

QATAR ECONOMIC FORUM 2025

The Road to 2030:
Transforming the Global Economy

The fifth edition of the Qatar Economic Forum (QEF), held in 2025 under the theme "The Road to 2030: Transforming the Global Economy," arrived at a time when the global economy is undergoing profound structural change. The convergence of geopolitical realignments, technological disruption, capital relocation, and regulatory evolution has placed extraordinary pressure on traditional growth models and governance systems. With more than 2,500 global leaders gathering in Doha, the Forum served as both a barometer of current economic sentiment and a platform for shaping the trajectory of global growth. The conversations spanned a broad range of topics—from energy transition and digital regulation to growth and post-conflict recovery—offering both global insight and region-specific nuance.

**QATAR
ECONOMIC
FORUM**
منتدى قطر الإقتصادي

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A particularly vivid thread running through the discussions was the growing assertiveness of the GCC countries in defining global economic currents. This emerging role reflects more than fiscal capacity or energy relevance; it stems from a deeper institutional transformation taking root in the region. What came to light at the forum is a Gulf that is not merely repositioning itself but actively reimagining its function as a strategic architect in the new global growth order. The sessions revealed the extent to which Gulf states are intentionally crafting new models of economic governance, strengthened by fiscal surpluses, sovereign investment strategies, and long-term national visions, making it a deliberate reframing of the region's global narrative.

1 Economic Diversification & Ramp-Up of GCC Economies

1.1. Strategic Repositioning of GCC Economies

From forward-leaning discussions on capital deployment to geopolitical realignments and digital transformation, the forum reflected a deeper shift underway across the region. The GCC is stepping into a role that transcends its traditional identity as an energy supplier. It is now emerging as a laboratory for institutional reform, a testing ground for cutting-edge technology, and a strategic interlocutor in global diplomacy. This strategic pivot is not merely a response to the volatility of global commodity markets, but a proactive stance designed to future-proof their economies against external shocks, climate transitions, and evolving global demand patterns. It is being operationalized through inter-linked approaches:

Investing in new industries by building capabilities in manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, chemicals, and renewable technologies.

Reforming regulatory environments to ease foreign ownership restrictions, offer investor incentives, and support public-private partnerships.

Strengthening global market ties through sovereign wealth fund investments, strategic bilateral deals, and participation in global trade corridors.

These institutional shifts have laid the groundwork for economic models defined more by **resilience, agility, and scale**. The forum underscored that this transition is driven by foresight, pointing to a ten-year planning horizon, centered on Vision 2030 frameworks and cross-sectoral integration, as the backbone of **economic stability**.

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This is where Gulf exceptionalism now lies: **institutional agility, cross-border cooperation, and long-term planning**.

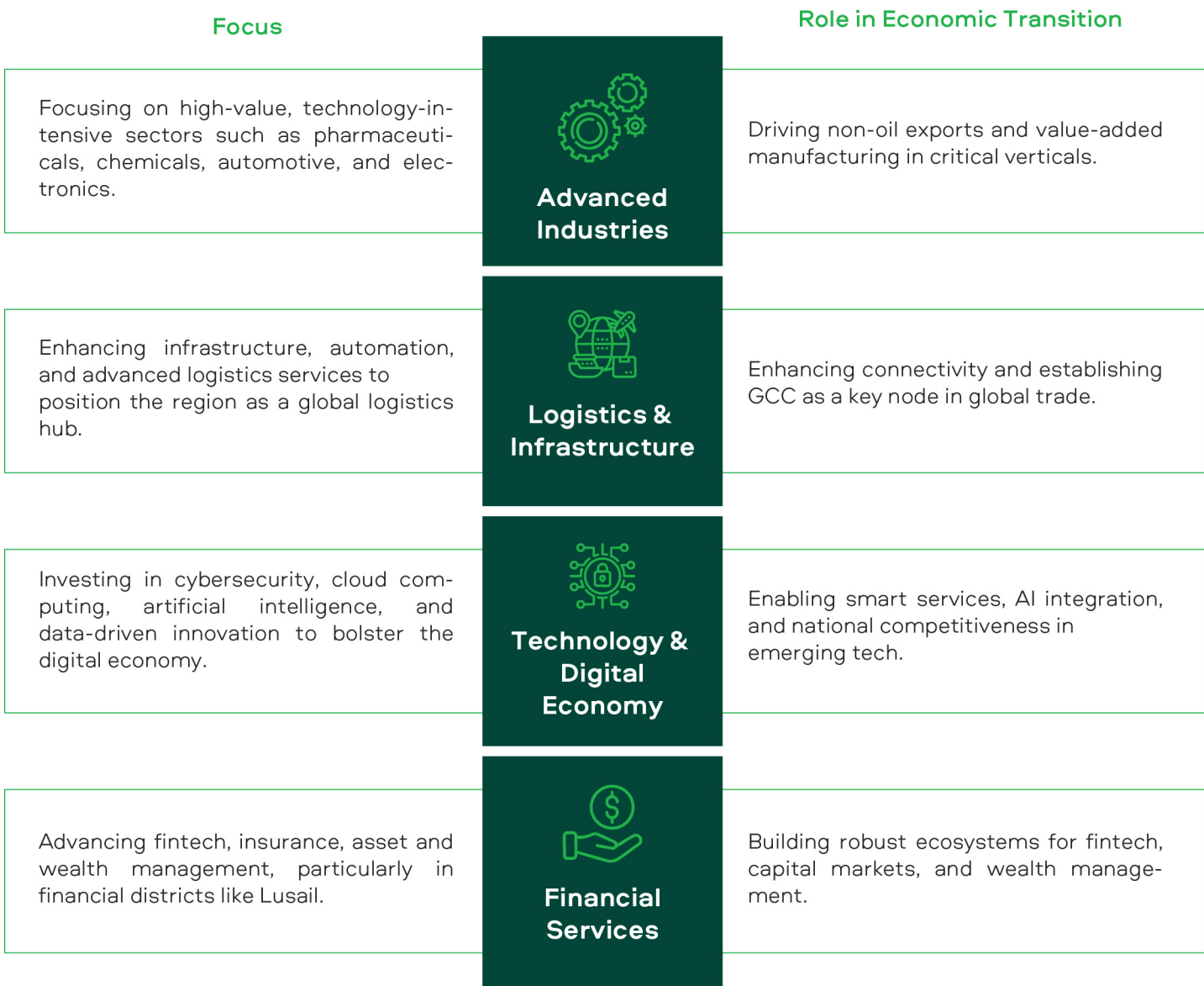
1.2. Qatar’s Diversification Strategy

Translating Global Visibility into Economic Maturity

In a compelling metaphor, Qatar’s Prime Minister H.E. Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani **likened the 2022 World Cup to an IPO**. He stated, “I have a friend who once told me that the World Cup was like an IPO for Qatar. I believe this was... a very successful IPO”. The tournament catalyzed visibility, and the post-event period has been leveraged as an **inflection point for deep economic recalibration**. The World Cup functioned as a geopolitical showcase—inviting global attention to Qatar’s **institutional readiness, infrastructure capabilities, and investment environment**.

Qatar’s **\$1 billion investment incentive program**, launched by Invest Qatar, reflects this strategy. Targeting four strategic sectors—advanced industries, logistics, technology, and financial services—the program offers financial packages covering up to **40% of operational costs**, from construction to staffing. The objective is to convert episodic exposure into sustained sectoral competitiveness and catalyze the emergence of globally relevant industrial clusters. It is a mechanism to both **attract high-value capital and accelerate the maturation of the country’s economy** beyond hydrocarbons.

Strategic Sectors Driving Qatar’s Future





Qatar's real estate sector was also addressed during the panel discussion titled "Global Real Estate Horizons: Navigating Growth & Demand." H.E. Abdullah bin Hamad bin Abdullah Al-Attiyah, Minister of Municipality and Chairman of Qatari Diar, emphasized the sector's resilience amid external challenges. He cited Qatar's safety, cultural coherence, and targeted infrastructure developments—such as the Land of Legends tourism and entertainment complex in Simaisma—as primary drivers of continued demand.

In energy, QatarEnergy CEO Saad Sherida Al-Kaabi emphasized the need for sustained LNG investment at price thresholds of \$70–\$80 per barrel—reaffirming the state's strategy of reinforcing core sectors while scaling new ones. These investments ensure Qatar's leadership in global energy security while funding its diversification efforts.

II. U.S.–Gulf Relations

At the Qatar Economic Forum 2025, U.S.–Gulf relations was a central theme, with particular emphasis placed on the recent **regional tour by former U.S. President Donald Trump**, who visited Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates. Forum speakers referenced these high-profile visits as emblematic of a renewed momentum in **bilateral cooperation**, with engagements that resulted in a number of high-value economic agreements, including **multi-billion-dollar investment pledges and partnerships**. Moreover, the visits were discussed as signaling a recalibration of U.S. foreign policy posture in the region—one that now leans more explicitly into economic diplomacy as a tool for **reinforcing geopolitical ties**.

Once seen as transactional or security-centric, the relationship is evolving into more of an interdependence that spans defense, finance, technology, and diplomacy. In the “Investing in America” session, Donald Trump Jr. noted the transformation of Gulf capital from marginal participation to critical enabler, attributing this investment momentum to several structural advantages in the Gulf: **well-managed sovereign wealth funds, efficient deployment of capital, and a regulatory environment that is increasingly open, stable, and investor friendly**. He further contrasted the Gulf’s investment posture with the more rigid and less predictable regulatory landscape of Western Europe:



“ I think if you said 15–20 years ago that you'd have this level of investment in the Middle East, I think people would have thought you were crazy. I think if you look at the comparison here to what's perhaps going on in Western Europe, this is the place where there's rational investment.

This sentiment was substantiated by the signing of over **20 MoUs between Gulf entities and international players**—many of them U.S.-based—spanning digital infrastructure, artificial intelligence, and financial innovation. These are foundational partnerships laying the groundwork for mutual market access and resilience. The depth of integration suggests a shift in global capital flows, where Gulf financial centers play an increasingly central role in funding innovation and industrial policy abroad.

Perhaps the most visible—and controversial—symbol of this alignment came with **Qatar’s gifting of a \$400 million Boeing 747-8 aircraft to the U.S.** that will serve as Air Force One. While raising questions, the gesture was defended by Qatar as a signal of trust and continuity in relations. Framed within decades of military cooperation, energy diplomacy, and economic alignment, the gift becomes a strategic symbol rather than a transactional event. It speaks to a maturing alliance, where soft power and diplomacy reinforce deeper, structural ties.

These developments underscore a deepening U.S.–Gulf relationship, underpinned not only by capital flows but also by a growing strategic alignment. The forum offered clear indications that this partnership is expanding in scope, with an increasing emphasis on long-term economic integration.

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MoUs between Gulf entities and international players

Qatar’s gifting of a

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aircraft to the U.S.

III. Technology and AI in GCC

GCC countries are leveraging their advanced infrastructure and abundant energy resources to support AI development, positioning the GCC to lead in smart cities and AI-driven urban planning. Qatar's Minister of Municipality, Abdullah bin Hamad bin Abdullah Al-Attiyah, emphasized the region's readiness:

“ I always believe that the biggest place that can invest in AI is the Middle East, because we are already prepared. We have a very modern infrastructure... we have the cheapest energy in the world... and we have all the infrastructure ready for data centers.



Technology—particularly AI—is no longer framed as an adjunct to development in the GCC. **It is central to the region's growth and national competitive advantage.** Across sessions, speakers emphasized that the Gulf's comparative advantages create an environment primed for data centers, blockchain deployment, and talent localization. Countries such as Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE are actively engineering ecosystems that **attract frontier-tech entrepreneurs and global developers.**

The forum also showcased the GCC's focus on **practical AI applications** in various sectors. Nour Al Hassan, CEO of Arabic AI & Tarjama, noted the region's emphasis on **infrastructure investment**, which benefits companies like hers. She highlighted a shift in global talent perception:

“ Five years ago, it was nearly impossible to convince a Silicon Valley engineer to move to the region. Now, they are reaching out to us. That alone is a huge sign that things are changing.



Qatar Financial Centre's (QFC) announcement of its **real estate tokenization initiative** marked another highlight. Through **blockchain-based fractional ownership**, the initiative targets a perennial challenge in emerging markets: asset illiquidity. The **QFC's Digital Asset Regulations 2024** and **Investment Token Rulebook** now provide the necessary legal scaffolding to ensure credibility and scalability in this space. This isn't just about innovation; it's about institutionalizing digital finance at a time when traditional systems remain exclusionary and rigid.

In a virtual appearance at the forum, **Elon Musk** added a cautionary dimension, addressing the rapid advancement of AI technologies and the pressing need for regulatory oversight. He warned that innovation is currently outpacing regulation, posing potential risks to society.

Musk emphasized the need for regulatory oversight in emerging fields such as Artificial Intelligence:

“ You want to have at least a few referees in the field. You don't want to have an army of referees, but you want to have a few referees on any given field, in any given sport, or even any given arena, industrial arena, to ensure that public safety is taken care of.



IV. Hotspots and Post-Conflict Forecasts

Syria's post-conflict reconstruction emerged as a point of discussion, particularly in light of the U.S. Treasury's issuance of General License 25. This license effectively eased sanctions on Syria, authorizing select transactions with the interim government, central bank, and state enterprises, effectively easing sanctions to support infrastructure and humanitarian efforts. Qatar's Prime Minister praised this policy shift as an important step in the right direction, highlighting its potential to catalyze economic stabilization in one of the region's most fragile states.

The forum underscored the significance of this development, noting that it opened avenues for international investment in Syria's reconstruction efforts— such as Turkish companies seeing big opportunities in neighboring Syria.

Key sectors identified for initial investment



Agriculture

The lifting of U.S. sanctions has unlocked transformative opportunities for investors in Syria's agricultural sector. After over a decade of war and climate-induced drought, Syria's agricultural revival is poised to become a cornerstone of regional stability and economic growth. Investments are particularly focused on drought-resistant technologies and agricultural infrastructure to rebuild food production.



Transportation

Reestablishing road and rail connections is a strategic priority for Syria. The country aims to become a regional transportation bridge, with efforts to rehabilitate and reconnect critical parts of the national infrastructure, including railway networks and highways linking Syria with neighboring countries like Turkey, Iraq, Jordan, and Lebanon.



Energy

Syria signed a \$7 billion memorandum of understanding with a consortium led by Qatar's UCC Holding, along with Turkish and U.S. companies, to develop major power generation projects. The agreement involves building four combined-cycle gas turbine power plants with a total capacity of 4,000 megawatts, plus a 1,000 MW solar power plant in southern Syria. These projects aim to revitalize Syria's power infrastructure, which has been severely damaged.

More than a diplomatic breakthrough, this moment could mark the re-entry of Syria into the regional economic system, also testing the ability of Gulf investors to operate in fragile states and influence post-conflict outcomes through economic levers.

Conclusion

The 2025 Qatar Economic Forum served as a **critical reflection point on the state of the global economy and the complex interplay of geopolitical, technological, and investment trends reshaping markets worldwide**. From high-level panels to sector-specific discussions, the forum offered a multidimensional view of how global actors are navigating disruption—and where new centers of gravity are forming.

Sheikh Dr Abdulla bin Ali al-Thani, chairman of Media City Qatar and the Organizing Committee of the Forum, said “The 2025 forum was a high-level strategy meeting for the global economy, offering a window into how global leaders are thinking about several topics, from geopolitics to investment. It revealed their priorities, the shifts they anticipate, and how they are preparing for the years ahead”.

Within this broader context, **the Gulf region emerged as a dynamic force**, not only for its financial clout but for the depth of its **institutional reforms, policy vision, and sectoral prioritization**. Countries like Qatar and Saudi Arabia are deploying capital with precision, designing future-facing regulatory environments, and integrating **diplomacy with development**. For global investors, **engagement with the region is a forward-looking choice**.



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