Gulf Research Centre Cambridge

Knowledge for All

GULF RESEARCH MEETING

16th Gulf Research Meeting

21 - 23 July 2026 – University of Cambridge

Workshop No. 4

Overlapping Ambitions: State-Led Economic Diversification and Mounting Intra-GCC Competition

Workshop Schedule

Workshop Directors

Dr. Glnar Eskandar
Economic Specialist

Dr. Gerd Nonneman
Georgetown University, Qatar

First Workshop Day - Wednesday, 22 July 2026

08:15 - 08:30 – Welcome coffee and tea

08:30 - 08:50 – Introduction of Workshop and Participants

08:50 - 09:40 – Paper 1: Walking the Same Road at Different Speeds: Economic Diversification in the GCC

Authors: Hassnian Ali, Ahmet Faruk Aysan, Muhammad Syauqi Bin-Armia

Discussant: Sumbul Kabir

09:40 - 10:30 – Paper 2: Diversification and Sectoral Congestion Across GCC Economies

Author: Manish Vaidya

Discussant: Oussama Meftha

10:30 - 10:45 – Coffee and tea break

10:45 - 11:35 – Paper 3: Development vs. Diplomacy: Explaining the Paradox of Concurrent Synergies and Rivalries among the GCC States

Author: Matthew Gray

Discussant: Weilin Deng

11:35 - 12:25 – Paper 4: Economic Diversification as an Arena of Leadership Competition in the Gulf: The Case of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates

Author: Loubna Madani

Discussants: Annelle R. Sheline and Kristian Coates Ulrichsen

12:25 – 12:55 – Paper 5: Integration and Differentiation: Bahrain and Oman amid Intensifying Intra-GCC Economic Competition - (Part 1)

Author: Duncan Mayall

Discussant: Misba Bhatti

13:00- 15:00 – Lunch break (lunch served at King's College)

15:00 - 15:20 – Paper 6: Integration and Differentiation: Bahrain and Oman amid Intensifying Intra-GCC Economic Competition - (Part 2: Discussion)

Author: Duncan Mayall

Discussant: Misba Bhatti

15:20 - 16:10 – Paper 7: Riyadh and Dubai as Competing Financial Centers: State-Led Diversification and Intra-GCC Economic Rivalry

Author: Sumbul Kabir

Discussants: Ayoub Rabhi and Jalal Qana

16:10 - 16:30 – Paper 8: Collective Gain or Zero-Sum Game? The Effects of Parallel State-Led Diversification Strategies in the GCC Petrochemical Sector - (Part 1)

Author: Oussama Meftha

Discussants: Hassnian Ali, Ahmet Faruk Aysan, Muhammad Syauqi Bin-Armia

16:30 - 16:40 – Coffee and tea break

16:40 - 17:10 – Paper 9: Collective Gain or Zero-Sum Game? The Effects of Parallel State-Led Diversification Strategies in the GCC Petrochemical Sector - (Part 2: Discussion)

Author: Oussama Meftha

Discussants: Hassnian Ali, Ahmet Faruk Aysan, Muhammad Syauqi Bin-Armia

17:10 - 18:00 – Paper 10: State-Led Capital and the AI Race: Mapping Artificial Intelligence Investment Flows in GCC Economies

Author: Ayoub Rabhi, Jalal Qanas

Discussant: Manish Vaidya

End of First Workshop Day

Evening Free

Second Workshop Day - Thursday, 23 July 2026

08:45 - 09:00 – Welcome coffee and tea

09:00 - 09:50 – Paper 11: Fintech Innovation, State-led Investment Strategy, And Digital Infrastructure as Drivers of Financial Sector Diversification in Qatar: The Mediating Role of the Intra-GCC Competitive Pressure

Author: Ghoson Al-Obaidly

Discussant: Duncan Mayall

09:50 - 10:40 – Paper 12: Parallel Reform, Uneven Gains: A Political Economy Analysis of Health System Planning and Intra-GCC Competition

Authors: Sarah Alkandari, Alaa Alghamdi, Eleanor Barry, Caroline Potter

Discussants: Zainab Rao, Abhishek Bhardwaj, Mohammad Khalid Hassan, Mohammad Farhan Fazli, Amir Khan Chauhan

10:40 - 11:10 – Paper 13: Vertical Rivalries: Iconic Supertalls and Skyline Duplication in Dubai 2040 and Riyadh Vision 2030 (Part 1)

Authors: Zainab Rao, Abhishek Bhardwaj, Mohammad Khalid Hassan

Discussant: Ghoson Al-Obaidly

11:10 - 11:25 – Coffee and tea break

11:25 - 11:45 – Paper 14: Vertical Rivalries: Iconic Supertalls and Skyline Duplication in Dubai 2040 and Riyadh Vision 2030 (Part 2)

Authors: Zainab Rao, Abhishek Bhardwaj, Mohammad Khalid Hassan

Discussant: Ghoson Al-Obaidly

11:45 - 12:35 – Paper 15: Competing for Global Talent: Intra-GCC Competition in Skilled Labor Attraction as an Economic Diversification Strategy

Author: Misba Bhatti

Discussants: Sarah Alkandari, Alaa Alghamdi, Eleanor Barry, Caroline Potter

12:35 - 13:05 – Paper 16: From Coalition to Competition: Yemen as a Mirror of Saudi–UAE Divergence under State-Led Economic Diversification (Part 1)

Author: Weilin Deng

Discussant: Frédéric Schneider

13:05 - 14:15 – Lunch break (lunch is served at the workshop venue)

14:15 - 14:35 – Paper 17: From Coalition to Competition: Yemen as a Mirror of Saudi–UAE Divergence under State-Led Economic Diversification: Weilin Deng (Part 2: Discussion)

Discussant: Frédéric Schneider

14:35 - 15:25 – Paper 18: Competing on the Field and in the Mosque: The Economics of Soft Power Rivalry between Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE

Authors: Annelle R. Sheline and Kristian Coates Ulrichsen

Discussant: Matthew Gray

15:25 - 16:45 – Paper 19: Ministry of McKinsey or Gulf MITI? Pathways to independence from external advice and regional economic cooperation (Part 1)

Author: Frédéric Schneider

Discussant: Loubna Madani

15:45 - 16:00 – Coffee and tea

16:00 - 16:30 – Paper 20 Ministry of McKinsey or Gulf MITI? Pathways to independence from external advice and regional economic cooperation (Part 2: Discussion)

Author: Frédéric Schneider

Discussant: Loubna Madani

16:30 - 17:00 – Publication discussion and questionnaire

End of Second and Final Workshop Day

19:00 Farewell Dinner at King's College