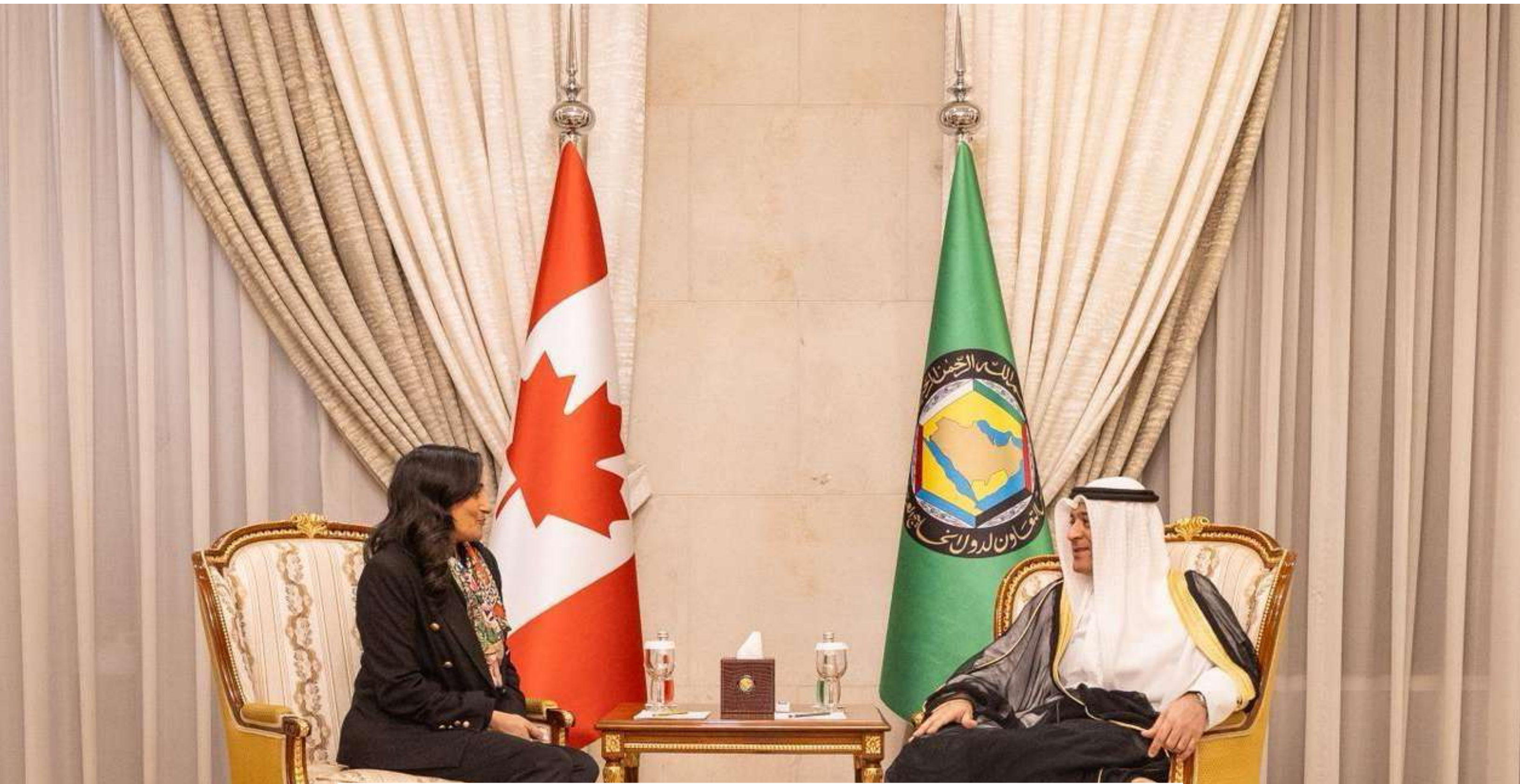
Gulf Research Center
Knowledge for All

مركز الخليج للأبحاث
المعرفة للجميع



Canada and the GCC: Strategic Convergence in a Fragmenting International Order

Amnah Mosly
September 2026

Canada and the GCC: Strategic Convergence in a Fragmenting International Order

I. Introduction

Relations between Canada and the member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) have undergone a significant transformation over the past decade. Historically centered on trade, energy, and education, these relationships are increasingly expanding into broader strategic cooperation encompassing diplomacy, regional security, technological innovation, artificial intelligence, critical minerals, infrastructure development, and economic diversification.

While the Gulf region has long been important to Canada because of its role in global energy markets and international security, recent geopolitical developments have elevated the significance of the relationship beyond traditional sectors.

Several factors have contributed to this shift. The international system is undergoing a period of change characterized by intensified great-power competition, growing economic competition, disruptions to global supply chains, and increasing uncertainty surrounding the effectiveness of multilateral institutions.

As the rules-based international order that shaped global politics following the end of the Cold War faces challenges, states are being compelled to reassess their external relationships and strategic priorities.

Canada and the GCC states have responded to these developments in remarkably similar ways. Canada has sought to reduce its dependence on the United States by diversifying trade and investment partnerships, expanding engagement with emerging markets, and strengthening relations with regions of growing strategic importance. GCC states have likewise pursued ambitious economic diversification strategies, expanded diplomatic engagement beyond traditional alliances, and increasingly flexible approaches to international partnerships. Rather than aligning exclusively with a single major power, Gulf states have sought to maintain constructive relations with the United States, China, Europe, India, and other actors while preserving their strategic autonomy.

This paper argues that Canada-GCC relations are evolving from a collection of bilateral partnerships into a broader strategic relationship driven by shared responses to global fragmentation, economic transformation, and geopolitical uncertainty.

Both sides increasingly recognize the value of diversified partnerships, pragmatic diplomacy, and flexible forms of cooperation that advance national interests while contributing to regional and international stability. The paper first examines the historical evolution of the relationship and the changing international environment before turning to economic cooperation, regional diplomacy, energy transition, technology, and education.

II. The Evolution of Canada-GCC Relations

The foundations of Canada's relations with the Gulf states were established during the 1960s and 1970s. These early relationships were shaped primarily by commercial exchanges, energy interests, and growing diplomatic engagement. Throughout the latter decades of the twentieth century, cooperation expanded steadily. Canada's growing economic presence in the Gulf reflected both the region's increasing importance within global energy markets and the broader internationalization of Canada's economy.

Collaboration also expanded through international organizations such as the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, the G20, UNESCO, and the International Civil Aviation Organization. These institutions provided settings in which Canada and Gulf states could work together even when bilateral relations were not equally developed. Cooperation extended to energy security, humanitarian aid, counterterrorism, aviation, food security, and regional stability.

Educational ties emerged as a particularly important pillar of the relationship, especially with Saudi Arabia, where thousands of students pursued higher education in Canadian institutions. In 1978, Saudi Arabia established the Saudi Arabian Cultural Bureau in Canada. In 2014, there were more than 16,000 Saudi students with scholarships and more than 1,000 Saudi medical trainees in Canada. In 2015, nearly 12,000 Saudi citizens were studying in Canada, making them the sixth-largest international student population in the country at the time.

The trajectory of Canada-GCC relations was not without challenges. The diplomatic dispute between Saudi Arabia and Canada in 2018 represented a significant setback and highlighted differing perspectives regarding sovereignty, diplomacy, and international engagement. Nevertheless, the eventual restoration of relations demonstrated the importance both sides attached to maintaining constructive ties.

In May 2023, the two countries announced the restoration of ties on the basis of “mutual respect and common interests,” according to a statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The decision followed a discussion between Saudi Arabia’s Crown Prince and Prime Minister, HRH Prince Mohammed bin Salman, and Canada’s then Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum in Bangkok in November 2022. The restoration of Saudi-Canadian relations marked the beginning of a broader period of re-engagement between the two countries. High-level visits increased, new institutional mechanisms were established, and economic cooperation expanded into emerging sectors.

More broadly, Gulf states are no longer viewed primarily as energy suppliers or destinations for Canadian exports. Their growing investment capacity, technological ambitions, and expanding diplomatic roles have increased their relevance to Canada’s foreign and economic policy. The GCC has also emerged as an increasingly important diplomatic actor, playing prominent roles in conflict mediation, humanitarian diplomacy, and regional de-escalation efforts. Canada, long recognized for its support for multilateralism, peacebuilding, and international cooperation, increasingly views Gulf states as valuable partners in addressing regional and global challenges.

In the following years, trade volumes increased, investment flows diversified, and political consultations became more frequent. Gulf sovereign wealth funds emerged as significant global investors, while Canadian companies increasingly pursued opportunities in infrastructure, engineering, transportation, healthcare, education, and energy-related sectors throughout the region.

Economic relations have similarly evolved beyond conventional trade exchanges to include collaboration in artificial intelligence, critical minerals, renewable energy, advanced manufacturing, food security, and digital transformation.

Canada’s engagement with the GCC has also become more regional in nature, culminating in regular GCC-Canada ministerial meetings and broader discussions regarding political cooperation, trade, investment, and regional security. Although Canada continues to maintain distinct relationships with individual GCC member states, the emergence of a more structured GCC-Canada dialogue provides Ottawa with a mechanism through which it can engage the Gulf collectively. For instance, the Third GCC-Canada Joint Ministerial Meeting, held in Riyadh on June 10, 2026, reaffirmed a commitment to expanding political dialogue and economic cooperation.

The GCC Secretary General noted that bilateral trade between Canada and the GCC reached approximately US$7.7 billion in 2025, while both sides emphasized cooperation in trade, investment, energy, transport, food security, education, and regional security. This regional approach allows Canada to identify common interests across the Gulf while retaining the flexibility to develop deeper partnerships with individual member states where specific opportunities exist.

III. A Changing International Environment

The evolution of Canada-GCC relations cannot be understood without considering broader changes in the international system. The contemporary global environment is increasingly characterized by fragmentation, uncertainty, and competition. The return of great-power rivalry has transformed international politics, while strategic competition between the United States and China increasingly shapes global economic, technological, and security dynamics.

Economic interdependence, once viewed primarily as a source of stability and prosperity, is increasingly being used as an instrument of strategic competition. Tariffs, sanctions, export controls, and restrictions on technology transfers have become common features of international economic relations.

These developments have created significant challenges for middle and regional powers. States that traditionally relied on stable multilateral institutions and predictable international norms now face greater uncertainty regarding the future direction of global governance.

The use of economic pressure, financial leverage, and supply-chain disruptions has highlighted vulnerabilities within the international system. Governments are therefore considering not only how to expand trade, but also how to protect energy, food, technology, finance, and critical-mineral supply chains.

The World Economic Forum Annual Meeting held in Davos in January 2026 illustrated this changing environment. The meeting emphasized that the rules-based order is shifting amid persistent geopolitical tensions, strategic uncertainty, and accelerating global change. Intensified great-power competition, evolving alliance structures, and continued ambiguity surrounding international law have reinforced perceptions of a less predictable international environment.

The expanded use of sanctions, the politicization of economic interdependence, and increasingly rigid bloc dynamics have further exposed the vulnerabilities of the current transition.

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney articulated this challenge directly, noting that “great powers have begun using economic integration as weapons, tariffs as leverage, financial infrastructure as coercion, [and] supply chains as vulnerabilities to be exploited.” He further warned that the multilateral institutions on which middle powers have traditionally relied, including the WTO, the UN, and the COP framework, are under increasing strain. These conditions have led many states to conclude that greater strategic autonomy is required in areas such as energy, food security, critical minerals, finance, and supply chains.

For Canada, these changes have reinforced the importance of diversification. Since taking office, Prime Minister Carney has prioritized economic sovereignty and national competitiveness. The government has pursued measures aimed at increasing investment, strengthening infrastructure, expanding energy capacity, and supporting strategic sectors such as artificial intelligence, critical minerals, advanced manufacturing, and clean technology.

Canada’s efforts to build stronger relationships with China, Europe, and the Gulf therefore reflect more than commercial opportunity; they also represent an attempt to reduce vulnerability to external economic shocks while maintaining strong relations with traditional allies. This is specifically timely as Canada and the United States face various disagreements and tensions.

GCC states have pursued comparable objectives through their own diversification strategies. Vision 2030 in Saudi Arabia, the UAE’s economic transformation initiatives, Qatar National Vision 2030, and similar development programs across the Gulf all seek to reduce dependence on hydrocarbons while expanding technological capabilities, attracting investment, and developing knowledge-based economies. Gulf states have also increasingly adopted multi-aligned foreign policies. While maintaining strong security relationships with the United States, they have expanded economic and diplomatic ties with China, India, Europe, and emerging economies throughout Asia and Africa.

This pattern can be understood through the concept of strategic autonomy. Strategic autonomy does not imply isolation, neutrality, or disengagement. Rather, it refers to the capacity of states to pursue independent policies, diversify partnerships, and maintain flexibility within a competitive international environment. Neither Canada nor the GCC states seek separation from existing partners. Both seek greater resilience through diversification while maintaining important relationships with traditional allies.

The GCC's strategic partnership with the United States illustrates this posture. Shared interests in energy stability, counterterrorism, and maritime security remain central, but increased variability in U.S. foreign policy and the fragmentation of global governance have altered the framework within which the relationship operates. Gulf states are balancing their reliance on U.S. security guarantees with efforts to expand beyond traditional allies and strengthen regional engagement.

The Palestinian issue and the push for a two-state solution represent a key example of Gulf strategic autonomy. Saudi Arabia's efforts to place the two-state solution at the center of international diplomacy, alongside Qatar's mediation and the UAE's diplomatic engagement, demonstrate the willingness of Gulf states to pursue independent political strategies when core regional interests are at stake. At the same time, their willingness to engage with U.S.-led initiatives illustrates a preference for dual-track diplomacy rather than rigid alignment.

The growing relationship between Canada and the GCC can therefore also be understood through the lens of middle-power diplomacy. Although significant differences exist in geography, political systems, and economic structures, both Canada and the leading GCC states increasingly occupy positions that encourage pragmatic and flexible forms of statecraft. Economic connectivity, technological innovation, investment capital, logistics networks, and diplomatic credibility have also become important to both sides. These similarities create opportunities for collaboration that extend beyond traditional bilateral relations.

IV. Economic Diversification, Trade, and Investment

Economic cooperation remains the most developed dimension of Canada-GCC relations, but its nature has evolved considerably. Economic engagement is no longer viewed solely through trade volumes or investment flows. It increasingly reflects broader strategic considerations related to innovation, resilience, technological advancement, and long-term economic transformation. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates account for the largest volumes of bilateral trade, although commercial exchanges with Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Oman continue to expand. Collectively, the GCC represents one of Canada's most important economic partnerships in the Middle East.

According to the Government of Canada, in 2025, Saudi Arabia was Canada's second-largest two-way trading partner in the GCC, with merchandise trade totaling approximately $3.5 billion. This included $1.3 billion in Canadian exports and $2.2 billion in imports.

Top Canadian exports included motor vehicles and parts, industrial machinery, pharmaceuticals, and scientific and precision instruments. Energy products accounted for more than 92 percent of Canadian imports from Saudi Arabia.

The UAE has emerged as a particularly significant economic partner. In July 2026, Canada and the UAE concluded trade negotiations that represented a step toward signing a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement. The agreement would cut tariffs, reduce red tape, and increase Canadian companies' access to the largest Middle Eastern market for Canadian exports. It would cover engineering, aerospace, agri-food, clean technology, and other sectors.

During Prime Minister Carney's November 2025 visit to the UAE, the first leader-level meeting between Canada and the UAE since 1983 and Prime Minister Carney's first official visit to the country, the two countries signed the Canada-UAE Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (FIPA) and launched negotiations toward a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA). They also announced plans for increased business delegations, sovereign wealth fund engagement, and expanded air connectivity. Canada welcomed the UAE's decision to invest $50 billion in Canada.

Saudi Arabia has likewise become a central pillar of Canada's Gulf engagement. The Kingdom's Vision 2030 transformation agenda has generated opportunities across infrastructure, renewable energy, mining, healthcare, education, logistics, tourism, and advanced technology. Its giga-projects, including NEOM, Qiddiya, Amaala, the Red Sea Project, and Diriyah Gate, are driving demand in sectors where Canada possesses relevant expertise. Canada's Trade Commissioner Service has identified water and wastewater, urban and municipal infrastructure, asset optimization, education, healthcare and social services, roads, transport, customs, renewable energy, and clean technology as opportunities for Canadian companies in Saudi Arabia.

Prime Minister Carney's July 2026 visit to Saudi Arabia produced 13 commercial agreements and memoranda of understanding worth more than US$1 billion. These agreements covered health technology, mining, infrastructure, and defense. To support this economic activity, the two countries agreed to finish negotiations on a Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement by early 2027 and began talks on a Double Taxation Agreement. These measures are intended to facilitate two-way investment, reduce regulatory barriers, and provide greater certainty for businesses operating in both markets.

The Saudi Arabia-Canada Investment Forum also highlighted trade volume that had exceeded US$20 billion since 2020. Prime Minister Carney announced that a delegation of Canadian pension funds would visit the Kingdom to evaluate long-term investment opportunities in energy and artificial intelligence. This development illustrates the growing interest in matching Saudi investment capacity with Canadian institutional capital, innovation, and expertise.

Qatar has emerged as another important economic partner, particularly in investment, trade facilitation, and transportation. On January 8, 2026, Qatar's Minister of State for Foreign Trade Affairs and Canada's Minister of International Trade chaired the Qatar-Canada Trade and Investment Roundtable. The meeting focused on enhancing bilateral cooperation in commerce and investment and on finalizing agreements regarding investment protection and double taxation.

In Kuwait, commercial cooperation has included civil aviation. In October 2024, Kuwait's Directorate General of Civil Aviation signed agreements with Canada to regulate air transport and develop the civil aviation sector. Oman provides another example of sector-specific cooperation. In January 2025, the Oman-Canada Business Forum in Muscat explored ways to enhance trade and investment cooperation in health.

These engagements demonstrate that smaller bilateral relationships can support the broader Canada-GCC partnership.

These areas of cooperation reflect complementary interests. Canada seeks investment, market access, and opportunities to commercialize innovation, while GCC states seek technological expertise, partnerships, and support for economic diversification. This convergence provides a strong foundation for long-term strategic cooperation.

V. Regional Diplomacy and Conflict Management

While economic relations remain central, diplomacy and regional security increasingly represent important dimensions of Canada-GCC engagement. The GCC's diplomatic profile has expanded significantly over the past decade. Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE have become active participants in regional and international mediation, conflict-resolution initiatives, and humanitarian diplomacy. Their involvement in addressing conflicts in Yemen, Sudan, Gaza, Syria, and elsewhere reflects a broader shift in Gulf foreign policy toward proactive diplomatic engagement.

Saudi Arabia's restoration of diplomatic relations with Iran, its mediation efforts in regional conflicts, and its growing international diplomatic role demonstrate this transformation. The Kingdom has also participated in efforts related to the war in Ukraine, including prisoner releases and humanitarian assistance. Qatar has facilitated negotiations across regional and international crises, while the UAE has emphasized conflict de-escalation and economic diplomacy.

Canada's foreign-policy tradition provides a basis for engagement with these efforts. As a middle power, Canada has long emphasized multilateralism, international cooperation, peacebuilding, and support for international institutions. It has therefore increasingly welcomed the GCC's role in mediation and conflict management while expanding consultations on humanitarian assistance, maritime security, cybersecurity, counterterrorism, and regional stability.

Maritime security provides a particularly relevant example. The Strait of Hormuz remains one of the world's most important energy corridors, while instability in surrounding regions poses significant risks to global trade and supply chains. Canada and GCC states share a strong interest in maintaining freedom of navigation and protecting critical infrastructure. During Prime Minister Carney's July 2026 visit to Saudi Arabia, the two sides condemned attacks on commercial vessels in the Strait of Hormuz as violations of international law and threats to global energy supplies. Canada expressed readiness to support maritime security efforts through maritime logistics, cyber support, demining expertise, and satellite imagery.

Humanitarian cooperation represents another promising area. Canada and GCC countries contribute humanitarian assistance to crisis-affected regions, including Gaza, Sudan, Syria, and Ukraine. Canada has provided humanitarian assistance to Palestinians and supported Ukraine since the beginning of the conflict in February 2022. Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE also contribute to humanitarian and mediation efforts. Greater communication and aid coordination could improve the effectiveness of assistance by connecting financial support with practical dialogue about delivery, humanitarian partners, and conflict prevention.

Canada has also responded to regional crises by emphasizing diplomacy. Following U.S. strikes against Iran, Prime Minister Carney called for immediate diplomatic engagement to avert a broader regional conflict. Foreign Affairs Minister Anita Anand similarly emphasized de-escalation, the protection of civilian lives, and the importance of returning to negotiations. Ottawa's response reflected growing concern that unchecked escalation could have far-reaching implications for global peace and security.

Political visits and institutional mechanisms have reinforced this relationship. In November 2025, Prime Minister Mark Carney met with President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan in Abu Dhabi. The meeting marked the first leader-level meeting between Canada and the UAE since 1983 and Prime Minister Carney's first official visit to the country. The two leaders agreed to strengthen bilateral economic relations and announced a roadmap to deepen cooperation across trade, investment, and selected areas of regional engagement. They also exchanged views on humanitarian assistance and stability in the Middle East.

On January 18, 2026, Prime Minister Carney met with the Amir of Qatar in Doha during the first-ever visit by a Canadian prime minister to Qatar. The leaders discussed the Canada-Qatar strategic partnership and opportunities to deepen diplomatic, security, development, cultural, and economic ties. In May 2026, Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs made the first official visit by a Canadian foreign minister to Oman in more than a decade. The two ministers signed a memorandum of understanding on political consultations aimed at establishing regular dialogue.

Prime Minister Carney's July 2026 visit to Jeddah marked another significant milestone in Saudi-Canada relations. It was the first visit by a Canadian prime minister to Saudi Arabia in 26 years. During meetings with Crown Prince and Prime Minister HRH Mohammed bin Salman, both leaders agreed to elevate bilateral relations and deepen cooperation across trade, investment, innovation, regional security, defense, energy, critical minerals, infrastructure, artificial intelligence, agriculture, tourism, life sciences, and education. They also decided to formalize diplomatic engagement through the Saudi-Canadian Coordination Council, which will serve as the principal mechanism for implementing a long-term bilateral roadmap.

VI. Energy Transition and Sustainable Development

Energy has historically been one of the defining dimensions of relations between Canada and the Gulf region. Its role is now changing. Rather than being limited to conventional hydrocarbons, energy cooperation increasingly encompasses renewable energy, sustainability, energy security, and the technologies associated with the global energy transition.

Both Canada and GCC states face the challenge of adapting to this changing landscape. Oil and gas will remain important components of the global energy mix for the foreseeable future, while governments and businesses are investing in technologies designed to reduce emissions and diversify energy systems.

This transformation creates opportunities for cooperation rather than competition.

Canada possesses expertise in energy technologies, environmental management, carbon capture, hydrogen development, and resource governance. GCC countries are investing heavily in renewable energy projects, green hydrogen initiatives, carbon-management technologies, and sustainable infrastructure. Saudi Arabia's investments in renewable energy and hydrogen production illustrate the broader transformation underway across the Gulf, while the UAE has emerged as a major investor in renewable energy projects both domestically and internationally.

The July 2026 Saudi-Canadian memorandum of understanding on energy cooperation focused on both traditional and clean energy sources. It included collaboration on liquefied natural gas projects in Canada, hydrogen, renewable energy, carbon capture and storage, cybersecurity for energy infrastructure, and resilient supply chains. This approach reflects the reality that energy transition involves both the development of new technologies and the management of existing systems.

Kuwait's discussions with Canada on electricity, water, and renewable energy provide another example of sector-specific cooperation. Bahrain's climate-related contacts with Canadian officials and the UAE's memorandum with Canadian Nuclear Laboratories on nuclear science and technology demonstrate that energy cooperation also includes environmental management, electricity, nuclear safety, waste management, and health technologies.

Cooperation in these sectors aligns with the long-term interests of both sides. Canada benefits from access to growing markets and investment opportunities, while GCC countries gain access to expertise, innovation, and technological partnerships. Energy transition should therefore not be viewed as a source of divergence between Canada and the GCC. It increasingly represents an area where shared interests and complementary capabilities can generate mutually beneficial outcomes.

VII. Technology, Innovation, and the Future Economy

Technology and innovation are among the most promising areas of future Canada-GCC cooperation. As global economic competition increasingly centers on technological leadership, countries are investing heavily in research, digital infrastructure, artificial intelligence, and advanced industries. Canada and the GCC possess complementary strengths that position them well for expanded cooperation.

Canada has established itself as a global leader in artificial-intelligence research. Canadian universities, research institutions, and technology companies have played important roles in advancing machine learning, data science, and AI applications. Cities such as Toronto, Montreal, Edmonton, and Vancouver have emerged as technology hubs that attract global talent and investment.

GCC states are pursuing similarly ambitious digital-transformation agendas as part of their economic-diversification strategies. Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, the UAE's digital-economy initiatives, Qatar's digital-transformation programs, and comparable efforts across the Gulf emphasize technological innovation, smart infrastructure, digital governance, and emerging technologies. These initiatives are intended to increase economic competitiveness and prepare Gulf economies for a future in which knowledge-intensive industries play a larger role.

The July 2026 Saudi visit provides a specific example of this emerging cooperation. Canada and Saudi Arabia signed a memorandum of understanding on artificial-intelligence investment and skills development, supporting joint investment in AI and the creation of workforce-training programs. Private-sector cooperation was also highlighted through collaboration between Cohere and HUMAIN to build sovereign AI infrastructure and discussions between BlackBerry and Aramco Digital regarding secure communications.

Canada's partnership with Qatar has also expanded into artificial intelligence and digital transformation. In October 2025, the Qatari Minister of Communications and Information Technology met with Canada's Minister of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation to discuss ICT, digital transformation, and artificial intelligence. The two sides agreed to finalize a memorandum of understanding. The UAE has pursued cooperation in AI, cybersecurity, and investment promotion.

Cybersecurity represents another area of mutual interest. As societies become more digitally connected, vulnerabilities associated with cyber threats, critical-infrastructure protection, and data security continue to grow. Canada and GCC countries share concerns regarding the protection of financial systems, government networks, energy infrastructure, and digital economies. Expanded dialogue and cooperation in cybersecurity could strengthen resilience on both sides while contributing to broader international efforts to address emerging threats.

Technology partnerships will carry significance beyond commercial considerations because advanced technologies increasingly shape economic competitiveness, national security, and international influence.

Their long-term value will be greatest if they include research, skills development, data governance, and institutional partnerships rather than focusing only on product sales.

VIII. Education, Culture, and People-to-People Relations

The development of human capital is another important pillar of future Canada-GCC relations. Educational cooperation has historically played a significant role in the relationship and continues to offer opportunities for expansion. For decades, Canadian educational institutions attracted students from across the Gulf, generating lasting personal, professional, and institutional connections.

In May 2024, Saudi Arabia hosted the first Saudi-Canadian Forum for Educational Partnership in Riyadh. The event underscored the historical educational ties between the two countries and highlighted opportunities for collaboration in general and higher education, early-childhood programs, teacher development, medical training, technical training, and vocational programs.

These connections extend beyond education itself. Human-capital development is central to economic-diversification strategies throughout the Gulf, and building knowledge-based economies requires investment in education, research, innovation, and workforce development. Canada possesses considerable strengths in each of these areas.

There is also a need for more Canadian students to study in Saudi Arabia and learn about the Kingdom. People-to-people contact benefits students and staff and can contribute to addressing emerging global challenges. Canadian institutions should therefore consider exchange programs and scholarships in Saudi Arabia, where education has become a key sector of the national agenda.

Research collaboration is a particularly promising avenue. Universities and research institutions on both sides are increasingly engaged in work related to artificial intelligence, clean energy, public health, agriculture, climate adaptation, and advanced technologies. Expanded cooperation in these fields would generate benefits extending beyond traditional educational exchanges. As a result, educational cooperation will likely remain a foundational component of Canada-GCC relations for decades to come.

IX. Conclusion

The evolution of Canada-GCC relations reflects broader transformations in the international system. As geopolitical competition intensifies and economic uncertainty increases, states are seeking diversified partnerships that enhance resilience, expand opportunities, and preserve strategic flexibility. Canada and the GCC have responded to these challenges in remarkably similar ways.

Their relationship is no longer defined solely by trade, energy, or diplomatic engagement. It increasingly encompasses technology, innovation, investment, education, regional diplomacy, conflict management, cybersecurity, maritime security, and sustainable development. These expanding areas of cooperation reflect a deeper convergence of strategic interests and policy priorities.

The relationship is also shaped by a shared preference for pragmatic diplomacy. Both Canada and GCC states seek constructive engagement with a wide range of international partners while avoiding excessive dependence on any single actor. This approach reflects an understanding that flexibility, diversification, and resilience have become essential attributes of foreign policy in an increasingly fragmented international environment.

Challenges and differences will remain, but the overall trajectory of the relationship is increasingly positive. The restoration and expansion of political dialogue, the growth of economic cooperation, and the emergence of new strategic sectors all point toward a partnership of growing significance. Continued engagement will require practical implementation, regular communication, and a willingness to manage differences through established channels.

Ultimately, Canada and the GCC are not merely expanding bilateral relations; they are gradually building a broader strategic partnership grounded in shared responses to global change. As both seek to navigate an uncertain international order, their convergence as pragmatic middle-power actors is likely to become an increasingly important feature of their foreign policies. The continued development of this relationship has the potential to contribute not only to mutual prosperity and security, but also to greater stability and cooperation within an evolving international system.

Amnah Mosly is a Researcher at the Gulf Research Center (GRC)

Gulf Research Center
Knowledge for All

مركـز الخليـــج للأبحـــاث
المعـــــرفـــــة للجـــمـــيـــــع

Gulf Research Center
Riyadh

Unit FN11A
King Faisal Foundation
North Tower
King Fahd Branch Rd
Al Olaya Riyadh 12212
Saudi Arabia
Tel: +966 112112567
Email: info@grc.net

Gulf Research Center
Jeddah

19 Rayat Alitihad Street
P.O. Box 2134
Jeddah 21451
Saudi Arabia
Tel: +966 12 6511999
Fax: +966 12 6531375
Email: info@grc.net

Gulf Research Center
Foundation

Avenue de France 23
1202 Geneva
Switzerland
Tel: +41227162730
Email: info@grc.net

Gulf Research Centre
Cambridge

University of Cambridge
Sidgwick Avenue,
Cambridge CB3 9DA
United Kingdom
Tel:+44-1223-760758
Fax:+44-1223-335110

Gulf Research Center
Foundation Brussels

4th Floor
Avenue de
Cortenbergh 89
1000 Brussels
Belgium
grcb@grc.net
+32 2 251 41 64