
Reviewed by Omar Darwazah

In his book, *Money, Markets and Monarchies*, Adam Hanieh illustrates the important role the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) has played in the Middle East (ME) and the world stage. He argues that the flows of the GCC’s financial surpluses, as a result of wealth generation on the back of rising commodity prices since the 1970s, are a key component to understanding the current form of the contemporary world economy. He adds that the world economy’s structure is characterized by persistent levels of resource over-accumulation, and the predominance of US and European capital buoyed by new financial and political centers in China, East Asia, and Latin America. Hanieh demonstrates that the GCC plays a crucial role in today’s highly globalized economy and has cemented itself as a critical site of capitalism in the ME. He suggests that the GCC has shifted patterns of resource accumulation through a detailed mapping of major economic activities in the wider region.

According to Hanieh, to conceptualize the linkages between capital accumulation and the processes that drive class and state formation across national, regional, and global scales, it is imperative to integrate the entire ME into the analysis. To illustrate this core tenet of the book, he interweaves spatial relations between the global and regional political economies to help understand the GCC’s prominent position in the ME’s recent politics. Moreover, this exercise helps unpack the current implications and future trajectories of the crisis unfolding in the region. Hanieh specifically helps the reader overcome his/her natural tendencies to lean toward a parochial vision of the models of spatial differentiation (e.g., North/South, First/Third World, Urban/Rural, Center/Periphery, etc.).

The book is divided into three parts. In part 1, Hanieh defines the patterns of capital accumulation in the GCC, the role capital surpluses have played in the global economy, and the unique characteristics of GCC-based capitalism. He explores three key sources of accumulation that are organized in a triangle: industry, built environments, and financial markets. Part 2 focuses on the relation of capital in the GCC and the broader ME through three key sectors: a) agro-commodities, b) commercial and residential real estate, and c) financial markets. Finally, in part 3, Hanieh analyzes the effects of the fall in oil prices in 2014 and the future prospects

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of the ME, especially in countries where conflicts remain active. More broadly, Hanieh explores the relatively under-studied facet of the GCC’s excess wealth recycling into Western markets and neighboring Arab countries and the socioeconomic and political impact this excess wealth has had on these regions.

In part 1, Hanieh describes how the GCC economies accumulated wealth. Subsequently, they took the capital generated and recirculated it in the US, Europe, as well as the emerging economies in Asia. The recycling of capital took place at the government and family-owned business conglomerate level, such as Al Kharafi, Al Rajhi, Al Shaya, Ghurair, and others. He describes that these family conglomerates participate in a “triangle system” where financial markets fund industry and construction provide commodities for the built environment.

In part 2, Hanieh addresses the food economy in the GCC, arguing that the increase in food prices in 2007 and 2008 forced the region to make food security a priority. The state-owned Hassan Foods in Qatar, for example, went as far as to land grab and acquire overseas farmland in countries such as Brazil, Ukraine, and Egypt to bolster domestic production in the country. In part 2, Hanieh criticizes the GCC’s megaprojects targeting tourists and wealthy residents, as well as the labor camps and informal housing for laborers and construction workers. Furthermore, he illustrates how the megaproject concept has been exported to other countries in the ME, such as Rawabi in Palestine, where Qatari capital has been instrumental in its attempt to develop it as a smart city. Finally, the author discusses how the GCC’s financial institutions, such as Qatar National Bank, National Commercial Bank of Saudi Arabia, Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait, Emirates NBD, and others have cemented their position in the wider ME over banks in Jordan, Egypt, Tunisia, and Lebanon.

In part 3, Hanieh argues that the fall of oil prices in 2014 made the GCC rethink its strategy for the future. For example, in Saudi Arabia, Mohamed bin Salman launched the Saudi Arabia National Vision 2030, a program which aims to increase privatization, cut public expenditure, and raise taxes. In the United Arab Emirates, the Abu Dhabi Economic Vision 2030 hopes to achieve effective economic transformation of the Emirates’ economic base and a core commitment to build a sustainable and diversified, high value-added economy. Finally, the last chapter closely examines the prospects of the region on the short to medium term. Hanieh discusses the key issues surrounding the reconstruction of Syria, Yemen, Iraq, Libya, and the various projects carried out by the GCC. In addition, he explores the recent diplomatic spat between Qatar and the rest of the GCC, and Qatar’s strategy of winning support against the blockade led by Saudi Arabia.
Overall, the book is a succinct overview of the history of the GCC and the rise of its modern economy. Hanieh does a great job of informing the reader of the importance of the region’s role in the global economy and how the recycling of its capital accumulation ended up affecting politics, economics, and trajectories of other nations, especially those of its neighbors in the ME. The book is accessible to the non-specialists but is also a great resource for scholars whose subject matter expertise is the GCC. The book brings unique insights and an interdisciplinary approach to debates across the political economy of the ME and its position on the global stage.