover the protests in the ways in which they did. This type of coverage damaged Qatar's relationship with the Quartet, and thus Qatar set out to rent power through other non-state media actors (Galeeva, 2022). Likewise, Saudi Arabia and the Quartet set out to develop their own web of media networks in direct competition with Qatar. The non-state media actors support by Qatar has a degree of deniability so that their support cannot be traced directly to Qatar in the same way that Al-Jazeera can, however discourse analysis reveals that links from these newer non-state media actors can be linked to Qatar through discourse analysis (Galeeva, 2022). Some of the indicators shown by these non-state media actors include bias toward Qatar, describing the Quartet as having authoritarian regimes, framing the Muslim Brotherhood as preferable and a vehicle for democratic change, framing Quartet media as "mouthpieces", titling articles in ways that negatively connotate Quartet states, and citing other non-state media actors to establish their own credibility and neutrality. This expanded network of non-state media actors directly represented an expanded capacity for rented power on Qatar's behalf by controlling the narrative through an increased degree of diffusion and deniability (Galeeva, 2022).

This pattern of "renting" power abroad continues through other areas in which international influence can be rented. Football is another area that Qatar has invested heavily in; the purchase of several high-profile European football clubs, as well as their successful bid to host the 2022 World Cup, are increasingly common pursuits that Qatar is taking to expand their influence (Galeeva, 2022). Similarly, "renting" the COP28 conference was a demonstration of renting power when the UAE "rented"

the right to host the annual climate conference. What remains is a common strategy; rented power is demonstrated through purchasing already existing, already notable products that are typically non-state actors for the purpose of expanding influence. This rentierism reflects how the oil industry began in the Gulf, when Gulf monarchs dealt with foreign, already established companies to drill and pump oil. This avenue of prosperity stands in contrast to the ways in which developed countries developed their native industries and products.

The operationalization of RST will come through interpretation based on the theoretical understanding that the sourced media websites are one form of rented power. As such, it would be pertinent for these countries to utilize one form of rented power (media) to augment other forms of rented power, thereby justifying the costs of rented media power, and generating ideological normalization of their preferred forms of rented power. Though CDA has its own theoretical underpinnings, RST is fit for purpose when analyzing and interpreting these three states, all of which fit into the traditional RST context. RST also points to hypotheticals; RST and CDA in combination allow one to explore the relationship between contemporary discourse and a chosen state's historical affinity for certain rented power. Additionally, it also provides preconceived notions about what their respective discourses could look like, effectively providing us with a set of expectations. Furthermore, it more easily allows us to keep an eye out for unexpected findings. The ongoing development of RST also pushes one to look deeper into the possible rented power of less-than-obvious outcomes, just as Shehab (2021) did.

Hypotheses

1. State-affiliated news media outlets in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE will construct discourse in a manner that supports those states' preferred form of rented power.
2. The framing of fossil fuels will differ between English and Arabic language articles, catering to the perceived values and expectations of different audiences.

These hypotheses offer avenues to explore the research question. The first hypothesis is informed by RST and would claim that it would be illogical for a rented power source such as media to not consistently advocate for the interests of the affiliated state. The media sources are affiliated with Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE—each of them rentier states. As such, they rely on fossil fuel sales to fund their respective governments, and furthermore those funds are used to maintain the populations loyalty, and therefore internal stability. Thus, the logic of RST would say that a rapid transition away from fossil fuels would pose a serious threat to these states' economies, and therefore every aspect of those states (Shehab, 2021). However, globally there is significant pressure to transition away from fossil fuels;

Theory embedded in CDA asserts that discourse can employ manipulative strategies to sway readers to believe one thing or another (Van Dijk, 2006, p. 359). With the understanding that these three countries need fossil fuel revenues to maintain their contemporary status, in combination with most countries wanting (at least textually) to phase out fossil fuels, it is incumbent on these countries to convince people that moving away from fossil fuels permanently is not something they should do. In effect, they should seek to sway readers to join their side. However, a cursory glance at articles published by these state-affiliated news outlets offers discourse that is not forthcoming. These news outlets do not speculate that these Gulf States take issue with phasing out fossil fuels because they need to sell them and will always need to sell them, nor do these authors enlighten readers to the facts that their state affiliates are heavily dependent on hydrocarbon revenues. As such, this hypothesis will guide the analysis to discover the ways in which authors construct discourse to manipulate readers' beliefs about fossil fuels.

The second question is more straightforward: English and Arabic publications are for different audiences, respectively; English is the most widely spoken language in the world, and Arabic is the most widely spoken language in the region. But primarily, Arabic is the most important language within these three countries. In Qatar and the UAE, substantial portions of the population are foreign and therefore foreigners widely speak English. However, the most important portions of their populations are their citizens—citizens whose loyalty is most necessary.

While Arabic is the most spoken language in the region, and the language spoken in the near-abroad region relative to these three countries, the rented power of media also extends to the wider world in the form of English publications: one source in Arabic for their own populations and the near-abroad, and English for everyone else. Identifying discursive commonalities between the English and Arabic publications would provide stronger evidence for answering the research question and reveal the preferred discourse of the respective regimes, regardless of the author's language of publication.

Analysis

Qatar

Historic COP28 deal agrees to 'transition away' from fossil fuels[3]

Article published in English 13 December 2023

Here is our English source from Al-Jazeera. As expected, at a cursory glance this English article is more "balanced" in its approach, offering insights into each viewpoint. However, there are some discursive elements at play here. The article outlines the passage of the COP28, which does not completely phase out fossil fuels, but does include language that seeks to transition away from fossil fuels, using equitable language predicted by the previous Al-Arabiya article.

The article makes heavy use of quotes from officials to support much of the **knowledge**, and even acknowledges some criticism, though not at Qatar or any Qatari official. The very first sentence does something that the other articles appeared resistant to do: **acknowledge** the direct link between fossil fuel usage and climate change: ". . .push nations to transition away from fossil fuels to avert the worst effects of climate change," is quite direct in comparison to the other articles because it avoids significant discursive elements. Other articles often appealed to authority, quoting, or paraphrasing them to make the point about fossil fuels and their contributions to climate change, but instead the author is quite forward about this.

The next significant discursive element comes when the author enlightens readers about what language is included in the final agreement.

> However, the deal doesn't go so far as to seek a "phase-out" of fossil fuels, for which more than 100 nations had pleaded.

While other articles make have defined the "phase out" camp as being comprised specifically the U.S. and Europeans, however the author here defines the "phase out" camp as being comprised of more than 100 nations, a majority of nations, which is true, yet suggests that this is a popular opinion as opposed to employing other language. For example, the author may use the phrase "many countries" or "some countries" to describe the "phase out" camp, yet those phrases have the effect of obscuring or

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[3] Al Jazeera English. (2023, December 13). Historic COP28 deal agrees to 'transition away' from fossil fuels. Retrieved from Al Jazeera English: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/12/13/new-un-climate-deal-calls-for-transitioning-away-from-fossil-fuels

minimizing the number countries with that preference, therefore pursuing a higher degree of manipulation.

Throughout the article, the author quotes and paraphrases several official sources. They include COP28 President Sultan al-Jaber, US climate envoy John Kerry, French Minister for Energy Agnes Pannier-Runacher, Norway's climate and environment minister Espen Barth Eide, and UN Foundation's senior adaptation adviser, Cristina Rumbaitis del Rio. Each of these appeals to authority is used to elaborate on the historic magnitude of the agreement. There are several observations that can be made about these sources. For one, they are either the COP28 President, or officials from developed western countries. In some of the other analyzed articles, developing countries officials were used to substantiate arguments that phasing out fossil fuels were unrealistic. Furthermore, the article offers no sources on opposing parties anywhere—after all, the conference was delayed by *someone*, signaling **omission**. Mention of Saudi Arabia lies buried in another Al-Jazeera article that the author links in this passage:

> Intensive negotiations continued well into the small hours of Wednesday morning after the conference presidency's initial document angered many countries by avoiding decisive calls for action on fossil fuels, the major driver of global heating.

"Conference presidency's initial document angered" places ownership of the disliked document solely in the hands of the conference presidency, however the linked article admits, in only a single sentence, that Saudi Arabia influenced the conference presidency to remove language regarding fossil fuels. Furthermore, this passage links "global heating" to the conference presidency: *Presidency's → document → avoiding → action → global heating.* By placing the sole burden on the conference presidency, a small degree of **omission** can be applied to this author's depiction of obstructive actors that delayed the conference. In fact, a degree of **antagonistic** discourse is beginning to develop based on the author's **omission** of Saudi Arabia, but also in the way the author depicts the conference presidency. Later in the article the author repeats the fact that the COP28 President, Sultan Al-Jaber, is the CEO of an oil company. Earlier in the article the author titles the Sultan as the COP28 President, but in the following sentence the author titles him as an oil CEO:

> "We have language on fossil fuel in our final agreement for the first time ever," said al-Jaber, CEO of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) oil company Adnoc.

The Sultan's role at COP28 was to act as the conference's president, not as an oil CEO. Discursively, the author makes the UAE and its president as the sole perpetrators of the delay, repeatedly reminding readers that the COP28 President is also an oil CEO.

This article is quite different in **tone** and the sources quoted, which was expected given its English publication, however the discursive elements offer some interesting notions. As far as **prestige** goes, the article celebrates the conference as a success. Sources cited may provide western readers with familiar faces, who were chosen to quote or paraphrase amongst the hundreds of countries that levied for language that phased out fossil fuels. However, **antagonistic** discourse was constructed in reference to the UAE and its president.

Key Discursive Elements

- **Key word choices:** "for the first time ever"
- **Tone:** Tends positive.
- **Knowledge:** Links fossil fuels to climate change, reminds readers that the COP28 President is the CEO of an oil company, notes the number of countries in the "phase out" camp.
- **Prestige:** COP28 is successful.
- **Antagonisms:** Associates COP28 president with negative circumstances.
- **Omission:** Omits Saudi Arabia's role.
- **Appeals to authority:** COP28 President, and western officials quoted on the historic proportions of the agreement.

Cop 28. Western Utopia and Gulf Realism on Fossil Fuels[4]

Article published in Arabic 12 December 2023

The software translated article opens by questioning whether COP28 will end with an agreement to phase out fossil fuels. The author answers the question by saying that three entities that tend to push for language declaring the need to end fossil fuel usage: the European Union, The United States, and U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres. Here, the author sets the stage for an **antagonistic** balance, a competition between two competing visions for what should or should not happen regarding the future

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[4] Badr, H. (2023, December 12). Cup 28. Western Utopia and Gulf Realism on Fossil Fuels. From www.aljazeera.net: https://www.aljazeera.net/science/2023/12/12 كوب-28-يوتوبيا-غربية-وواقعية-خليجية

of fossil fuels and their utilization. However, the author reveals that the opposite, yet true answer lies "behind closed doors", and then employs an **appeal to authority** by citing a poll conducted by Al-Jazeera of unnamed experts who believe that the most "realistic" solution is the one offered by the Gulf countries (note a possible judgmental word choice). There are several important points about this section. Owing to the imprecise state of software language translator, "behind closed doors" should simply be interpreted as implying that something is being conspiratorial, to say that what one may have heard from the U.S., the EU, and the secretary-general may be untrue. Furthermore, the author augments the possibility of hidden truths by, in his own words, describing the Gulf countries plan as being "realistic", implying that what one is hearing form the U.S., EU, and secretary-general is unrealistic, and that the better option presented by Gulf countries is also reinforced as the preferred option by experts. The poll has its own **authoritative** function: how can you, the reader, possibly disagree with innumerable, unnamed experts? After all they are experts, and the reader is not likely to be an expert. Additionally, the author does not cite the sample size, and therefore the reader could conceivably believe that a sufficient sample size was taken, though the lack of any citation for this poll also has the effect of shielding it from criticism. Finally, the paragraph states that the Gulf countries position is that fossil fuels "can be produced while investing in technologies to clean up emissions."

So far, the article has started so strongly by employing strategic appeals in preference for the Gulf countries preferred outcome. The overall effect of this paragraph is that it structures the article in a way that prioritizes the Gulf countries preferences by doing three things: 1) naming three entities that are publicly providing an unrealistic solution by framing them as being less than credible, 2) provide statistical information that shows that the *true* solution is hidden, according to experts, and 3) plainly states the Gulf countries position. In effect, the author is saying *they* are not credible, and t*he alternative* solution is backed by experts. This **strategy** is competitive, and in the remainder of the article we can expect a winner in this competition of ideas, and the winner will be revealed by an analysis of the depiction of these parties and the strategies employed while writing about them and their ideas and actions. More quotes from the Egyptian head are included in which he outlines a carbon credit plan, in which countries buy credits from other countries that have met the carbon reduction goals. The Egyptian also asserts that developed countries essential subsidize their carbon credit purchases by selling renewable energy technology, and further elaborates that Gulf countries are aware of this "scheme" as he calls it. This inclusion results in a display of **knowledge**, but it only includes quotes from an official in the region, making the inclusion of **knowledge** lopsided in favor of the Gulf countries alternative plan, in which they will use fossil fuel sales to fund "emissions cleaning technology".

The author then proceeds to outline the apparent hypocrisy of those demanding a phase out of fossil fuels: the U.S. unsuccessfully pressured Saudi Arabia into demanding that OPEC increase oil production to lower the price and Germany returning to coal generated power during the Russian war against Ukraine. The quoted official is head of the International Studies Unit and Energy Studies Program at Egypt's Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies, Ahmed Kandil. Quoting yet another expert that concludes that the Gulf proposal is again the more "realistic" proposal. Even more, Uganda's Energy Minister Ruth Nankabirwa asserts that asking Uganda to end oil production amounts to an "insult" and is essentially a call to keep Uganda poor. This section provides several important strategies: The inclusion of experts and officials without a German or American counterpart, **normative** insinuations that it is immoral to demand the phasing out of fossil fuels, and highlighting hypocrisy of only one side, thus resulting in a condemnatory **tone**.

So far, the article has been quite consistent in forming an adversarial narrative, similar in outcome to what Abdulmajid (2019) found in his research. The article ends with Francesco Grillo, a visiting fellow at the European University Institute in Fiesole presents another piece of **knowledge** explaining with carbon capture technology is not yet a total solution, saying that it still has enormous costs, and will "solve half of the emissions reduction issue by 2050." The quote from the visiting fellow contains a neutral **tone**, cites a study from Oxford University, and is lacks elements that previous quotes used like normative insinuations and judgmental word choice e.g., "realistic." Overall, the final quote presented by the visiting fellow presents evidence that is more typically seen in science articles.

While word choice is considered weak evidence given that software translations were used, the choice of included elements and overall composition—choices made by the author—are far stronger. The list of discursive elements will be split into two categories: one category will outline the discursive elements when speaking about the Gulf countries preferred plan, and in the other when presenting the viewpoint of (presumably) the U.S. and Germany. The elements compiled below make no distinction between author and quoted persons, although the author is ultimately responsible for what is present in the article.

Key discursive elements:

- **Key word choices and phrases**: "realistic" when describing the Gulf countries preferred outcome, depicts U.S., European, and U.N. actions and speech as taking place "behind closed doors," describes carbon credit purchases as a "scheme" that developed countries engage with,

"Advocates of "phasing out" fossil fuels say burning them is the biggest cause of climate change ever."

- **Appeal to authority**: Cites an unspecified Al-Jazeera poll by a wide range of experts, quotes developing countries government officials supposedly in touch with their country's needs.
- **Knowledge:** Facts about the Paris agreement, renewable energy, carbon capture technology, carbon capture schemes.
- **Tone:** Condemnatory, doubtful, pointing out perceived hypocrisy of the western stance.
- **Strategy:** Support Gulf countries preferences, discredit Western preferences as unrealistic; **antagonistic** discourse.
- **Prestige:** Inclusion of developing countries officials places the Gulf countries as the defenders of oil up-and-coming oil producers.

The included **knowledge** provides the article with an informative basis, and thus one could conclude that this article is meant for someone who is not up to date on the problems and potential solutions of climate change. However, the overall structure, combined with key discursive elements, reveals the preferred slant of the Gulf countries. Staying true to its headline, the article itself can be described as pushback against the notion that fossil fuels can be phased out. However, what is absent from this article is equal pushback against the notion that fossil fuels *cannot* be phased out. Furthermore, the key to this article's manipulative **strategy** is that the reader cannot use this article as a basis for the support of the western position; the article provides no positives for the western position, no doubt or condemnation for the Gulf countries, nor does it pay any attention to the Gulf countries role in being a major source of climate change, constituting **omission**. The article gives an informative impression with its presentation of objectives facts, but the relatively short length of discourse in combination with the listed discursive elements and strategies, this article is evidence of media aligning with the Gulf countries preference, but furthermore it is the degree to which this article sides with the Gulf countries gives credence to the importance of fossil fuel production in the gulf countries.

In theoretical terms, the latter article contains evidence that supports the basic tenants of RST. Overall, the discourse produced by this author is consistent with RST's assertion that Qatar, being one of the many oil-funded, will do whatever it takes to maintain their oil-based economy. However, it is to the degree with which this article constructs discourse that tends to heavily support RST; on one hand RST says that continued oil production is essential to a petrostate, on the other hand this article reproduces that reality through key discursive elements—the strongest element being the **antagonistic strategy**.

Furthermore, the attempt at establishing objectivity through composition and category. The article was placed in the 'Science' section and includes facts about climate agreements, two inclusions that one would expect to see in any reputable science outlet, but there are elements that cause this article to diverge from articles sourced from reputable outlets. Downplaying the acceptance of anthropogenic climate change by claiming that advocates say that fossil fuels are the largest driver of climate change is essentially questioning its factual basis.

To present anthropogenic climate change in this manner targets the scientific consensus on fossil fuel driven climate change and is thus a challenge to the discursive ideology of those who advocate for the phasing out of fossil fuels. The manipulation is achieved by positioning both the Gulf countries and Western preferences as having equal weight when the latter's preference has a factual basis. In essence, this article reproduces *sharp power* through manipulative discourse by confronting dominant ideologies by using a false premise as a starting point. This discursive emphasis of *sharp power* contrasts to a display of *soft power* that may be seen in articles describing a more climate-conscious country, wherein discourse will highlight the climate-conscious country's green achievements, thus bolstering its reputation as a leader in the fight against climate change. The author here makes no attempt to verify the veracity of fossil fuel driven climate change, but rather manipulates a perception of climate *reality* by supplanting scientific fact with political opinions, hence the inclusion of quotes from various officials.

The effect of the discursive strategies, overall composition, doubtful word choices, phrases, **tone**, produces a piece of discourse that heavily favors the Gulf countries preference. In fact, this article leaves no room for an uneducated reader to give any credit to the western preference to include language to phase out fossil fuels, but rather discredits them at every step. The concept of *rented power* is apparent in that the article overwhelmingly supports the fundamental core of the Gulf countries, oil, and therefore countering threats to oil production is necessary to the survival of petrostates.

Within-Case Comparison

First, the publishing date of both articles should be addressed. The agreement to phase out fossil fuels was signed on December 13, the day the English article was agreed upon, but the Arabic article was published one day prior to the signing of that agreement (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 2023). Could the discourse on the same topic differ so radically one day apart? To pose such a question, we should first rule out other possibilities. Now, the first hypothesis will be addressed. The Arabic article is more obvious in answering the first hypothesis, but it is the English article that is

more difficult to discern. Rentierism has many different forms, and the most solid piece of evidence in the English article is its treatment of the COP28 conference—a form of rented power. The English article's quotes and paraphrases consistently boost the prestige of COP28, indicating recognition of its functional ability to produce agreements based on collective desires.

This ability to drive change is an aspect that rentier states are all interested in, and while the Arabic article indicates deep skepticism surrounding the events at COP28, it is precisely COP28's ability to exercise rented power that is free from discursive manipulation. A notable standout from the Arabic article is its lack of discursive strategy against the COP28 conference itself, refusing to essentially say that it is a failure, but rather using discursive manipulation to take aim at western positions on the topic. Similarly, the English article also takes aim at an actor, the COP28 president, and furthermore omits Saudi Arabia as one of the delaying participants. However, the articles differ in the methods of discursive attack: western positions are "unrealistic", and it is ironic that the COP28 President is also an oil CEO.

Though the articles differ in their discursive targets, it is the lack of discourse against COP28, in of itself a vehicle of rented power, that is the most important common factor. Theoretically, RST aids this understanding: COP28 can be a form of rented power, which Qatar would likewise be interested in hosting. Therefore, it is in the interest of Qatar to preserve the prestige of the event, bolstering its legitimacy even though COP28's final agreement was not in Qatar's interest, indicated by strong discourse against major sponsors of the final agreement, both western and Emirati. However, the English article offers some counterfactual evidence given the positive tone and celebratory content of the quoted individuals. The fact that the bulk of the text is dedicated to the words of western officials, all of whom speak positively about the COP28 agreement, inherently gives more discursive weight to their positions.

Overall, the first hypothesis is supported strongly by the Arabic article and weakly, if not counterfactually, by the English article, though differ significantly in which rentier paths they support. The Arabic article strongly supports the most direct source of rentierism, fossil fuels, by discursively disparaging supporters of phasing out as "unrealistic" and providing knowledge that shows how far away the world is from phasing out fossil fuels. As such, discursive support for fossil fuels serves as the strongest possible evidence to support the first hypothesis, and the English article serves as weaker, if not counterfactual, evidence because it discursively supports a form of rented power that is rented by fossil fuel revenues, yet provides discursive weight to proponents of phasing out fossil fuels.

Saudi Arabia

The end of the pharaonic approach to the "energy transition"[5]

This article is listed as an opinion piece and is authored by Dr. Faisal Al-Fayek in Arabic 25 April 2024

The title of the article provides a pointed description of the dominant climate ideology that is being challenged. The word 'pharaonic' does not just imply that the dominant climate ideology is wrong, but rather it is tyrannical and being pushed and implemented in an undemocratic and unilateral fashion. From the outset this article sets a defiant **tone**. The author then poses a question: Is the IMF over focusing on fighting fossil fuels? Directly addressed are those who called for the complete elimination of fossil fuels and those who called OPEC a failure, but the author reminds us that "we have become accustomed to such noise since the first climate change conferences." To use a word like "noise" denotes an outright rejection of the status quo on climate dialogue, and the word "we" denotes those who feel as if they are being lectured by those who do not know the proper course on the topic of energy. Furthermore, this "we" builds the case that there are many others who feel the same way, implying that the author is speaking on behalf of others.

As one who speaks for others, this is one data point that contributes to the attempt at building **prestige** through discourse. To reiterate his point, the author quotes Crown Prince bin Salman, who asks ""Why do they limit everyone to the options that are right for them?" "Them" referring to those who insist on "energy poverty", or the idea that developing countries should refrain from exploiting their hydrocarbons. The inclusion of the Crown Prince is an **appeal to authority** that not only adds credibility to the idea that those who wish to phase out fossil fuels are taking the incorrect stance. Furthermore, by selecting, naming, and quoting the Crown Prince, it adds to the potential **prestige** of Saudi Arabia by placing them as defenders of those who would supposedly be condemned to "energy poverty" in the absence of hydrocarbons. Keep in mind that Al-Arabiya is state-affiliated media, and first and foremost the Saudi crown is most interested in continually messaging their own population. Although Suadi Arabia is deeply authoritarian, the crown still requires some level of buy-in from the population. One of the aspects of *rented power* is being able to buy a wide reach the *weight* of the bought media only offsets the *costs* of such a media enterprise if the renter can receive what they seek, and one of the major goals

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[5] Al-Fayek, F. (2024, December 31). The end of the pharaonic approach to the "energy transition". Retrieved from www.alarabiya.net: https://www.alarabiya.net/aswaq/opinions/2023/12/31/الطاقة-تحوّل-في-الفرعوني-النهج-نهاية-

is to get the Suadi population onboard with national plans like Saudi Vision 2030. Emphasizing MBS's leadership, within the context of climate discussions, places him at a leadership role, demonstration that not only is MBS the crown prince of Saudi Arabia, but that he is also a leader in global affairs and a topic that is presented as an existential threat, climate change.

But who is opposed in this situation? The beginnings of ideological confrontation strengthen, as the author relays their ideological opponents, "Saudi Arabia is emphasizing the importance of finding realistic solutions to combat "energy poverty," an approach we don't hear from major industrialized countries, especially those fighting fossil fuels." Several translated word choices here are key: "finding" and "realistic". We have seen in other articles the use of the word "realistic" to denote that current proposals are unrealistic, but the inclusion of the word "finding" assumes that the proper solution is yet unfound. The strategic value of these word choices is compounded by the lack of discourse that counters current proposals on a scientific basis. Identifying the opponent, the author suggests "industrialized countries" and further specifies that those countries in opposition are "those fighting fossil fuels." Implicit in this specification of opposition is that the proponents of "energy poverty" are certain countries rather than an idea or concept. The concept is "energy poverty" is a repeated concept that is often associated with words like "realistic", and therefore it is incumbent on the reader to have the impression that "industrialized countries," and "those fighting fossil fuels" are therefore proponents of energy poverty, rather than some idea to phase out fossil fuels based on their contribution to anthropogenic climate change. The author then includes a piece of **knowledge** to contribute to the ideological development of "energy poverty":

> The term "energy poverty" means lack of access to sufficient, affordable, reliable and safe energy sources to support development. Insufficient energy means that it is impossible to develop agriculture and industrialization, leaving the poorest countries trapped in a vicious circle, contributing to malnutrition, unhealthy living conditions, and limited access to education and employment.

This definition by itself does contain any references to fossil fuels, but only energy in the most general sense. However, piece of information about phasing out fossil fuels at the behest of out-of-touch industrialized nations, immediately after the segment about the unrealistic prospect of phasing out fossil fuels, makes the implication clear: without fossil fuels, developing countries will be condemned to poverty, and it is implied because the author omits to make any link between phasing out fossil fuels and the consequence of energy poverty. This linkage between phasing out fossil fuels and the inevitability of

energy poverty could be made if it weren't for international efforts like the Join SDG Fund to help developing countries generate energy in renewable and greener ways in the absence of fossil fuels, or the complete transition away from fossil fuels, amounting to **omission** (Joint SDG Fund, 2024).

The next paragraph reiterates some of the same points using similar strategies seen previously, but a new concept is introduced, carbon control:

> The goal is to balance sustainable development with the needs of each economy, while the unification of the goal should focus on reducing emissions and not eliminating fossil fuels.

Here is one possible rectification of the supposed unrealistic thinking by industrialized countries. The assertion that "balance" must be achieved between sustainable development and economy presents them as being mutually exclusive: one can develop sustainably, but not at the cost of the economy, and to achieve this balance one must discard the idea of eliminating fossil fuels, such that the needs of each economy can and will be outside the purview of sustainable development.

More **knowledge** is deployed regarding the growing demand for oil which is expected to continue for decades to come. Such **knowledge** is accompanied by stating that growing populations in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia will require fossil fuels to meet their energy needs. The author reifies the **antagonistic** relationship between the demand to phase out fossil fuels and the perceived victims of such a policy: *Industrialized countries → phase out fossil fuels → developing countries → energy poverty*.

Key discursive elements:

- **Key word choices and phrases: "**Pharaonic", "such noise", "realistic", "energy poverty"
- **Tone:** Defiant
- **Knowledge:** Growing populations need fossil fuels, growth of oil demand
- **Prestige:** Saudi Arabia and MBS as a defenders of developing countries
- **Appeal to authority:** Quotes Crown Prince MBS
- **Omission**: Omits efforts to compensate for developing countries
- **Antagonisms**: "those" who want to phase out fossil fuels, "industrialized countries"

Through the lens of RST, the country vs. country discourse is sensible given that any opposition to the production of hydrocarbons is in essence opposition to petrostates, given that any reduction in fossil fuel consumption would theoretically reduce petrostates' ability to rent power. The output of the analysis reveals a discord between petrostates and those advocating for phasing out fossil fuels; it is not a

disagreement about science, but rather a disagreement about *what the foundations of a state should be*, and to say that a phasing out of fossil fuels would mean the end of hydrocarbon-based economies. The author is keen to avoid Saudi Arabia's stake in this discussion, omitting the fiscal impact a phasing out of fossil fuels would have on the kingdom. Instead, the author uses several discursive strategies to discredit the notion of phasing out fossil fuels.

In the "Cop 28". Largest climate talks ever facing record heat[6]

Article published in Arabic on 10 December 2023. Title editorialized to correct a mistranslation.

Here is a piece that was published two days before the start of COP28 and was placed in a COP28 section on the website that was specifically created for the conference.

The title contains two words that describe the magnitude of the upcoming conference. "Largest" and *"record"* are descriptors, respectively, of *"climate talks"* and *"record heat".* These descriptors do the oppose of downplay or normalize the circumstances, but instead they impose a **tone** of urgency stemming from unprecedented heat, which will be discussed amongst an unprecedentedly large conference specifically to deal with that alarming problem. This sense of urgency is notable because one possible strategy that a country could use to ensure the continued usage of fossil fuels would be to deny the problem, however this article immediately identifies the problem and **acknowledges** the huge interest in discussing that problem amongst the "largest climate talks." The article proceeds to detail some of the expectations for the conference and reasons for climate issues. Notable excerpts are from the first sentence:

> Around 70,000 politicians, diplomats, activists, financiers and business leaders are expected to travel to Dubai for COP28 amid growing concerns about the possibility of the world sliding into environmental catastrophe.

Growing → concerns → possibility → world → sliding → catastrophe are the key word choices that describe the topic. However, the most significant word that needs analysis is "possibility", raising the notion that something could be done to possibly change the course of the "possibility" of "catastrophe".

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[6] www.alarabiya.net. (2023, 28 November). *In the "Cup 28". Largest climate talks ever facing record heat*. Retrieved from www.alarabiya.net: https://www.alarabiya.net/aswaq/special-stories/2023/11/28/الأنظار-تصب-نحو-علاقة-أميركا-مع-الصين-وتأثيرها-على-ملف-الوقود-الأحفوري-في-كوب-28

From a scientific perspective, this is an accurate assessment of what could happen if the world were to stay on its present course. One would expect the rest of the article to reflect the sentiments displayed in the title and first sentence. The next paragraph elaborates on the circumstances of climate change. "2023 is sure to be the hottest year on record. . ." uses "sure" to make an assertion with a high degree of confidence. This setting of confidence conditions the reader to believe the following information will be factual. ". . . greenhouse gas emissions are still rising and promises to cut pollution remains insufficient to eliminate the uncontrollable threat of warming." The author makes some curious choices here— choices that foreshadow Saudi Arabia's opposition to the term "fossil fuels" later in the conference. The line "greenhouse gas emissions are still rising" is separated from the other clauses by commas, denoting some separation from the previous and following assertion of facts, as if it is separated from the most climate significant point: ". . . insufficient to eliminate the uncontrollable threat of warming. . ." While this analysis is vulnerable to mistranslation and misinterpretation of grammar, the disconnect between "greenhouse gasses" and the consequence of the "threat of global warming" with commas provides separation, thus amount to a possible obfuscation of the effects of greenhouse gasses. This evidence is weak, but the end of the article provides more possibilities.

The next headline is titled "Improved diplomatic mood" and outlines the cooperation and differences between the U.S. and China. The passage tends toward a neutral **tone**, but also contributes to the **prestige** of COP28. Positive **tone** is invoked with lines like "perhaps the most positive development so far. . ." is followed by "agreed earlier this month to publish more expansive pledges to cut emissions." The positive association regarding emissions, i.e., fossil fuels, is made only when in association with the betterment of ties between the two largest emitters, however key discursive elements regarding fossil fuels in this passage are absent. ". . .helped pave the way for historic texts. . ." is a recurring method of raising the **prestige** of the conference, particularly with the usage of the word "historic". However, in the last section of the article the author implements a discursive **strategy** specifically regarding the language of fossil fuels.

Under the headline titled "Fossil Fuels" the author expands upon the possibility of tension at CPO28. The key discursive elements found under this headline are weak but elucidate the possibility of tensions at COP28. Additionally, the author excludes Saudi Arabia from the contributors to possible tension, either intentionally or the author did not have **knowledge** of the possibility at the time. A common theme is raised as a point of possible contention:

> The Sino-American statement does not explicitly call for the phase-out of all fossil fuels, a key demand of a group of European and Pacific countries known as the High Ambition Alliance.

The keyword here is "demand", which serves to bolster the claims of possible tension, but the association of this passage with the following provides some discursive insight:

> A similar attempt to include this approach in the agreement failed at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP27) in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, last year. This year, Dubai is likely to see some tensions.

The association of the High Ambition Alliance's failure is included in the historical **knowledge** of phasing out fossil fuels, and this **knowledge** of historical failure precedes the assertion of possible tensions. These pieces of **knowledge** are grouped within the same paragraph, increasing their conceptual association, thereby manipulating, albeit lightly, to associate one position with failure and tension. The next paragraph enlightens readers to the Chinese position:

> Chinese climate envoy Xie Zhenhua said in September that targeting the phase-out of all fossil fuels was "unrealistic." At the same time, a growing body of voices led by developing countries is demanding a broader energy package that links the goal to funding.

This paragraph differs in its implicit effect: The Chinese position that "targeting the phase-out of all fossil fuels was 'unrealistic'" is immediately followed by an assertion that a "growing" number of "developing countries" are dissatisfied with previous proposals. Therefore, the dissatisfied position of the Chinese is bolstered by the dissatisfaction of an increasing, or "growing", number of countries, albeit on a different point of interest.

> Diplomats are trying to find less polarizing language that sends the right signal, according to a senior State Department official.

> Eventually, a final agreement on fossil fuels could be warned of in words calling for an "orderly," "fair," or "responsible" transition and the use of carbon capture and storage technologies.

Less polarizing → right signal → according to is the relevant line for analysis. "Less polarizing" references the Chinese position of "unrealistic" language regarding the phasing out of fossil fuels, "right signal" is a reference to an alternative position that is held by Chinese and a "growing body of developing countries", but it is the author themselves that speculate on what more realistic, less "polarizing", and "right signal" language could be:

> Eventually, a final agreement on fossil fuels could be warned of in words calling for an "orderly," "fair," or "responsible" transition and the use of carbon capture and storage technologies.

The three suggested words counter assertions that the term "phasing out" fossil fuels are appropriate.

The composition of this section, titled "Fossil Fuels", gives heavier weight toward those opposed to the High Ambition Alliance; three of the four blocks of text are dedicated to text regarding the alternative position of the Chinese and developing countries, but the one block of text dedicated to the High Ambition Alliance's position are associated with failure. Here are the discursive elements:

Key discursive elements:

- **Knowledge**: Climate effects, widespread interest in solving climate change
- **Tone**: Urgent, positive when in association with improving relations between the U.S. and China
- **Appeal to authority**: Cites an unnamed, presumably Chinese State Department official.
- **Prestige**: Highlights COP28's potential for cooperation between the U.S. and China, notes COP28's "historic text" outcomes.
- **Key word choices**: *"Historic",* and predicts *"orderly", "fair", "responsible"* will be in the final agreement, "less polarizing."
- **Omission**: Omits Saudi Arabia as a party to "tension"
- **Antagonisms**: Growing number of countries are dissatisfied with the High Ambition Alliance

This article shares discursive elements with other Al-Arabiya and Al-Jazeera articles, regardless of publication date, but is less **antagonistic** than the Al-Arabiya opinion piece. It provides insight into Saudi Arabia's pre-COP28 discourse, praising the event for fostering better relations between antagonistic countries and their shared interest in reducing emissions. However, it emphasizes that phasing out fossil fuels is unrealistic, a common theme in Al-Arabiya and Al-Jazeera texts. RST provides logic for this focus: COP28 was a form of rented power for the UAE, enhancing its **prestige** and demonstrating commitment to climate change solutions. Saudi Arabia similarly seeks to elevate COP28's **prestige** to advocate for continued fossil fuel usage on behalf of developing countries, prioritizing success at a credible conference. Thus, when discussing fossil fuels, the article heavily favors maintaining their usage, reflecting Saudi Arabia's preferences for both continued fossil fuel usage and a successful forum to achieve that goal.

Saudi Aramco CEO Amin Nasser says energy transition strategy 'visibly failing'[7]

Article originally published in English on 28 March 2024

The article is overall concerned with the viability of phasing out fossil fuels. In this article, one can observe some similarities with the article's sources from other state-affiliated websites, as well as their Arabic counterparts. The bulk of the article is constructed using quotes and paraphrasing derived from Saudi Aramco Chief Executive Amin Nasser and ExxonMobil Chief Executive Darren Woods, making the article heavily based on two peoples' opinion, though the article is listed under the "Climate Change" section of the website.

The article opens with a skeptical **tone**: "Pointing to the still paltry share of renewable energy in global supply" with the key phrase "still paltry share" invokes a failure in meeting expectations, especially with the word "still", noting to readers that the share of renewable energy was and continues to be insubstantial. "Paltry" invokes a feeling of pittance, amounting to less than minimal. This tonal setting is followed by a quote from the ARAMCO CEO ". . . current energy transition strategy as a misguided failure. . .", where *current → misguided → failure* is the key string of words. "current" implies now, but also that what is current is not the future and is thus liable to change, and "misguided" denotes wrongness, in that *what is happening now is wrong and what could happen in the future could be different*. "Failure" invokes a feeling of finality, to create the sense that *what has been tried has not succeeded.* Instead, using the word "failing" could denote that what is being tried *can* be rectified to and turned into a success, yet the author quoted the CEO to say that the current climate strategy irredeemably unsuccessful, which reiterates the critical **tone** regarding climate strategy.

The author then includes **knowledge** that states an overwhelming amount of energy consumption is derived from fossil fuels, citing the IEA in saying that fossil fuel consumption is yet to peak. One of the only notable words within this section of **knowledge** is the word "demand", whereas fossil fuel usage was referred to as "consumption". Demand invokes **knowledge** of the economic law of supply-and-demand, raising the notion that for something to be consumed it must first be *demanded by someone*. The message is becoming clearer: climate strategy is failing because people want (demand)

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[7] 'english.alarabiya.net. (2024, March 28). Saudi Aramco CEO Amin Nasser says energy transition strategy 'visibly failing'. Retrieved from english.alarabiya.net: https://english.alarabiya.net/News/saudi-arabia/2024/03/28/Saudi-Aramco-CEO-Amin-Nasser-says-energy-transition-**strategy**-visibly-failing-

something (fossil fuels) and that is the reason for the strategies failure. The logic so far implies a logic in which the failures of the current climate **strategy** is affirmed by the world's continued demand for fossil fuels; if the world *really* wanted stop using fossil fuels, they would stop demanding fossil fuels. In effect, this distributes the blame for the problem of climate change.

The CEO then reiterates that peak oil demand could come sometime after 2030, yet the author's following words employ a discursive method, saying that the CEO was ". . .alluding to a medium-term target that has been seen as a potential phaseout date for crude". The allusion to 2030 is an assertion that that the author made themselves, recalling that the year 2030 holds some significance in the current climate strategy. Here, the author compares the CEO's statement to the expectations of the current climate strategy, using the **knowledge** provided by the CEO to say *something* about the viability of climate goals that should be met by the year 2030. The author then reiterates the same logic by quoting the ExxonMobil CEO, who states that the world is not on the path to reach net zero emissions by 2050.

Later in the article, the author reminds readers that COP28 included "a call for a transition away from fossil fuels", yet the author fails to include that funding the green transition was a key part of COP28, owing to the need to help less developed countries develop with the use of green energy. This amounts to **omission** because key information that could contribute to the success of the "current climate strategy" is not included, when at the same time the author quotes a CEO saying that no one wants to pay for it, while simultaneously reminding readers about some events at COP28.Furthemore, including more information about what was discussed at COP28 could poke holes in the argument that the current climate strategy has ended in failure, and that the current climate **strategy** is very much a work in progress. Two more quote-based pieces of text bring up recurring concepts seen in some of the other articles:

> Nasser called for policies more in tune with the "real world."
> While alternative energy can reduce emissions, "when the world does focus on reducing emission
> from hydrocarbons, it achieves much better results," Nasser said.

Here, the author quotes a common phrase amongst green-transition-skeptical discourse, an appeal to realism and realistic solutions. The "real world" implies that what is taking place in green transition discourse is unrealistic, and those that advocate for such policies should come to terms with a fossil fuel

future reality. Additionally, an alternative is offered, and Nasser's quote contains some key words that provide insight into his preferred climate strategy. The word "focus" means that energy should instead be diverted to a particular cause, narrowing the scope while excluding a larger number of tasks. "It achieves much better results" qualitatively defines one option as being better than the other. The key relevance here is informed by RST: focusing on reducing emissions deals with the effects of fossil fuels, while continuing to meet the increasing demand of fossil fuels. This is in line with the preferred Saudi future of pumping every drop of oil they have. The included quotes offer an **antagonistic** element:

> "This is hardly the future picture some have been painting," Nasser said.

The "some" refers to those attempting to create a certain future reality. This same "some" are also out of touch with reality, as indicated by the author's note that a significant amount of energy is still generated by fossil fuels, as cited by Nasser. Emphasizing one's detachment from reality essentially labels those advocating for the phasing out of fossil fuels as irrational actors, which undermines the nature of good-faith debate. This discourse is not only skeptical in tone, but the authorities cited are also skeptical of the cohort advocating for the phase-out of fossil fuels. So not only are they wrong about their prosecution of the green transition, but they are wrong in their abilities to properly assess the climate situation.

Key discursive elements:

- **Tone:** Skeptical, critical
- **Knowledge:** Most energy consumption is derived from fossil fuels, supply-and-demand,
- **Omission:** Omits key funding initiatives for the climate transition
- **Key word choices & phrases:** "paltry", "current climate strategy", "misguided", "failure"
- **Strategy:** Everyone is to blame for continued fossil fuel use, an alternative is better, skeptical of the "phase out" camp's rationality
- **Antagonisms:** "some" have been depicting a false and unrealistic future

Within-Case Comparison

The most outstanding and consistent commonality between all the Saudi articles, regardless of printed language, is antagonistic discourse. Each of these articles use discursive methods to challenge the position of "them" or "some" or "industrialized countries" or the High Ambition Alliance. The

deployment of antagonistic discourse against a defined or implied opponent has its own effect: to properly address a problem, one must first identify the problem. More specifically, it is specific actors that are pushing allegedly unrealistic demands onto the developing world. The latter two articles also consistently, discursively advocate for developing countries, while the first article is the most defiant in rejecting the phase-out advocates position as "pharaonic", with discourse that effectively paints the phase-out camp as arrogant and irrational. Furthermore, while one of the articles clearly acknowledges the effects of climate change, the bulk of each article instead pursues discursive manipulation. Overall, the primary commonality between all the articles is clear dissatisfaction with the phase-out camp; each article heavily features discourse that pushes back on the notion of phasing-out fossil fuels. The second article might be considered the most "neutral," but this perception arises from its subtle discursive elements. It gives weight to the developing country camp by highlighting their dissatisfaction with the phase-out proponents and dedicating the bulk of the text to supporting the developing countries' perspective. Additionally, it associates the phase-out camp with tension. Overall, the three articles each offer an "us vs. them" paradigm, albeit with varying levels of discursive manipulation. The English and opinion pieces use harsh language to describe the goals of the phase-out camp.

Some counterfactual evidence exists in the second article in comparison with the other two, primarily for its discursive efforts in displaying the seriousness of climate change, albeit some smaller scale data points such as grammar provide some room for interpretation, though such obfuscating evidence is weak. That one piece of counterfactual evidence in the second article that weakly links fossil fuels to climate change is the only example throughout the three articles, yet that article still provides more discursive weight to the idea that phasing-out fossil fuels is "unrealistic".

The consistency among the three articles, regardless of publication date or language, is so strong that it is safe to say that Saudi Arabia has a preferred ideology that it would like to spread regarding fossil fuels. The discourse is consistently comprised of: Saudi Arabia as an advocate for developing countries, fossil fuel demand is growing and necessary, the phase-out camp is unrealistic or irrational, and alternative climate paths are better, and the COP28 forum is worthy of legitimacy.

UAE

United Nations: "UAE agreement" is an unprecedented step[8]

Article published in Arabic 15 December 2023

 This article was published during COP28. Prior comments made by Sultan Al Jaber indicate that the UAE's position is amenable to the phasing out of fossil fuels, which is expected given that they hosted COP28, a forum where consensus-based decisions are made.

The article begins with a serving of information, telling readers that the U.N. has approved a roadmap for the move away from fossil fuels. To describe the passage of this roadmap, the author describes the event as an "unprecedented first step." The key phrase is "first step", implying that there are steps to come. The usage of some phrase meaning "first step" is like what Sultan Al Jaber said, providing some messaging consistency between what the Sultan said and online Al-Bayan publications. Next, the article describes the delay to the end of the CO28 conference, citing disagreements about the inclusion of language that phases out fossil fuels. The delay, the author describes, is due to "intense negotiations". The word "negotiations" means some level of equitability between disagreeing parties.

The author of this article further buttresses their neutrality as later they describe these negotiating parties as "participants". It should be noted that the author does not name any country throughout the article. The lack of naming any one country makes it more difficult to construct an **antagonistic** narrative, and instead the author would have to do so through other strategic, discursive methods. An important piece of **knowledge** is also included: ". . .fossil fuels that are warming the planet such as oil, gas, and coal . . ." This piece of **knowledge** is evidence of the counterfactual.

The article does quote UN Secretary-General António Guterres. One quote from the UN Secretary-General, in combination with the author's own words, further bolsters the article's tendency toward neutrality: "'will be impossible without the phasing out of all fossil fuels', and this is recognized by a growing and diverse coalition of countries." This quote is included by the author to reinforce Guterres' assertion that phasing out fossil fuels is essential to limiting the global temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius relative to pre-industrial levels. The mere inclusion of this information, without author pushback, is indicative of support for phasing out fossil fuels; if one were to test the hypothesis

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[8] Khalifa, M. (2023, December 15). United Nations: "UAE agreement" is an unprecedented step. Retrieved from www.albayan.ae: https://www.albayan.ae/sustainability/cop28/2023-12-15-1.4784165

based on the mere existence of evidence, this would pass that test in comparison to discourse published by Saudi and Qatari state-affiliated media. Under a heading called "Real Steps", the author notes that COP28 negotiators agreed to increasing renewables capacity and energy efficiency. Again, focusing on a recurring **strategy** in this article, the author again quotes another U.N official who says that they agreements are "real steps forward," but were "a lifeline for climate action, not the finish line." The implications within this quote should be viewed within the context of the article; the author includes no pushback of his own or in the form of quotes from others, but rather includes the notion of phasing out fossil fuels in conjunction with quotes from U.N. officials. Notably, the article is absent of many discursive strategies employed by authors on Saudi and Qatari state-affiliated media. The article finishes with a reiterating statement from the same official stating that progress is not fast enough, but the global assessment is meant to align countries national plans with the Paris Agreement.

While the article lacks many of the strategic discursive strategies seen elsewhere, the overall construction of the article gives us some clues about the role of this article. The construction of the article included **knowledge**, and opinions sourced from known, credible officials result in an article that tends toward increasing the discursive weight of U.N. the author not only increases the discursive weight of U.N. officials by exclusively paraphrasing and quoting them, but the author himself echoes the same sentiments regarding the title, section headings, and first two paragraphs. However, one notable discursive strategy is **omission**, as the author fails to mention any country by name who may be responsible for the holdup regarding phasing out fossil fuels. Unaware readers miss out on the context of the debate that delays agreements on phasing out fossil fuels. While the lack of personal commentary or strong discursive strategies makes this article tend toward what some might call objectivity, failure to say who or what is causing the disagreement gives the impression that this debate is abstract. In fact, the article completely omits the Gulf countries' reasons for disagreeing about the phasing out of fossil fuels. The journalistic practice of presenting "both sides" is common, and it is done for a reason—to give readers the ability to form their own opinions based on the information presented to them. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to simply update readers on the progress of a certain topic at COP28 and why it is important, not why or who the debate is occurring in the first place. In effect this shields the Gulf countries (among others) from being blamed for stalling the finale of COP28, given that that COP28 was extended beyond its original end date.

Key discursive elements:

- **Tone:** Neutral

- **Knowledge:** Causes & effects of climate change, practical and funding challenges of combating climate change,
- **Antagonisms:** Absent
- **Prestige:** Repeated discourse on the unprecedented results of COP28
- **Appeals to authority:** U.N. Secretary General, Simon Steel (U.N. climate official)
- **Key words & phrases:** "unprecedented first step", "real steps forward", "progress is not fast enough."

The UAE was, at least for the duration of COP28, content to publish content on the ongoing debate about phasing out fossil fuels. What is absent is clear indicators of who was blocking the progress on language to phase out fossil fuels. However, the analysis of this article proves to be absent of **antagonistic** discourse. In searching for an explanation for this article's less-**antagonistic** construction, one must consider a couple possibilities:

1. **Prestige**. The UAE is obligated to act neutral as hosts of COP28, and remaining neutral reaffirms the correctness in choosing the UAE to host COP28, and further bolsters their claims as a leader against the fight against climate change. Proper execution of COP28 effectively increases the influence of the UAE and was an active demonstration of *soft power* in their ability to be selected to host COP28.
2. **Future strategy depends less on oil**. Though the UAE derives most of its revenue from oil & gas exports, they maintain smaller oil reserves than their Gulf counterparts. Knowing they have smaller oil reserves; the UAE may feel more pressured to pursue a domestic future that is much less reliant on oil.

One of the assumptions this thesis makes is that these state-affiliated media outlets will not publish content that is contrary to the respective state's goals. This reasoning is supported by RST because renting power is illogical if it does not support the renter's goals, and therefore anything published by their media outlets would logically at least not counter their respective goals. While this article does not deny the influence of Saudi discourse, it certainly does not support it. Overall, this article serves as a reproduction of COP28 discourse, with little discursive input from the author, and lacks discourse used by Al-Arabiya and Al-Jazeera. Furthermore, it actively neutralizes criticism by not naming specific countries responsible for the delaying the end date of COP28, thereby attempting to discursively preserve the UAE's obligated neutrality as hosts of COP28.

COP28 has come and gone - But Its lessons on climate finance should not fade away[9]

This article was published on the English language website khaleejtimes.com on 4 April 2024

Most of this article is concerned with the financial aspects that may contain some discursive elements of their own, however the first section of the article is directly concerned with the debate over phasing out fossil fuels. In an unexpected turn, the article offers commentary on the sentiment that COP28 was underwhelming, and the author particularly brings up that debate over phasing out fossil fuels.

> Lots have been said about how COP28 over promised and under delivered, or surpassed expectations with the levels of unprecedented multilateral consensus that was reached on several critical initiatives.

The author highlights that some observers were either disappointed or pleased with the outcome, though the author also repeats some of the wording that was used in the Al-Bayan article, particularly with the word "unprecedented". Unprecedented, not in the scientific consensus that fossil fuels should be phased out, but a consensus that was agreed upon in an international forum such as COP28. The underwhelming sentiment is derived from, as the author explains, the fact that neither the "phase out" or "phase down" phraseology was adopted, but rather a ". . .'transitioning away from fossil fuels … in an orderly and equitable manner. . .'" So far, the author's own **tone** and presentation of **knowledge** may approach "neutral", but the continued mention of disappointment gives an amount of *weight* to the disappointed sentiment:

> Whenever lawyers draft a contract, they analyse the degree of commitment represented by particular phrasing. Despite the commitment in COP28's language being hard to see, the promises made are not insignificant when combined with the other goals and undertakings expressed in the 196 written paragraphs constituting the outcomes of the first global stocktake, which is, in many ways, the fruits of COP28's labours, according to Hessam Kalantar and Samuel Miller of Kalantar Business Law Group.

This paragraph offers more telling evidence and can be analyzed with more confidence given that it was originally published and written in English. An **appeal to authority** is called on by citing lawyers. The

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[9] Stojan, J. (2024, April 5). COP28 has come and gone - But Its lessons on climate finance should not fade away. Retrieved from www.khaleejtimes.com: https://www.khaleejtimes.com/kt-network/cop28-has-come-and-gone-but-its-lessons-on-climate-finance-should-not-fade-away?_refresh=true

most important string of phrases is the following: *"hard to see"* → *"not insignificant"* → *"combined"* → *"other goals"* → *"196 written paragraphs"* → *"outcomes"* → *"fruits of COP28's labours".* "Being hard to see" implies that those disappointed may not be looking closely enough. The choice of "not insignificant" over "significant" could be a choice to directly pushback against claims of "insignificance" elsewhere. "196 written paragraphs" demonstrates the breadth of the written consensus, thereby bolstering the claims of significance, and is used to demonstrate the number of "other goals". "Outcomes" is followed by "fruits of COP28's labours" and is the descriptive phrase that defines "outcomes", and "fruits" as a word choice denotes an often-sweet product or in this case an outcome of a concerted process, denoting something that is either useful or enjoyable, thus manipulating the reader by suggesting that something normatively positive has been produced prior to presenting that evidence (or **knowledge**). Next, the author presents the "fruits of labor" by quoting a member of a law group. The next mention of fossil fuels is presented by the author's own words:

> Even those who support a global "transition away" from fossil fuels disagree on the mechanics of its implementation. As expected, developing countries expressed their desire for a "staggered" reduction in hydrocarbon consumption, allowing them to continue using affordable fossil fuels while wealthier countries transition to alternatives first.

"Even those" contains its own rhetorical function; "even" curates a **tone** of revelation as if it is unexpected that that "those" are engaging in a mode of activity that is unexpected. "Those" is used to describe those who support a global transition away from fossil fuels. "Those" has several functions: it eliminates the need to list all the countries, persons, or institutions (brevity), leaves the number of countries, persons, or institutions unspecified, and reduces the possible degree of **antagonistic** discourse directed toward any entity. "Transition away" is written in quotations, denoting the author's desire to attribute that phrase to someone else although that source remains uncited. The likelihood of this being a cited phrase is supported in the next sentence when the author puts the word "staggered" in quotation marks, telling readers that "those" support a "staggered" "transition away" from fossil fuels. Though the author includes their own commentary outside the quoted phrases and words, the overall effect gives discursive *weight* to those who support phasing out fossil fuels. "As expected" denotes predicted behavior that can only be determined with known **knowledge** about how the subject should behave. The expected behavior comes from "developing countries". Developing more clearly defines who or what has a certain opinion, and developing contains some type of characteristics that are expected of them. This sentence opens the door for **antagonistic** discourse, but for now can be simply a presentation of perspective with a preference for neutrality. However, the "developing countries"

"expressed desires" are elaborated upon when the author buttresses their viewpoint by appealing to the authority of a developing country's official, and in this case: Zambia.

The author also paraphrases another source to point out nuances in the position of either discourse. The point that Zambia's Minister for Green Energy makes is that they should be able to do what developed countries have done since the industrial revolution: exploit natural resources to develop and it would be otherwise unfair would amount to injustice, the same assertion that the Saudi opinion piece expanded upon. This point would be ideal for **antagonistic** discursive strategies; however, the author diffuses that option by including the same Hassam Kalantar from Kalantar Business Law Group to tell readers that "the choices are indeed not solely scientific or economic, but premised on interests involving social justice, human rights, and redressing historical inequities." This type of **knowledge** and **appeal to authority** is weighted toward a more balanced approach by spending the rest of the article detailing the proposed solution in the case of climate finance.

The author then details climate finance plans. These plans include carbon credits, country-to-country investment, and credit transfers. Within this text, the naming of certain countries is an insertion of **prestige**, though notably **omitted** is the Gulf countries contributions to climate degradation, and furthermore the author **acknowledges** the failure of COP28 to agree on common transparency, reporting, and crediting authorisation revocation rules. . ." Under the headline *Local markets rising to the challenge*, the author details Gulf countries contributions to climate finance. The author lists the ways in which several Gulf countries plan to meet their nationally determined contributions (NDCs) and their plans to meet net zero emissions. However, absent is the term "fossil fuels" in the latter half of the article, despite the article opening with knowledge on the agreement to transition away from fossil fuels. In fact, most of the text is dedicated to alternatives to phasing out fossil fuels: carbon removal, planting trees etc. The turning point of the article was on the topic of fairness, when a Zambian official was quoted about their expectations for the climate transition. Thus, the strategic logic of the article can be deduced: *Disappointment → desire for fairness → presentation of UAE's contribution to climate finance.* This article seeks to shore up the perceived shortcomings of the conference. Furthermore, this logic seeks to maintain the UAE's prestige by using highly informative discourse.

Key discursive elements:

- **Tone:** Tends neutral
- **Appeals to authority:** Lawyers, Zambia's Minister for Green Energy

- **Knowledge:** Acknowledgement of disappointments, developing countries desires, and perceived failures

- **Key words & Phrases:** Unprecedented, "choices are indeed not solely scientific or economic."

- **Antagonisms:** Hesitant to antagonize but presents developing countries expectations for fairness

- **Prestige:** Bulk of text is dedicated to the UAE's and GCC countries' contribution to climate finance

Within-Case Comparison

The within-case comparison for the UAE should be based on some expectations and assumptions. First, the COP28 was a form of rented power, and with this particular form of rented power comes some expectations. The UAE also implicitly made a choice by hosting COP28—a conference that was expected to push for phasing out fossil fuels. As fossil fuels remain a significant source of income for the UAE, the possibility of a hydrocarbon-less world could severely impact the finances of the UAE. However, these two articles display some consistent similarities that reveal the UAE's priorities, primarily their preferred dedication to raising its own prestige and neutrality on the topic of fossil fuels. The most obvious piece of evidence to support the hypothesis would be the UAE's preference for the continuation of the use of fossil fuels, however that is not the result of the analysis. As such, the hypothesis must be answered within the context of the UAE's indicated preferences. COP28 was a form of rented power in which the UAE was expected to be neutral supporter of consensus-based solutions, likewise the discourse in these two articles perpetuates that implication. The authors' reluctance to introduce antagonistic discourse, presentation of multiple, opposite perspectives, and deference to neutral authorities maintains neutrality. Paradoxically, the authors present discourse on some of the failures and shortcomings on COP28, however these failures are not discursively linked to the UAE itself, but rather display the debate-centered nature of the climate forum. Theoretically, previous iterations of RST would hypothesize that hosting COP28 would amount to the betrayal of a rentier state's principles. However, Shehab's (2021) work asserts that we look beyond this failure to protect potential rent-revenue paradigm at all cost, but rather that the UAE, in combination with its hosting of COP28 and continued "neutral" discourse, one can conclude that the UAE feels comfortable prioritizing one form of rent expression over another according to Shehab's (2021) findings.

Discussion & Conclusion

Saudi Arabia's and the UAE's discourse matches with their positions in the most recent major climate debate, COP28. Saudi Arabia's discourse employed strong and frequent discursive elements that resulted in an analytical output that strongly backed their position at COP28, and furthermore reveals their rental preference: the use of fossil fuels in perpetuity i.e., a constant stream of hydrocarbon revenue (wealth). Of course, each country desire wealth, but the discourse reveals that there is no room for alternatives— except for the ones they provide. In fact, the analytical output could be described as bold, frequently targeting those in the phase-out camp, going as far as to position them as being irrational, arrogant, out of touch, and unrealistic. Saudi Arabia also has an apparent discursive strategy: to stand up for developing countries. This strategy places Saudi Arabia on a moral high ground, which is an attempt to navigate the paradox of Saudi Arabia being one of the largest fossil fuel producers. After all, why should anyone care what Saudi Arabia thinks in terms of climate change considering they have much to gain in the continued and increasing rate of fossil fuel consumption? Saudi Arabia resolves this paradox, discursively, by strongly enforcing an us vs. them paradigm using the concerns of developing countries. For Saudi Arabia COP28 was indeed an opportunity to demonstrate both action and discourse by participating in delaying the end of COP28, and the reason for delay was language, specifically. However, Saudi discourse also acknowledges the utility of a form of rented power like COP28 and takes care to provide it legitimacy, lest Saudi Arabia one day host a COP conference.

The UAE also employs discourse in a way that lines up with their most recent, major form of rented power. The UAE is further reinforcing its bolstered position as a neutral mediator by publishing discourse that tends to have a balance approach by deferring to neutral authorities, acknowledging fossil fuels' contribution to climate change, but at the same time present the concerns of developing countries while informing readers about what can be done in their favor. Lacking is the use of antagonistic elements, thereby refraining from creating an us vs. them paradigm. Word choices and tone also refrain from disparaging anyone's point of view, and tends to avoid naming entities, except in cases where the UAE's prestige can express, providing favorable discourse to the UAE's actions, plans, and even partners.

Qatar's discourse is less obvious, though one of the analyzed articles share many similarities with that of Saudi discourse, and indeed it is more difficult to typify Qatar's position when one combines the analytical output with their background information, particularly their dedication to mediation. What is most noticeable is the difference in the articles' analytical outputs depending on which language they were published in. The Arabic article is discursively similar to that of Saudi articles in its disparaging of

phasing out fossil fuels, condemnatory tone, preferences for the Gulf countries alternatives, and defending the preferences of developing countries. Yet, the English discourse is constructed in a way that appeals to western readers in particular, especially in its appeal to western authorities. If one were to draw on the background, information this stance from Qatar is highly reflective of a preferred form of rented power: media and mediation. This difference in discourse depending on language is likely an attempt at neutrality, not in the sense that their actions and discourse are neutral in each instance, but that they seek to offer content that is appealing to many parties.

Conclusion

The research question is satisfied by the deconstructive nature of CDA. However, to the degree with which the research question is satisfied is suspect. Firstly, the research question and research design demand that the discourse be connected to the affiliated states, and that connection is heavily based on the assumption that the affiliated states exert a definitive amount of control over the published discourse. Furthermore, the sample size is small. Consistent discursive tendencies were found in Saudi and Emirati discourse, but Qatari discourse depends on the language of publication. Though CDA is sufficient to explore how discourse is constructed on a small-scale, the research question could by answered with a higher degree of validity using a large-n study.

Likewise, the hypothesis is confirmed, but only if one accepts Shehab's (2021) hypothesis. Instead of prioritizing continued fossil fuel production and consumption as the primary rent preference, expanding the RST paradigm to encompass a broader spectrum of rent-seeking activities allows for a more comprehensive validation of the hypothesis. Each case study supports the hypothesis based on the specific rent activities identified in their respective contexts: Saudi Arabia prioritizes wealth generation through oil revenue, Qatar emphasizes its traditional role as a mediator, and the UAE is shifting towards mediation by hosting large, prestigious events.

The second hypothesis is most satisfied by the Qatari articles by a significant margin; however, it is the counterfactuals offered by the Saudi and Emirati articles that improve the validity of the findings. The consistent usage of similar discourse in either English and Arabic sources derived from Saudi and Emirati sources strengthens the argument that these states are firmly dedicated to propagating a deliberately chosen ideology. Each of these chosen ideologies consistently serve their favored form of rented power and are intent on convincing any audience to adopt their preferences.

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