

ORION FORUM

Trump's Gulf Tour and the Emphasis on AI

MAY 24, 2025

President Donald J. Trump's Gulf tour this month—with visits to Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)—marked a pivotal moment in US relations with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)'s wealthiest and most geopolitically influential members. As economic ties deepen, especially in the high-stakes realm of artificial intelligence (AI), collaboration between Washington and its Gulf Arab partners becomes more crucial than ever. Partnerships grounded in innovation and shared technological progress can reshape US-GCC relations in the digital era.

AI is poised to reshape the world in ways we can barely imagine. The wealthy Gulf Arab states are determined to be at the forefront of this global transformation. By pouring investments into partnerships with top American tech firms, they're betting big on an AI-driven future. If their strategies pay off, the deals signed during Trump's tour last week could turn out to be game changers in the Gulf's AI revolution.

Strategically situated at the crossroads of Asia, Africa, and Europe, the GCC states—particularly Saudi Arabia and the UAE—are poised to emerge as vital hubs in the global AI and digital infrastructure network. Their geography offers unmatched advantages for data routing, low-latency cloud services, and the seamless flow of AI capabilities between East and West, positioning them as the Middle East's key AI backbones.

Trump's Gulf tour kicked off in Riyadh, where he [claims](#) the deals signed are worth more than \$1 trillion, even if this eye-popping figure is perhaps elusive as details remain somewhat scant. Many of these deals are centered on advancing AI technology. For Saudi Arabia, this aligns perfectly with Vision 2030, the Kingdom's ambitious agenda aimed at reducing dependence on oil while diversifying the Kingdom's economy and positioning it as a global leader in

technological innovation.

Humain is a new AI start up backed by Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund, the Public Investment Fund. Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman chairs Humain, which [debuted](#) this month and is to play a critical role in helping the Kingdom achieve its objective of becoming an AI powerhouse.

One of the high-profile deals entails the Silicon Valley-based semiconductor giant Nvidia [agreeing](#) to sell hundreds of thousands of Nvidia's next-generation Graphics Processing Units (GPUs) to Humain. The first tranche will be for [18,000](#) of these "Blackwell" chips. Additionally, the global semiconductor company Advanced Micro Devices (AMD) [revealed](#) its \$10 billion partnership with Humain, which is to provide software and chips for AI data centers "stretching from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the United States."

Qualcomm, a San Diego-based microchip manufacturer, and Humain [signed](#) an MoU to develop advanced AI data centers and hybrid AI solutions across edge, cloud, and cloud-to-edge services in the oil-rich country and beyond. The partnership will drive the integration of Qualcomm's AI and Central Processing Units (CPUs) technologies into Humain's cloud infrastructure. Qualcomm will also work with the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology to establish a design center, supporting Saudi Arabia's semiconductor ecosystem and local talent development.

Humain also announced partnerships with [Global AI](#), [Cisco Systems](#), and [Amazon](#) to develop the Kingdom's own "AI zone", featuring advanced infrastructure, servers, and networks to support more efficient AI training.

During Trump's visit to Doha, Al Rabban Capital, a Qatari investment and advisory firm, [signed](#) an agreement with Colorado-based Quantinuum, the world's top integrated quantum firm, to invest \$1 billion in US quantum technology and workforce development.

The third and final leg of Trump's Gulf tour was in Abu Dhabi, where the US and UAE [announced](#) a joint initiative to develop the world's largest AI data center outside the US, which will be built in Abu Dhabi. G42, an Abu Dhabi-based AI development holding company established in 2018 with support from two Emirati sovereign wealth funds, will lead this

project, which will span [ten](#) square miles and have a planned capacity of [five](#) gigawatts. The agreement [grants](#) the UAE access to 500,000 Nvidia semiconductor chips. Additionally, Cisco Systems [signed](#) a deal with G42 firm to develop the UAE's AI sector.

These AI deals signed during Trump's Gulf tour reinforce the strong economic ties between the US and these three GCC states. For Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE, such agreements mark a major step forward in their quests to become global AI hubs and powerhouses. In the White House's eyes, such deals bolster the US's position in the America-China [AI race](#) and serve to solidify the US's upper hand, particularly at a time of mounting concern about the Chinese [closing](#) the gap.

The swift [ascent](#) of China's DeepSeek onto the global stage delivered a sobering wake-up call to Western nations: The AI divide between the US and China is far slimmer than many had assumed. Scaling models may not be the sole—or even the most practical—route to advancement, and most critically, the US and its allies currently lack an effective framework for monitoring China's AI development. Within this context of US-China great power competition, the Trump administration sees Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE as America's capital- and energy-rich partners which should be incorporated into the US's AI ecosystem in order to advance Trump's "America First" agenda.

In light of the signing of these multibillion-dollar AI agreements between US companies and GCC states during Trump's Gulf tour, concerns are emerging in Washington over the national security implications of selling American-made chips to Gulf Arab monarchies. While the US aims to counter China's rise in AI, it also seeks to enhance the global reach of its tech giants.

This delicate innovation-versus-national security [balancing act](#) is challenging to strike in an increasingly interconnected world of shared research, infrastructure, and supply chains. For example, G42's [ties](#) to China are expected to face heightened scrutiny while the White House views Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE as key drivers of the "[Trump Effect](#)," drawing a surge of private and foreign investment into the US's AI ecosystem.

Nvidia's recent partnership with Humain to develop "[AI factories](#)" in Saudi Arabia raises important questions about who ultimately stands to benefit from semiconductor and AI-related

ventures in the Gulf. As Gulf Arab monarchies such as Saudi Arabia and the UAE continue to strike balancing acts between the West and the East, it might be unwise to take for granted that their long-term alignment will remain firmly with Washington.

Moreover, the GCC states' energy wealth and financial clout position them as potential heavyweights in the global AI race. Large-scale chip orders, as backed by the Trump administration, raise the specter of these Gulf Arab countries one day becoming serious competitors to the US in the AI space. This prospect is likely to prompt some Washington policymakers to initiate thoughtful debates about whether such an outcome aligns with America's long-term interests—and what strategic implications it may carry.

*image credit: Anadolu Agency

Orion Policy Institute (OPI) is an independent, non-profit, tax-exempt think tank focusing on a broad range of issues at the local, national, and global levels. OPI does not take institutional policy positions. Accordingly, all views, positions, and conclusions represented herein should be understood to be solely those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of OPI.