

Public Affairs in the Middle East

Navigating the Gulf Region in a Changing Global Landscape

Wednesday, October 15, 2025

A Brief Background



17 years of experience in the Gulf

Partially raised in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Worked in Bahrain, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE

Background in Political Science and Government Advisory

Advised governments, corporates, UHNWI, and foundations

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Quick Take

Change in the Gulf in Numbers

148%

The growth in Saudi Arabia's
tourism revenue between
2019 and 2024
(Arab News)

65%

Approximate share of population
under the age of 29 in Oman
(UNFPA, 2018)

\$4tn

Assets Under Management of the
Gulf Cooperation Council's 13
Sovereign Wealth Funds
(IMF, 2025)

10%

Approximate share of locals relative
to expats in Qatar and the United
Arab Emirates
(Gulf Research Center, 2022)

\$113

Saudi Arabia's fiscal breakeven
oil price per barrel, if including
domestic Vision 2030 investment by
the Public Investment Fund
(Bloomberg Economics, 2025)

80%

The United Arab Emirates'
approximate non-oil share of GDP
(The National, 2025)

50 years

The time Sultan Qaboos ruled
Oman, the longest serving
national ruler in Gulf history
(Encyclopaedia Britannica)

The Gulf Is Making Headlines



Saudi Arabia's Surprising transformation (2025)



The UAE's Ambitious Ascent (2023)



The New Middle East (2023)

Bloomberg



A \$150 Billion Fortune Bolsters Qatari Royals at Critical Moment (2024)

The New York Times



Anatomy of Two Giant Deals: The UAE Got Chips. The Trump Team Got Crypto Riches (2025)

Bloomberg

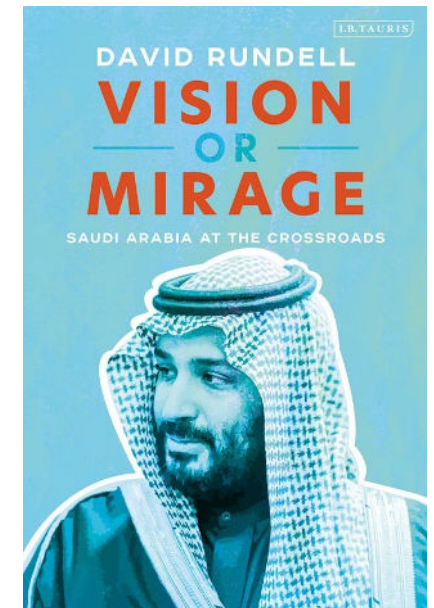


How to Get a Meeting with the UAE's \$1.5 Trillion Man (2024)

Bloomberg



Secretive Gulf Family's \$300 Billion Fortune Is About More Than Oil (2022)





The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)



- Formed in 1981 by Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, and Oman, the GCC aimed to build unity and security in a turbulent region
- The Gulf's history as a **trading hub** forged openness and wealth long before oil, linking Arabia to Africa, Persia, and India
- **British and later American influence** shaped its borders and security ties, anchoring Western involvement in Gulf affairs
- Power remains with **ruling families**, rooted in **tribal legitimacy and local loyalty**, making shared identity strong but sovereignty stronger
- These dynamics mean the GCC works best as a **forum for coordination**, not a political union

The Gulf Is No Monolith

- 1** United Arab Emirates  Regional **business hub** and most diversified economy with 80% of GDP coming from the non-oil sector
- 2** Kingdom of Saudi Arabia  Biggest **regional growth market** – with a population of 30+ million and an ambitious development agenda: Vision 2030
- 3** State of Qatar  Among the **highest GDP per capita** and a sovereign wealth fund (QIA) with more than USD \$500+ billion in firepower
- 4** Kingdom of Bahrain  Regional **pioneer in economic liberalization** with a regulatory edge in terms of sandboxes – especially for fintech
- 5** Sultanate of Oman  **Untapped opportunities**, including in tourism development, enabled by fiscal pressures, and key regional maritime hub.

Trends Enabling the Gulf's Growth

1

The Gulf states have become so-called **middle powers**, exerting their growing influence globally.

2

Climate change is a present reality rather than a distant threat, and the Gulf is key to the **energy transition**.

3

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is here to stay, and the Gulf states can close global computing and energy gaps.

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Quick Take

Strategic Positioning Opens Doors



Public Relations in the Gulf

Expressing yourself in ways that resonate with your target audiences



Risks, Issues, and Crises



Thought Leadership



Global Platforms



Investments

Relationships Are Key to Success



Public Affairs in the Gulf

Building rapport with your key stakeholders in support of your strategic objectives



Market Knowledge



Cultural Competence



Strategic Relationships



Emerging Industries

Gulf Mandates Cut Across Labels

Governor



Positioned a Governor as a global thought leader ahead of a sector strategy launch

UHNWI



Amplified a UHNWI global influence with placements in the world's leading media

Minister



Positioned a Minister for success in a high-stakes global election campaign

Science Park



Led a high-impact campaign securing finalist status for a global science summit

Nuclear Program



Forged global consensus around a sensitive Gulf nuclear initiative

World Expo



Showcased a Gulf nation's journey of transformation at an historic World Expo

AI Company



Positioned the CEO of the regional JV of an Asian AI firm amid political headwinds

Royal Family



Mitigated reputational risks for a Gulf royal family's cross-border investments

Fortune 500 Firm



Secured regulatory clarity and stakeholder backing for a Fortune 500 market entry

Battery Pioneer

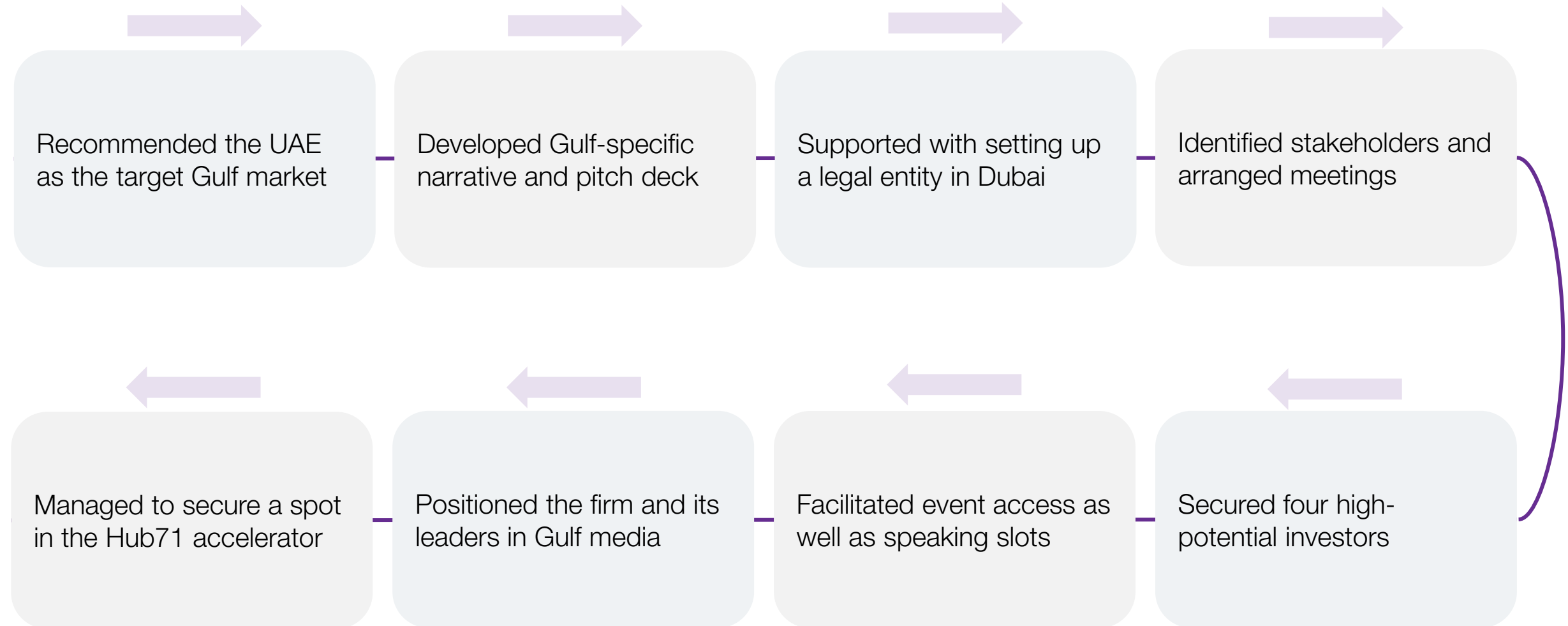


Fast-tracked a Series A startup's GCC expansion and investor engagement

First Case Study: Helping a Fortune 500 Company Enter Saudi Arabia



Second Case Study: Helping a Battery Pioneer Enter the UAE



Tenets of Public Affairs in the Gulf Region

The Majlis, such as the one pictured below, exemplifies the practice of public affairs in the Gulf states: it is relationship-driven, hierarchical, respectful, consultative, steady-paced—procedural rather than processual in its logic.



Relationships > Bureaucracy

Trust > Credentials

Nation > Project

Consultation > Instruction

Investment > Extraction

Honor > Opportunity

Deals > Policy



Open Exchange

Get in touch to continue the conversation.

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