

Capitalism and Class in the Gulf Arab States

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Adam Hanieh

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Preface

This book has its genesis outside of the Gulf. From 1997 to 2003 I had the privilege of living and working in the Palestinian West Bank. During this time, I was struck by the immense influence that the Gulf region had on the Palestinian political economy. Gulf-based companies owned large stakes in major Palestinian companies and financial institutions, Gulf governments played an influential role in Palestinian politics, and many friends and relatives spoke of time they had spent as workers in the oil and other industries in the Gulf. It was clear that Palestine (like the rest of the Middle East) was profoundly affected by this connection. Yet, paradoxically, there had been little written on the political economy of these regional links and their relationship to the nature of capitalism in the Gulf—the Gulf was the core of Middle East capitalism but the dominant perspective seemed to downplay the regional scale and treat the Middle East as a simple agglomeration of distinct nation-states.

What this book aims to do is to contribute some essential first steps in thinking through these problems of the region's development. In order to appreciate how the Gulf is penetrating the broader Middle East, we first need to grasp the processes at work within the political economy of Gulf capitalism. This means taking seriously the Gulf states as *capitalist*—not simply monarchies that sit atop an oil spigot—and incorporating the process of Gulf regional integration into our analysis. From this starting point, we can hopefully begin to better understand how Gulf capitalism helps to form the broader hierarchies of the Middle East.

There are very many people who contributed to bringing this book to completion and in stimulating my ideas and thoughts on the region. I would particularly like to thank Gilbert Achcar, Greg Albo, Sam Gindin, Eberhard Kienle, Jerome Klassen, Thomas Marois, David McNally, Ananya Mukherjee-Reed, Sabah Al Nasser, Leo Panitch, Alfredo Saad-Filho, Omar Al-Shehabi, Ahmad Shokr, Abdel Takriti, Issam Al Yamani, Anna Zalik, and Rafeef Ziadah who all read drafts or excerpts of this book. I greatly

appreciate the extensive time these individuals gave to seriously engage and offer criticisms and comments. I would also like to thank Robyn Curtis at Palgrave Macmillan, who was a pleasure to work with throughout the entire writing process.

Many of the ideas in this book originate in my PhD dissertation, completed in 2009 in the political science department at York University, Toronto. I thank all the faculty and administrative staff that made my time at York such a pleasure and an exciting learning experience. There are very few academic institutions that truly encourage critical thought in a contemporary university setting—the York political science department is one of these and it was a privilege to work alongside an exceptional group of faculty and graduate students. In particular, I would like to thank Greg Albo, my dissertation supervisor. Greg remains a wonderful intellectual mentor and friend who taught me an enormous amount about understanding the world and working to change it. This book would not have been possible without him.

While writing this book I spent 18 months in the Gulf carrying out research and teaching at Zayed University, Dubai. Faculty and staff at ZU were generous with their time and friendship. I learnt a great deal from this experience, particularly from the opportunity to engage with many of the wonderful students at ZU. I appreciate the critical and thoughtful insights that these students often brought to our discussions on Gulf politics and the Middle East more generally—and I hope some of this is reflected in the pages that follow.

There are many other friends in Toronto, Montreal, Ramallah, London, and Adelaide that made the last few years of research and writing possible and from whom I continue to draw inspiration. In particular, I would like to thank deeply Rafeef Ziadah. She has been there from day one, both at an intellectual level to discuss many of the ideas contained in this book and as a dear friend and emotional pillar. I hope one day to repay the debt. My family has also always been there for me—perhaps slightly puzzled by my interest in the Gulf—but nevertheless a wonderful source of love and support. Finally, this book is dedicated to my father, Ahmad Hanieh, who passed away as it was being written.