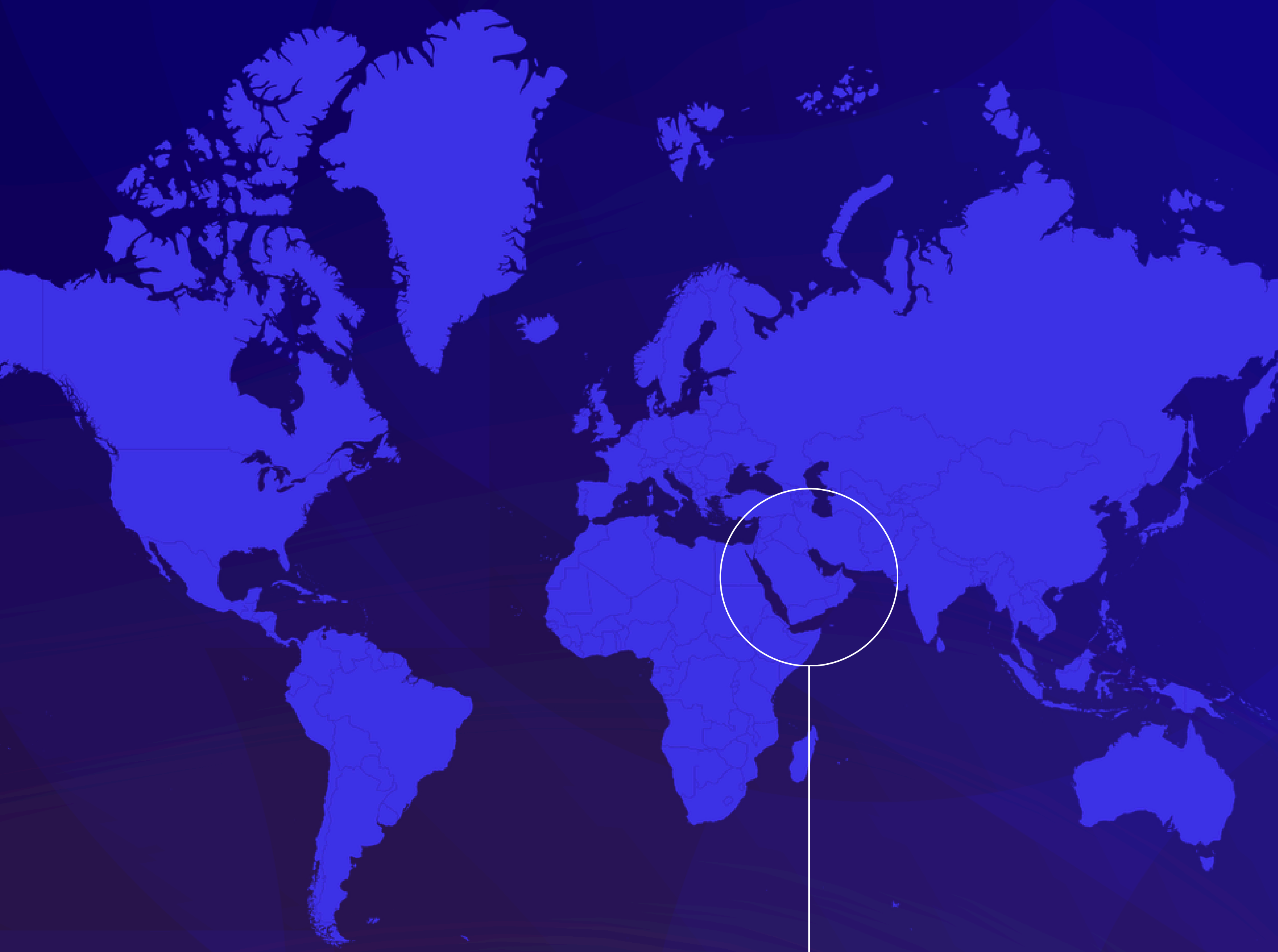

A PLAYBOOK FOR GCC POLICYMAKERS

Strengthening Investor Confidence and Building Future Resilience

dga | ALBRIGHT STONEBRIDGE GROUP

Recent regional instability has sharpened investor scrutiny of the Gulf. While GCC economies continue to benefit from structural strengths, world-class infrastructure, fiscal resilience, and ambitious transformation agendas, policymakers should continue to engage strategically with the private sector to reinforce investor confidence.

Based on our experience advising several Gulf government entities and more than 80 international companies on their operations and investment plans throughout the Gulf region, we believe that strengthening investor confidence and economic resilience will require credible, well-coordinated measures across government that resonate in global boardrooms. One of the unsung success factors of the Gulf region has been its willingness to approach relationships with the private sector through a long-term partnership lens. The flip side is that when external events threaten to erode that partnership, corporates are more likely to expect the government to take credible steps to restore confidence.

Governments should seize the opportunity to strengthen domestic policy resilience, deepen international partnerships, and communicate with substance and credibility. This note sets out practical steps and recommendations in each of these three areas.

This report is an abridged version of the detailed playbooks we have developed for different Gulf states, which we are happy to share on request.

Build resilience at home:
Enhance the competitiveness of policy ecosystems

GCC governments should use this moment to reinforce the competitiveness of their policy ecosystems. The objective is not wholesale reform, but targeted policy tweaks and practical steps that reduce friction, strengthen predictability, and make the region more compelling when global corporate leaders decide where to deploy capital.

1. Use targeted investor engagement to identify the issues that matter most: Targeted, off-the-record conversations with priority investors are likely to yield better insights than traditional investor sentiment surveys, particularly given widespread survey fatigue. Officials should ask what specific policy changes would most strengthen operations, improve resilience, and raise their country's position on global investment priority lists.

2. Screen opportunities for practical policy intervention: Not every investor concern will require policy change. A central team should screen issues to identify those that are credible, recurring, aligned with national priorities, and amenable to targeted intervention. Compared with a traditional top-down regulatory "stocktake," this investor-driven approach is faster and grounded in real-world experience: where investors face friction, what creates uncertainty, and which changes would most move the needle in boardroom decisions.

> ***"Gulf states should take this opportunity to strengthen how policy is made over time ... and further institutionalize evidence-based policy practices, including earlier private-sector consultation, better use of data and impact assessment... and stronger planning for implementation."***

3. Translate priority issues into a coherent policy agenda: Prioritized interventions can be translated into a practical, whole-of-government plan of action. This would focus first on high-impact, low-cost changes that can be implemented quickly to reinforce investor confidence, followed by more medium-term interventions. One priority should be removing accumulated administrative red tape that slows investment or no longer serves a clear purpose. A central policy transformation unit should coordinate implementation across government, clarify ownership, track progress, and resolve bottlenecks.

4. Strengthen the policy-making system itself: In addition to identifying tweaks to the existing policy framework, Gulf states should take this opportunity to strengthen how policy is made over time. Building on progress in recent years with the establishment of central policy review and coordination mechanisms, governments should further institutionalize evidence-based policy practices. Such practices include early private-sector consultation, use of data and impact assessments, centralized regulatory quality assurance, and stronger planning for implementation before reforms are announced.

5. Institutionalize monitoring and evaluation: Understanding whether policy enhancements are being implemented effectively and having the intended impact is equally critical. Alongside centralized policy transformation teams, Gulf states should consider establishing companion policy evaluation units to track progress, assess impact on investor confidence, measure administrative efficiency and regulatory clarity, and provide a credible basis for further adjustment where needed.

Connect abroad:
Strengthen international strategic partnerships

Investor confidence is shaped not only by domestic policy, but also by the strength of a country's international network. GCC governments should pair domestic reforms with a targeted partnerships push aimed at re-engaging existing investors and expanding their network of strategic partnerships abroad.

> ***"Gulf states should continue expanding trade agreements and strategic partnerships with foreign governments … reinforcing the region's positioning not only as a market, but as a platform for companies seeking access, credibility, and trusted partners in third countries. "***

1. Re-engage existing investors as strategic partners: In recent years, Gulf states have skillfully used foreign partnerships to advance their economic diversification agendas and strengthen their investment value propositions. Following recent regional disruption, they should consider launching a targeted partnerships push focused on existing investors whose relationships with the market can be strengthened through deeper engagement, practical support, and a clearer sense of long-term partnership.

2. Move relationships beyond transactional engagement: Some investors, particularly recent market entrants, benefit from commercial opportunities, low-tax environments, or free zone incentives without forming deeper ties with government. These companies are more likely to reassess their regional footprint and investments during periods of volatility. Gulf states should proactively engage priority investors at a senior level, understand their business plans, and identify areas where government can support growth in ways that make the relationship harder to unwind or de-prioritize.

3. Use practical, off-the-record dialogue to identify opportunities: Structured discussions with a small set of priority investors can help identify what challenges they faced during recent disruption, what support would have been useful, what pain points remain, and what would make them expand faster. These conversations should also test where investors could contribute to national priorities through PPPs, co-investments, research partnerships, supply chain localization, technology transfer, or other forms of deeper local collaboration.

4. Equip the right entities to lead engagement: This effort does not need to be highly centralized. In many cases, the most effective engagement will come from the relevant ministry, sector regulator, or entities responsible for foreign affairs, trade, and investment. These bodies can identify where an investor's regional or global plans align best with sectoral priorities and make introductions to the right local partners and ecosystem players.

5. Continue expanding G2G partnerships abroad: Gulf states should continue expanding trade agreements, strategic partnerships, and relationships with foreign governments and state-owned entities across Southeast Asia, Africa, Central Europe, Latin America, and other emerging markets. In sectors such as healthcare, technology, logistics, energy, food security, and agriculture, these relationships can reinforce the region's positioning not only as a market, but as a platform for companies seeking access, credibility, and trusted partners in third countries, especially the Global South.

Communicate with purpose:
Amplify the impact of policy and partnership efforts through a consistent, proactive communications strategy

Policy and partnership efforts will have greater impact when they are supported by disciplined communications. Serious investors will not respond to marketing alone. They need credible signals that governments understand the moment, are addressing concerns, and are taking concrete steps to improve the investment environment.

1. Build trust through realism: Acknowledging the impact of regional events and the potential for ongoing disruption will lend further credibility to efforts to restore investor confidence. This should be paired with concrete steps to enhance the attractiveness of the business environment and a clear explanation of what has *not* changed: fiscal strength, infrastructure quality, economic diversification agendas, pragmatic leadership, and deep commitment to partnership with the private sector.

2. Put substance before style: High-stakes communication strategies often suffer from prioritizing the messaging over the message. Communications should highlight tangible policy improvements, investor support measures, and partnership opportunities, rather than relying on broad messaging around resilience. This will help shift the conversation from whether challenges exist to how effectively they are being addressed.

3. Showcase tangible wins: Showcasing a few tangible, high-profile investment "wins" could have a significant impact on broader investor perceptions. This could include investment roadshows across key financial hubs such as London, New York, Singapore, and Beijing. A well-coordinated paid and earned media campaign – complemented by thought leadership that features senior officials in financial media, podcasts, and policy forums – can further reinforce the message that investor appetite remains strong and the Gulf states continue to strengthen their FDI positioning.

4. Find the right third-party validators: Finding the right messengers and channels will be just as important as the message itself. Third-party validators such as incumbent investors, respected figures in global capital, business councils, industry organizations, and high-net-worth investors based in the region can often carry more credibility than official messaging alone. While some may be reluctant to be seen as official ambassadors, many may be willing to reinforce messages more informally with their influence networks.

5. Balance centralization with empowerment: A measured degree of centralization – ideally through a cross-governmental communications campaign coordinated centrally – can ensure consistency and provide clear materials for engagement with investors, partners, and media, while still allowing flexibility for government actors to leverage their existing relationships.

"High-stakes communication strategies often suffer from prioritizing the messaging over the message. Communications should highlight tangible policy improvements, investor support measures, and partnership opportunities, rather than relying on broad messaging around resilience."

ABOUT DGA-ASG

DGA-Albright Stonebridge Group is an independent, expert-led public policy advisory and strategic communications firm, combining global perspective and deep regional experience with a focus on practical implementation. We help organizations enhance policy effectiveness, build strategic partnerships, and create the conditions for long-term investment, competitiveness, and growth.

Our experts are practitioners—former senior government officials, regulators, diplomats, and corporate leaders—with hands-on experience across more than 40 countries. Together, we help clients design and implement evidence-based policy solutions, engage stakeholders, communicate with impact, and deliver lasting outcomes.

Our GCC Offices

Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Dubai, UAE

Contact Information

For more information or to request market-specific versions of the full playbook, please reach out to:

Imad Al-Abdulqader, Head of Saudi Office
Imad.Alabdulqader@dgagroup.com

Jan Kamphuisen, Head of UAE Office
Jan.Kamphuisen@dgagroup.com

Michael Bessey, Head of Global Policy Solutions
Michael.Bessey@dgagroup.com