Economic Inclusion and Sustainable Growth: New Perspectives from the Gulf

Chatham House, London | Monday, 9 April 2018

Part of a two-year project funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York entitled ‘Building Pluralistic and Inclusive States Post-Arab Spring,’ this half-day workshop features emerging scholarship from the Gulf on economic and sustainable development in the region. Scholars from Bahrain, Oman, and Saudi Arabia will present local perspectives and fresh insight on regional state-business relations, climate change policies, and entrepreneurship and innovation in Gulf economies.

13.00 – 14.00  Lunch

14.00 – 14.15  Introduction

Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, Baker Institute for Public Policy, Rice University
Jane Kinninmont, Middle East and North Africa Programme, Chatham House

14.15 – 15.30  Session 1: Economic Diversification and Climate Change

Traditionally, Gulf economic diversification projects have often built on the region’s comparative advantage in terms of cheap fossil fuels, for instance in the development of petrochemicals and plastics. But as concerns about the environmental and economic impact of climate change mount, there is a growing need to develop more sustainable development models for the Gulf. Climate models suggest that rising temperatures in the Arabian Peninsula may materially impact patterns of social and urban development by mid-century and constitute new sources of long-range vulnerability and insecurity.

- How vulnerable are Gulf cities to increasing temperatures and rising sea levels and what mitigation efforts are feasible, affordable, and realistic?
- How are policy debates on climate change evolving across different Gulf States and are they being integrated into the latest iterations of multi-decade economic visions and plans?

Speakers:
Aisha al-Sarbi, Ministry of Environment, Sultanate of Oman; Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington
Glada Lahn, Energy, Environment and Resources Department, Chatham House (TBC)

Chair: Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, Baker Institute for Public Policy, Rice University

15.30 – 16.00  Refreshments

This event will be held on the record
State-business relations in the Gulf have been shaped by the decades-long dominance of oil and public spending in the economies, implying that they may change and evolve in the coming years as the Gulf countries seek to diversify away from their dependence on oil. Government policy documents call for a greater and more active role for the foreign and local private sector, envisaged as the future driver of growth and the main provider of employment. At the same time there are questions about the impact of fiscal austerity and labour market reforms on private sector business models, and the scope for new entrepreneurs and new approaches to evolve, sometimes creating tensions between different types of business stakeholder.

- What are the implications for foreign companies seeking to invest in the different Gulf countries?
- What are the implications for different foreign governments who seek to understand as well as support the diversification visions promised by Gulf governments?

Speakers:
Sumaya Almajdoub, Young Professionals in Foreign Policy
Faris al-Sulayman, King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies

Chair: Jane Kinninmont, Middle East and North Africa Programme, Chatham House