

A Study of GCC Economic Visions through Magnitude Thinking

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Abstract The rapid economic and social transformations underway in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries have made the development and assessment of national visions critically important for guiding sustainable futures. This study analyzes the national visions of the six GCC nations (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates) through qualitative content analysis employing Magnitude Thinking, as an evaluative framework. Ten guiding questions were developed for each of the five layers of magnitude thinking (i.e., scale, impact, complexity, holism, and accuracy), enabling the systematic and uniform evaluation of each vision through a multidimensional approach. The findings indicate that all GCC visions aim to diversify and enhance economic sustainability; yet they vary in ambition, stakeholder involvement, responsiveness to circumstances, and evaluation and adaptation methods. The study concludes by highlighting the importance of integrating systematic evaluation tools to ensure that the national visions will lead to measurable and meaningful outcomes.

Keywords: *Economic sustainability, Green technologies, Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), National visions, Magnitude thinking*

1. Introduction

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The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations—Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates—are undergoing significant transformations in their economies and societies. These nations previously relied on revenues from oil and gas; however, they now face increased pressure to diversify their economies due to volatile oil prices, uncertain global energy markets, and long-term sustainability issues. Each of these countries has established a national vision to reduce dependence on oil and transition towards robust economies founded on information and innovation. These long-term strategic frameworks constitute comprehensive plans designed to facilitate structural reforms, attract foreign direct investment (FDI), enhance private sector participation, and promote the advancement of technology and human resources.

To evaluate the design and implementation of these visions, numerous analytical frameworks have been developed. The EMG (Evaluating and Monitoring Goals) framework focuses on stakeholder involvement, resource alignment, and ongoing assessment (Haghi, 2016). The OECD (2021) framework emphasizes five central criteria for project evaluation: relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are frequently utilized to assess the extent to which a project achieves its objectives (Sultan, 2023). Meanwhile, the OGSM (Objectives, Goals, Strategies, Measures) framework aligns long-term and short-term planning, promoting transparency and maintaining a cohesive emphasis on shared objectives (Sharan et al., 2023). Additional tools such as performance monitoring and risk management techniques (Algahtany et al., 2016), VRIO analysis, based on Value, Rarity, Inimitability, and Organizational support (Murcia et al., 2022), and Benefits Realization Management (BRM) (Marnewick & Marnewick, 2022) have also been used to assess strategic coherence and resource utilization. However, while these models provide valuable diagnostic tools, they tend to prioritize short- to medium-term outputs, operational efficiency, or internal capabilities. More importantly, they often neglect cross-sectoral dynamics, cognitive distortions in policy framing, or the broader systemic context in which policies are formulated and evaluated. Hvidt (2014) asserts that implementation issues frequently come from insufficient coordination, ambiguous decision-making, and inefficient feedback mechanisms. Moreover, Current evaluation models often rely on linear indicators that insufficiently represent the complexity, scale, and interconnections of national-level actions. These shortcomings require an evaluative framework that incorporates multidimensional thinking and systemic analysis.

This study introduces an evaluation system grounded in Magnitude Thinking to address these deficiencies. Magnitude thinking is not a rigid framework; rather, it is a cognitive approach that facilitates the development of comprehensive and reflective evaluation systems. Pishghadam (2025a) developed magnitude thinking, a cognitive framework that assists individuals and organizations in assessing the significance of various concerns in complex, ambiguous, and data-rich circumstances. It does this through five interrelated dimensions: scale, impact, complexity, holism, and correctness. The magnitude thinking pyramid, proposed by Pishghadam (2025a, 2025b, 2025c), provides a hierarchical model for applying these five concepts. The pyramid is structured around five core stages: Perception of Scale, Assessment of Impact, Complexity Analysis, Holistic Contextualization, and Accuracy Check, each of which facilitates a deeper understanding of policy phenomena at personal, institutional, and national levels.

Magnitude thinking focuses on how strategic challenges are conceptualized and interpreted. This diverges from conventional instruments such as EMG or KPIs, which emphasize execution and metrics, or frameworks like VRIO, which concentrate on internal resources. This entails addressing the potential for inaccurate or exaggerated evidence, overly restricted objectives, or insular planning. Magnitude thinking fosters a fluid and progressive understanding of context, as opposed to the rigid assessment standards of the OECD. Its efficacy is rooted in the integration of cognitive evaluation and systemic foresight, enabling users to examine not only performance but also the foundational assumptions, interrelations, and long-term implications of strategic planning. This study applies magnitude thinking to evaluate GCC national visions, offering a conceptually and methodologically robust framework to analyze the defined objectives of each vision, along with its coherence, realism, and transformative potential.

This research presents two contributions. Initially, it improves the theoretical application of magnitude thinking by demonstrating its efficacy in assessing complex policy frameworks. Secondly, it employs this paradigm to conduct a pragmatic assessment of six GCC national visions, highlighting their strengths, flaws, and potential areas for improvement. The study yields insights that are immediately relevant to policymakers, academics, and regional stakeholders involved in economic reform, institutional planning, and sustainable development. The central research questions guiding this study are:

1. How robust and potentially effective are GCC economic visions when evaluated through the five dimensions of magnitude thinking?
2. How do GCC economic visions compare across the five dimensions of magnitude thinking?

By addressing these questions, the study contributes to the growing body of literature on national planning and foresight, offering a robust, scalable, and theory-driven methodology for vision assessment in high-stakes economic environments.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Structural and Economic Risks in the GCC Context

The GCC, formed in 1981, comprises six Arab nations, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, whose shared linguistic, cultural, and political traits facilitate regional coordination. However, their development trajectories are constrained by persistent structural challenges. These include an overreliance on hydrocarbons, a disproportionately large youth population, labor market rigidity, and high dependence on migrant labor (Goldani & Asadi, 2024). While social reforms in areas such as women's empowerment, education, and healthcare have been commendable, inclusive growth remains uneven (Goldani & Asadi, 2024).

From an economic perspective, these structural conditions pose systemic risks. Youth unemployment, for example, threatens long-term productivity and domestic stability, while dependence on foreign labor inhibits the development of high-skilled local workforces (Wagle, 2024). Such dependencies distort wage structures, suppress innovation, and expose economies to demographic and geopolitical shocks. In addition, fiscal volatility, largely due to fluctuating global oil prices, compounds these vulnerabilities. Therefore, while social and institutional reforms are underway, the region remains economically fragile and in need of resilient, diversified models of growth.

2.2. The Emergence of Strategic National Visions

In response to these compounded risks, the GCC nations have formulated long-term national strategies to transition toward knowledge-based and sustainable economies. These visions entail strategic modifications that will foster innovative concepts, institutional transformations, and an expanded spectrum of economic endeavors. Simultaneously, national finance strategies have increasingly included Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) concepts to enhance resilience and attract investment (Alharbi, 2024). The International Monetary Fund (IMF, 2025) asserts that these strategic initiatives aim to enhance economic stability by fortifying non-oil sectors, generating additional employment, reforming tax structures, and promoting overall economic resilience.

Transitioning from public sector employment to private sector engagement is regarded as a significant method to enhance long-term productivity. Digital globalization has accelerated this transformation. Touati and Ben-Salha (2024) assert that technological integration and industrial progress have necessitated regional governments to adhere to global benchmarks of innovation, transparency, and competitiveness. While global trends shape policy decisions, their implementation must account for local constraints and institutional capacities.

Furthermore, a green economic transformation has emerged as a pivotal component of the GCC's policy framework. Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 and the UAE's Net Zero 2050 objective emphasize the necessity for investments in renewable energy and initiatives to reduce carbon emissions. These demonstrate the region's increasing dedication to strategizing for an economy capable of addressing climate change. These modifications indicate a transition towards more intricate policymaking that considers future occurrences, aligning with contemporary national aspirations.

2.3. National Visions: Historical Roots and Strategic Characteristics

The GCC is not the sole region where national visions are present. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2014) states that these are strategic frameworks that provide long-term objectives for the economy, society, environment, and governance. National visions are founded on post-World War II development theories, modernization concepts, and private sector strategic planning models. Their objective is to provide clear, quantifiable plans for national advancement (Kantabutra & Aguinis, 2019). Common priorities of national visions encompass economic diversification, institutional enhancement, and human development (UNDP, 2014).

Kantabutra and Aguinis (2019) argue that effective visions must be clear, adaptive, participatory, and anchored in performance indicators to maintain relevance in dynamic environments. However, the mere presence of aspirational language is insufficient. Crupi and Schilirò (2023) emphasize that GCC visions,

despite their shared themes of fiscal reform and employment generation, vary in implementation quality. Kantabutra (2020) warns that unless vision statements are explicitly aligned with execution mechanisms and stakeholder needs, they risk being symbolic. Harrison (2023) similarly notes that without robust fiscal and policy instruments, even well-crafted visions may fail to yield tangible outcomes.

3. Methodology

3.1. Materials

This study examined the latest official national vision documents published by the six members of the GCC. These visions are accessible on governmental websites. They elucidate the long-term objectives and strategies for the development of each nation. The examined documents included “Bahrain Economic Vision 2030,” “Saudi Vision 2030,” “We the UAE 2031,” “Qatar National Vision 2030,” “New Kuwait 2035,” and “Oman Vision 2040.” These resources provided a reliable foundation for qualitative research employing the magnitude thinking framework.

The national visions are analogous due to their origin in the GCC countries, which possess comparable governmental structures characterized by centralized decision-making and significant state participation. Their economies are comparable due to their reliance on oil and gas; they all aspire to diversify their economies, implement sustainable practices, and enhance their global competitiveness. This shared regional context makes a comparative analysis both relevant and methodologically sound.

3.2. Procedure

This study employed Pishghadam’s (2025a) five levels of magnitude thinking as the primary analytical framework to assess the national visions of the GCC countries. The five dimensions, perception of scale, assessment of impact, complexity analysis, holistic contextualization, and accuracy check, offered a comprehensive and systematic method for objectively evaluating each vision.

To operationalize this framework, the researcher developed a set of ten guiding questions under each of the five dimensions, yielding a total of fifty evaluative prompts (see Table 1). These questions were deductively derived from Pishghadam’s model and informed by the theoretical principles of magnitude thinking. They were designed to ensure systematic, in-depth, and theory-aligned exploration of each document.

Table 1

Guiding Questions Used in the Evaluation Process, Categorized under Each Dimension of Magnitude Thinking

Perception of Scale	• What sectors does the Vision prioritize, and how broad is its focus?
	• Is the Vision targeting local, regional, or global influence?
	• What are the key quantitative targets (e.g., GDP, employment, investment)?
	• What is the vision’s timeframe, and how feasible is it?
	• Who are the main stakeholders, and at what levels are they involved?
	• What structural reforms are proposed (legal, educational, financial, etc.)?
	• Is the Vision aligned with global goals like the UN SDGs?
	• How does it address social equity, sustainability, and competitiveness?
	• How is progress monitored and evaluated?
	• How does it compare in ambition and design to visions from other GCC countries?
Assessment of Impact	• What are the immediate economic and public perception impacts?
	• How will income distribution and social equity be affected in the short term?
	• What long-term structural changes are expected in the economy?
	• How will the Vision impact citizens’ daily lives over time?
	• What regional ripple effects might occur across the Gulf?
	• How could foreign investment and trade partnerships evolve?
	• What are the environmental impacts and sustainability provisions?
	• How will the Vision affect education, innovation, or human capital development?
	• How might national identity and cultural norms shift in the long run?
	• What are the risks of unintended or negative consequences?

Complexity Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What key systems are involved, and how do they interact? • What trade-offs exist between growth, equity, and sustainability? • How do local traditions and governance affect implementation? • How dependent is the Vision on external factors like oil or global markets? • What stakeholder conflicts might arise, and how are they managed? • What feedback loops or ripple effects could occur? • Are adaptive decision-making mechanisms in place? • How complex is the governance required for implementation? • How are data, technology, and digital tools integrated? • What unintended outcomes might result from reform interactions?
Holistic Contextualization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will the Vision impact individuals' identities, careers, and daily lives? • What cultural values are promoted or challenged by the vision? • How does the Vision align with or diverge from historical development patterns? • How well does it reflect current political, economic, and social conditions? • Is the Vision coherent with other national policy agendas? • How does it address demographic challenges? • How does it align with global economic trends and development models? • What international partnerships or networks support or influence it? • How might global crises affect or be affected by the vision? • How does the Vision position the country in regional and global contexts?
Accuracy Check	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are data sources and assumptions clear and transparent? • Does the Vision realistically acknowledge existing challenges? • Are projections based on credible models or optimism? • Is the Vision shaped more by politics or evidence? • Is the language symbolic or grounded in measurable terms? • Are risks and uncertainties clearly addressed? • Do independent evaluations support the vision's claims? • Is there a mechanism for revision and adaptation? • How has the media shaped public understanding of the vision? • Are there gaps between the vision's content and actual implementation?

The researcher ensured the accuracy of his interpretations by consistently comparing them to the original material, thereby validating that their findings precisely reflected the texts' intended meanings. Responses were synthesized and compared across the six GCC countries, allowing for a cross-national comparative analysis based on the five dimensions of magnitude thinking.

4. Findings

Table 2 provides a comprehensive comparison of GCC's national visions across the five layers of magnitude thinking.

Table 2
The National Visions of the Six GCC Countries across Five Levels of Magnitude Thinking

Country	Scale	Impact	Complexity	Holistic Context	Accuracy	Summary
Bahrain – Vision 2030	Balanced across macro (competitiveness), meso, and micro (equity, QoL)	Promotes finance/logistics, job creation; environmental and equity risks noted	Complex coordination needed across equity, governance, and growth	Advocates meritocracy and sustainability; a leader in reform narrative	Measurable goals exist but poorly sourced; lacks adaptive governance and independent validation	Bahrain may demonstrate notable integration across scales and strong Holistic orientation, but the vision appears to have limited transparency, and independent validation mechanisms may not be clearly articulated in the available

						documentation. It may present challenges to comprehensive assessment.
Kuwait – Vision 2035	Macro with strong meso reforms (infrastructure, finance); micro less defined	Strong reform push; regional trade positioning; risks in traditional sector disruption	Complex across economy, environment, governance; social tensions and investor uncertainty	Redefines identity through skills and the private sector; aligns with SDGs and global trade	Bold yet lacks execution, modeling and third-party review; aspirational more than operational	Kuwait's vision may reflect considerable potential in macro-level reform and regional positioning, Micro-level planning detail and references to external validation processes appear limited or are not extensively emphasized in the document as currently presented.
Oman – Vision 2040	Meso-driven with macro FDI/GDP goals; strong regional equity and decentralization	Labor, education, and innovation reforms; risk in initial inequality and cultural shifts	Complex interdependencies: feedback potential present but weakly defined	Merges innovation with tradition; culturally grounded and SDG-aligned	Strongest modeling among peers; moderate transparency; lacks continuous audit or risk systems	Oman's vision appears well-aligned with cultural and regional goals and may offer the strongest modeling capacity among peers; Although Oman's vision demonstrates strengths in modeling, its articulation of adaptability and systemic complexity may benefit from further elaboration in future updates.
Qatar – Vision 2030	Balanced macro-meso with soft micro inclusion; GDP and services diversification	Growth in employment, tech, and services; risks in centralization and inequality	Diversification meets governance and social norm challenges; skills mismatch risk	Pushes innovation while challenging tradition; globally ambitious	The document at times leans toward aspirational rhetoric, and some areas may lack accompanying empirical detail; no clear modeling or external auditing	Qatar's vision is relatively balanced across dimensions, yet its reliance on rhetorical framing and limited empirical substantiation may weaken its evaluative robustness.
Saudi Arabia – Vision 2030	Strong macro focus with meso and micro reforms; global leadership via diversification and SME growth	Fast growth in tourism, infrastructure, jobs; long-term diversification; risk of inequality, congestion	Highly complex due to interwoven political, social, and economic reforms; cultural resistance	Balances tradition and modernization; aims for global influence; digital and sustainability-aligned	Quantitative targets exist but lack transparency; symbolic tone dominates; weak feedback validation	Saudi Arabia appears relatively strong in Scale and Holism, particularly in its diversification agenda, though its performance on Accuracy may be limited as certain elements of the vision appear to emphasize symbolic framing, while specific validation mechanisms are not extensively discussed.

UAE – Vision 2031	Primarily macro-level with innovation and sustainability; some meso support	Immediate private sector expansion; long-term growth in AI, biotech; urban and inequality risks	Complex innovation agenda; tech-driven governance introduces new risks; needs inter-sector coordination	Reinvents citizenship via tech, inclusion, diplomacy; blends tradition and futurism	Highly aspirational; While the vision is bold in scope, the inclusion of concrete metrics and detailed implementation plans could be more explicit in the document; Mechanisms for independent or external validation are not clearly outlined and may be areas for future development.	The UAE's vision seems ambitious in terms of innovation and Holism, yet its operationalization may be constrained by limited evaluative metrics and inter-sectoral integration challenges.
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4.1. Bahrain's Economic Vision 2030

4.1.1. Scale

Bahrain's Vision 2030 is a comprehensive strategy aimed at reducing economic dependence on oil and transforming the nation into a competitive regional hub. The Vision states, "Our objective is to transition from an oil-dependent economy to a productive, globally competitive economy" (Bahrain Economic Vision, 2030). It discusses methods to enhance health, transportation, tourism, finance, and education. The Vision advocates for reforms in the legal, educational, economic, and governmental systems to enhance the quality of life for all individuals, both broadly and specifically. The primary concepts are social equity, sustainability, and competitiveness. It aligns with global objectives, particularly the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and includes KPIs to ensure accountability. The incremental, inclusive timeline ensures the engagement of individuals from many backgrounds. The emphasis remains distinctly on Bahrain's economic change, despite the extensive scope.

4.1.2. Impact

Bahrain's Vision 2030 is anticipated to exert immediate impacts on the economy by generating employment in the private sector and reforming immigration, education, and labor systems. The Vision states, "We will transition from a public sector-led economy to one propelled by the private sector, where productivity and innovation stimulate growth" (Bahrain Economic Vision, 2030). Anticipated advantages encompass increased investor confidence, particularly in areas beyond oil, and improved compensation frameworks. Individuals with low and intermediate incomes are advised to seek assistance with their earnings and education; nevertheless, the educated urban demographic may have more short-term advantages. Bahrain's macroeconomic objectives emphasize diversification into sectors such as banking, logistics, and tourism. Individuals are anticipated to have enhancements in healthcare, education, and compensation. The Vision highlights FDI as a lever of change, though rapid growth could exert environmental and social pressures. It also proposes reducing public sector dominance and promoting a meritocratic culture.

4.1.3. Complexity

The Vision identifies four interdependent domains, economic, societal, political, and environmental, as foundational to national progress. It asserts that economic success depends on transparency, social equity, and environmental sustainability. The emphasis on inclusive capitalism brings risks of elite capture, wage suppression, and regulatory imbalances. "To achieve our goals, we must address inefficiencies in labor markets and government bureaucracy that stifle economic growth" (Bahrain Economic Vision, 2030). The implementation of some reforms might face delays due to entrenched cultural expectations and institutional norms, although the extent of this challenge is not fully specified in the vision document. Economic risks include oil price volatility and global financial instability, while sociopolitical tensions may emerge between reform agents and conservative interests. Although the

Vision refers to global benchmarks, it lacks a dynamic, adaptive framework capable of recalibrating mid-course. Successful implementation requires significant institutional collaboration and systemic innovation.

4.1.4. *Holism*

Bahrain's Vision 2030 seeks to foster a skilled, entrepreneurial, and globally integrated economy. It advocates overcoming rentier-state dependencies and nurturing values of meritocracy, innovation, and transparency. "We will build an economy based on productivity, where opportunities are accessible to all, and rewards are based on merit" (Bahrain Economic Vision, 2030). The Vision addresses youth unemployment, public sector inefficiencies, and mismatches in labor market skills. Its scope includes marginalized groups, expatriate labor, and aging populations. It emphasizes foreign investment and regulatory reform aligned with global economic standards. Digitization and environmental stewardship are integrated priorities, enhancing resilience and relevance. Bahrain positions itself as a reform leader within the Gulf, balancing tradition with forward-looking economic governance.

4.1.5. *Accuracy*

While Bahrain's Vision 2030 includes ambitious economic benchmarks, including GDP growth and labor productivity improvements, the supporting data may lack detailed methodological transparency, at least as reflected in the current public version of the vision document. Although it states goals such as "doubling real household income by 2030," the mechanisms to achieve them remain underexplained. The Vision exhibits a promotional tone, often favoring national branding over analytical rigor. Despite referencing international benchmarks like PISA, TIMSS, and World Bank indices, the absence of clear independent validation weakens credibility. Risks such as oil dependency and labor imbalances are acknowledged but not fully integrated into contingency planning. Formal feedback mechanisms and adaptive governance structures are not prominently featured and may be underdeveloped or not explicitly outlined in the vision's current articulation. The disparity between aspirational language and practical implementation underscores the need for clearer economic roadmaps and independent evaluation protocols.

4.2. The 2035 Vision of Kuwait

4.2.1. *Scale*

Kuwait Vision 2035 aims to restore the nation as a regional and global economic hub. It outlines plans to develop multiple sectors, including oil, finance, logistics, tourism, healthcare, education, technology, and renewable energy. The Vision declares: "We seek to transform Kuwait into a financial and commercial hub attracting investment, where the private sector leads economic activity" (New Kuwait, 2035). Key economic targets include generating \$35 billion in GDP from Special Economic Zones, attracting \$1.5–2 billion annually in FDI, and creating 90% of new jobs in the private sector. The phased roadmap (2010–2035) transitions Kuwait from infrastructure building to a smart economy. Stakeholders include the government, private sector, international partners such as China (via the Belt and Road Initiative), and citizens. The Vision emphasizes social equity through access to education, housing, healthcare, and vocational training. It aligns with the UN SDGs and international indicators but includes limited performance metrics. Although broad and aspirational, the focus remains on long-term economic restructuring and diversification.

4.2.2. *Impact*

The Vision is expected to have immediate economic effects, including legal reforms and private sector expansion. According to the Vision: "Kuwait's future prosperity relies on reducing dependency on oil through economic diversification and sustainable development" (New Kuwait, 2035). Economic benefits may initially favor the skilled population, yet strategies for inclusion and social cohesion are also outlined. Key goals include fostering innovation, enhancing transportation, and promoting tourism and renewable energy to reduce oil dependency. The Vision envisions improved employment, healthcare, and education access. Kuwait's neutral diplomacy and involvement in OBOR positions it for enhanced regional trade and investment. However, challenges such as inequality, cultural shifts, and

employment displacement may emerge. Industrial expansion is balanced by environmental sustainability goals. The move toward a productive, non-rentier economy is central, though risks necessitate adaptive and inclusive planning mechanisms.

4.2.3. Complexity

Kuwait Vision 2035 integrates economic, social, political, and environmental domains. These interconnected systems require high coordination and policy coherence. Trade-offs exist between growth, equity, and environmental sustainability. Public sector dependency and societal welfare expectations complicate reform, while volatility in oil prices and regional geopolitics pose further risks. The Vision notes the importance of “creating governance structures capable of managing national development through cooperation, transparency, and efficiency” (New Kuwait, 2035). Discord among stakeholders, including citizens, investors, and the government, could obstruct progress. Feedback loops may arise: education can reshape labor markets; infrastructure may drive urbanization. Though phased implementation is planned, few mechanisms address dynamic changes. Smart technologies are mentioned, yet their role in policy adaptation and monitoring remains vague. Unintended outcomes may include increased inequity or urban strain, requiring robust inter-agency coordination and resilience strategies.

4.2.4. Holism

The Vision promotes private sector employment, skills training, and educational modernization while safeguarding cultural identity. “Kuwait will remain committed to preserving its Arab-Islamic values while embracing the innovations required for economic leadership in the 21st century” (New Kuwait, 2035). The transition from an oil-dependent economy to a knowledge-based one addresses issues such as youth unemployment, budget deficits, and labor market inefficiencies. It considers population concerns and seeks sustainable growth in urban areas. The Vision aligns with global frameworks such as the UN SDGs and collaborates with other nations through international alliances like the Belt and Road Initiative. Kuwait aspires to establish itself as a hub for trade and diplomacy in the region, aligning with its broader objectives to diversify its economy and enhance its geopolitical influence. Nonetheless, achieving the appropriate equilibrium between change and stability remains a significant difficulty in attaining these objectives.

4.2.5. Accuracy

Kuwait Vision 2035 addresses critical issues such as fiscal shortfalls and excessive reliance on the public sector. The statement asserts that “90% of new jobs ought to be in the private sector,” although the published vision framework may lack sufficient detail on the methodology for achieving this or the evidence to substantiate the claim. The text conflates national branding with genuine reform objectives; yet, it lacks robust strategies to address significant risks such as fluctuations in oil prices and demographic shifts. The Vision aligns with worldwide norms; nonetheless, it has not undergone external verification or approval. Discussions regarding performance management exist; however, there are no mechanisms for real-time feedback or policy modification. The public engagement component of the vision may be less prominently detailed, suggesting that participatory mechanisms could benefit from further elaboration. Media discourse may have also obscured practical gaps. Although progress is evident, including infrastructure investments and smart economy initiatives, the Vision remains aspirational without clear accountability and dynamic responsiveness to internal and external economic pressures.

4.3. Oman Vision 2040

4.3.1. Scale

Oman Vision 2040 outlines a multidimensional development strategy targeting education, healthcare, governance, environmental sustainability, and economic innovation. The Vision asserts: “Oman Vision 2040 aims to place Oman among the advanced nations, with a competitive economy based on innovation, diversity, and sustainability” (Oman Vision, 2040). Economic priorities include a 90% increase in GDP per capita, a 10% growth in FDI, and the employment of 40% of Omanis in the private

sector. These are supported by phased targets and indicators benchmarked against over 50 international metrics. The Vision includes major reforms in taxation, legal frameworks, education, and public sector governance. Key stakeholders, government, private sector, civil society, and citizens are actively engaged. With oversight by the Council of Ministers and alignment with the UN SDGs, Oman's strategic direction balances growth with social equity and regional integration.

4.3.2. *Impact*

The Vision is designed to deliver both immediate and long-term economic benefits through regulatory reform, job creation, and expanded investment. It declares: "Oman seeks to enhance economic diversification and increase private sector contribution to GDP, reducing dependence on oil" (Oman Vision, 2040). While skilled urban populations are likely to benefit early, mechanisms for inclusive development are emphasized. The Vision seeks to attract FDI, promote regional development, and strengthen trade alliances, shifting Oman toward an innovation-driven, export-oriented economy. Risks include urban congestion, sectoral displacement, and short-term inequality. Nonetheless, mitigation efforts are in place through participatory governance and targeted socioeconomic interventions. Smart city and digital transformation projects are expected to improve the quality of life and employment outcomes, particularly outside the capital.

4.3.3. *Complexity*

Oman Vision 2040 incorporates interdependent economic, political, social, and environmental systems. According to the Vision: "Our success depends on creating a governance model that fosters transparency, accountability, and intersectoral coordination" (Oman Vision, 2040). The reform agenda introduces feedback loops, e.g., improved education enhancing workforce capabilities, but also faces resistance from centralized authority and entrenched norms. Despite diversification aims, oil price fluctuations and regional geopolitics remain strong external influences. Stakeholder tensions between private investors and public expectations persist. The Implementation Follow-up Unit monitors cross-ministry coordination, yet digital infrastructure gaps and policy inertia may limit adaptability. Unanticipated impacts, such as resource strain or uneven development, require enhanced planning tools and institutional flexibility.

4.3.4. *Holism*

Vision 2040 proposes a redefinition of national identity through economic self-reliance, cultural integrity, and technological progress. "Vision 2040 envisions a society rooted in its heritage while embracing innovation and global competitiveness" (Oman Vision, 2040). It aims to reduce dependence on expatriate labor, increase female labor force participation, and broaden citizen access to education and entrepreneurship. The strategy also integrates existing programs such as Omanization and regional development. Aligned with the SDGs and over 50 international indicators, the Vision positions Oman as a regional partner promoting sustainability, digital inclusion, and social equity. It calls for enhanced civic engagement, decentralization, and stakeholder alignment in delivering long-term prosperity.

4.3.5. *Accuracy*

Oman Vision 2040 is based on measurable benchmarks and transparent objectives, although some projections, such as achieving Top 10 global rankings, lack clear methodologies. The Vision emphasizes: "Our ambition is bold but grounded in the reality of Oman's capacities and the commitment of its people" (Oman Vision, 2040). National challenges like fiscal imbalances and youth unemployment are acknowledged explicitly. While implementation progress is evident in education and governance reforms, decentralization and labor market restructuring are lagging. Independent third-party evaluation processes are not comprehensively detailed in the vision document and may need additional specification for enhanced accountability. While internal oversight exists, and formal public feedback mechanisms appear to be less clearly defined in the Vision. Media discourse largely supports the Vision's aspirational tone, which may obscure unresolved challenges. Ultimately, the Vision combines reformist intent with national symbolism, requiring sustained transparency and institutional coordination for full realization.

4.4. Qatar Vision 2030

4.4.1. Scale

Qatar's National Vision 2030 delineates a comprehensive strategy to transition the nation's economy from an oil and gas dependency to one centered on knowledge and diverse industries. The Vision states, "Qatar will evolve into an advanced society capable of sustaining its own development and providing its citizens with a high standard of living" (Qatar Vision, 2030). The Vision prioritizes sectors including education, health, energy, infrastructure, and environmental protection, with the economy as its foundational pillar. Although it lacks explicit quantitative targets, the Vision sets ambitious goals to reduce oil dependency and foster private sector expansion. Stakeholders include government institutions, businesses, and civil society, whose participation is encouraged at multiple levels. The objective of structural changes is to enhance education, the labor market, and legal frameworks. Qatar's endorsement of the UN SDGs demonstrates its commitment to international development benchmarks. It employs instruments such as KPIs, feedback mechanisms, and external evaluations to facilitate implementation.

4.4.2. Impact

The objective of Qatar Vision 2030 is to implement rapid and enduring transformations in the economy. The statement asserts, "Economic development will guarantee the optimal utilization of hydrocarbon resources, diversification of the economy, and environmental protection for future generations" (Qatar Vision, 2030). Significant national investments are anticipated to provide prompt impacts on construction, healthcare, and education. However, initial advantages may be inequitable for individuals with limited income or abilities. Long-term programs focus on cultivating individuals, enhancing the business sector, and promoting societal equity. The Vision positions Qatar as a regional leader, aiming to attract FDI, enhance commerce, and promote innovation. Prioritizing green energy and environmental protection is crucial; nevertheless, this may lead to increased urban density and heightened strain on infrastructure. The economy is gradually evolving, resulting in alterations to the functions of the public and private sectors, requiring an increased collaboration of all institutions.

4.4.3. Complexity

Cross-sector integration is a crucial component of Qatar Vision 2030, which seeks to achieve equilibrium among growth, equity, and sustainability. The equilibrium between modernization and the conservation of traditions will be crucial for achieving the Vision" (Qatar Vision, 2030). Policy complexity could arise from the conflicting demands of modernization and societal norms, especially regarding female participation and foreign labor. The Vision operates within volatile external contexts, global markets, oil prices, and geopolitical dynamics, all of which influence economic planning. The vision addresses collaboration among ministries, digital change, and adaptive policymaking, although it lacks specifics. Stakeholder alignment and feedback mechanisms remain underdeveloped, complicating the coherence of changes. To prevent negative loops such as skill mismatches or labor market segmentation, social and economic planning frameworks must integrate more effectively.

4.4.4. Holism

Qatar Vision 2030 advocates for a comprehensive societal transformation, integrating cultural preservation with innovative corporate concepts. "The Vision will advance justice, benevolence, and equality among all citizens, enhancing Qatar's global standing" (Qatar Vision, 2030). The Vision addresses demographic pressures, particularly youth unemployment and reliance on expatriate labor, by promoting inclusive labor strategies and national workforce development. It aligns closely with national programs in education, health reform, and urban planning. Global partnerships and alignment with the SDGs underscore Qatar's aspirations for regional and global leadership. By integrating sustainability, innovation, and cultural identity, the Vision presents a model of development that is at once ambitious and locally grounded.

4.4.5. Accuracy

While Qatar Vision 2030 provides a compelling narrative of transformation, the empirical foundation of the vision appears limited in some sections, or may not be fully disclosed in the current published version. The Vision affirms: “Development must be guided by the principles of transparency, efficiency, and accountability” (Qatar Vision, 2030), yet several goals presented in the document seem primarily aspirational, and further evidence-based grounding may enhance their evaluability. Baseline data and assumptions are often unclear, and performance modeling structures are not fully elaborated and may be at an early stage of development, at least as indicated in the publicly available materials. Risk management and feedback mechanisms are limited, with little public documentation of course correction or adaptive governance. Although aligned with global frameworks, there is minimal third-party validation or independent evaluation. Media portrayal emphasizes national ambition, which can obscure practical limitations in implementation, especially regarding labor nationalization and economic diversification. Bridging the gap between vision and action will require enhanced transparency, stakeholder inclusion, and more rigorous assessment tools.

4.5. Saudi Arabia’s Vision 2030

4.5.1. Scale

Saudi Vision 2030 is a strategic initiative aimed at significantly reducing the Kingdom’s reliance on oil while establishing it as a regional leader in trade, tourism, technology, and finance. The Vision states, “By 2030, we will increase the private sector’s contribution to GDP from 40% to 65% and reduce unemployment to 7%” (Saudi Vision, 2030). It encompasses both short-term and long-term objectives that must be achieved within a decade. The initiative encompasses a diverse array of stakeholders, including government agencies, business investors, individuals, and international partners. It necessitates significant reforms in governmental operations, legislation, education, and healthcare. The Vision aligns with the UN SDGs, which advocate for transparency, competition, and sustainable progress. We utilize digital dashboards, KPIs, and international benchmarks to monitor development. Saudi Arabia aims to attain balanced growth, regional supremacy, and sustained prosperity by transforming the state’s role in the economy.

4.5.2. Impact

Vision 2030 anticipates that the economy will be influenced in both the short and long term. “Our economy will provide opportunities for all individuals, regardless of age or gender, to excel” (Saudi Vision, 2030). The initial impacts encompass employment expansion in retail, tourism, and construction, alongside modifications to regulations, including privatization and reductions in subsidies. These modifications may benefit urban workers more than rural workers, who may face structural barriers without targeted interventions. Long-term objectives emphasize augmenting non-oil revenues, fostering innovation, and enhancing public transit and smart infrastructure. To enhance the competitiveness of Saudi Arabia’s economy, it must attract FDI and establish partnerships with other nations. Nonetheless, risks like social inequality, environmental degradation, and cultural hostility must be mitigated through inclusive and adaptable policies.

4.5.3. Complexity

Saudi Vision 2030 encompasses initiatives to collaboratively enhance the economy, society, governance, and the environment. “We will cultivate a robust economy by leveraging the capabilities of our citizens and the private sector,” states the Vision (Saudi Vision, 2030). Economic diversification efforts intersect with challenges in labor reform, governance, and sustainability. Trade-offs emerge between privatization and equity, growth and environmental stewardship, and modernization and traditional norms, especially regarding gender roles. External shocks, such as oil price volatility and geopolitical instability, pose ongoing threats. The Vision includes digital governance tools and institutional coordination mechanisms, but their practical effectiveness remains uncertain. Reform implementation involves multiple ministries and councils, increasing the potential for friction and policy misalignment. Although adaptive governance is proposed, the Vision places limited emphasis on formal contingency planning, which may weaken its institutional flexibility.

4.5.4. Holism

Vision 2030 aims to transform the economy and culture by redefining societal roles and institutional objectives. The Vision articulates, “We will fortify our Islamic and national identity, advance cultural initiatives, and cultivate tolerance and moderation” (Saudi Vision, 2030). The Vision asserts that we must transition from rentierism to entrepreneurship, digital literacy, and collaboration with the private sector. It advocates for market liberalization, educational reform, and infrastructural investments to address critical national issues such as youth unemployment, underdeveloped small and medium-sized enterprises, and excessive dependence on public sector employment. The project aligns with global environmental objectives and promotes collaboration in technology, defense, and investment. Despite significant objectives, social resistance and varying institutional strengths may impede achievement. Vision 2030 is an extensive and aspirational initiative rooted in local identity while embracing global innovations.

4.5.5. Accuracy

Saudi Vision 2030 delineates numerous objectives; nevertheless, many lack definitive methodologies or independent verification. The Vision states, “We will be transparent and accountable at all levels” (Saudi Vision, 2030), although baseline data and effect evaluations are not consistently documented. The Vision addresses significant structural issues, such as excessive reliance on oil and an ineffective labor market. Nevertheless, the implementation techniques may benefit from greater specificity, and the document’s operational aspects could be enhanced by providing clearer directives on execution. While there exist KPIs and monitoring systems, their scope and clarity vary significantly. Risk preparedness is still not very good, and there aren’t many methods to adjust the course of events. Political and media discussions make people feel good about their country, but they might not talk about the practical and cultural issues that come with it. To effectively bridge the divide between rhetoric and execution, all sectors must enhance public engagement, establish clearer criteria, and increase accountability.

4.6. The United Arab Emirates’ Vision for 2031

4.6.1. Scale

The UAE Vision 2031 is a comprehensive national strategy encompassing conventional sectors like as oil and tourism, with emerging businesses such as artificial intelligence (AI), biotechnology, green energy, and the internet economy. The Vision articulates that “the UAE will emerge as the most secure and interconnected nation, leading in sustainable development” (UAE Vision, 2031). It establishes expansive yet ambitious strategic objectives rooted in national pride and advancement, yet it fails to provide specific metrics for assessing progress. Federal ministries, local governments, enterprises, and civil society are all stakeholders, indicating their respective roles in the process. Structural modifications are proposed for healthcare, education, governance, and the legal framework. The Vision aligns with global initiatives such as the UN SDGs, particularly regarding diplomacy, innovation, and achieving Net Zero emissions. The strategy promotes equity and competition; nonetheless, its magnitude necessitates extensive cooperation and transformation across all sectors.

4.6.2. Impact

The Vision predicts fast economic advantages from changes to the rules, new jobs, and growth in the private sector. The Vision states, “We aim to double the GDP and position the UAE among the top 10 economies globally by 2031” (UAE Vision, 2031). Emirati citizens are anticipated to be the initial beneficiaries; however, long-term strategies intend to encompass a broader demographic. The primary focal points as we transition to a knowledge economy are technology industries, sustainable investment, and research innovation. Anticipated modifications in education, housing, and healthcare are projected to enhance the quality of life. However, disparities in implementation may exacerbate existing income inequalities. Regional leadership could intensify competition inside the GCC, whereas sustainability initiatives such as Net Zero may adversely affect established sectors. For impact to occur, institutions must exhibit flexibility, and economic planning must be adaptable.

4.6.3. Complexity

The UAE Vision 2031 operates within interconnected systems encompassing the economy, society, politics, and the environment. The Vision states, “An agile government will guide a unified, future-prepared society towards global competitiveness and prosperity” (UAE Vision, 2031). Because of interdependencies, trade-offs are unavoidable, especially when it comes to social cohesiveness and quick innovation or growth and sustainability. Reforms may encounter opposition from entrenched bureaucracies and cultural norms, especially concerning labor and gender expectations. Regional instability and reliance on foreign labor exacerbate the issue. The Vision encourages flexible governance and tech-enabled supervision, but there aren’t enough explicit resilience measures and policy feedback loops. Collaboration among ministries and emirates will be crucial, as will the necessity to reconcile innovative concepts with traditional practices.

4.6.4. Holism

Vision 2031 aims to effectuate a comprehensive transformation in the nation by promoting lifelong learning, civic participation, and international collaboration. It reads, “We will build an economy based on knowledge, innovation, and future skills, while keeping our identity and values” (UAE Vision, 2031). Education and entrepreneurship ought to redefine individual and collective identities, emphasizing inclusivity, sustainability, and digital transformation. The Vision addresses social issues such as youth development and urban planning, while also emphasizing climate resilience, food security, and international humanitarian assistance. Because of our reliance on immigrant workers, demographic challenges continue. The UAE serves as a conduit for regional stability and international involvement by striving to take a leadership role in global forums such as COP28 and facilitating diplomatic efforts. The Vision mixes the heritage of the country with its ambitions for the future.

4.6.5. Accuracy

The UAE Vision 2031 delineates grandiose objectives that are devoid of significant factual substantiation. The Vision articulates, “We are dedicated to establishing a transparent and accountable government prepared for the future” (UAE Vision, 2031). Nonetheless, numerous objectives lack clarity on their achievement and evaluation processes. Baseline data are often unspecified, complicating assessment. The dominant media discourse tends to focus on national ambition, which might inadvertently obscure some of the implementation challenges and limitations. Risk scenarios such as rising inequality, urban congestion, or misaligned labor policies are mentioned in broad terms, but detailed mitigation frameworks may be underrepresented or remain implicit in the current vision. There is no systematic structure for stakeholder feedback or external audits. Ultimately, without reinforced data transparency and third-party benchmarking, the Vision’s success may rest more on narrative coherence than empirical progress.

5. Discussion

This study explored the robustness and comparative effectiveness of the economic visions of the GCC countries using the five dimensions of magnitude thinking. The analysis revealed both shared priorities, such as economic diversification, innovation, and sustainability, and meaningful differences in how these economic priorities are articulated, operationalized, and monitored across countries.

RQ1: How Robust and Potentially Effective Are GCC Economic Visions Based on Magnitude Thinking?

The economic visions vary considerably in robustness when examined through the dimensions of scale, impact, complexity, holism, and accuracy. Bahrain and Oman demonstrate comparatively balanced and coherent economic planning. Their visions are grounded in national contexts, incorporate stakeholder perspectives, and align strongly with global economic benchmarks. Oman reflects notable strength in economic modeling and regional equity, while Bahrain balances competitiveness with equitable growth. In contrast, Qatar and the UAE present globally ambitious economic aspirations, particularly in emerging sectors such as technology, AI, and innovation. However, they may not consistently articulate detailed mechanisms for implementation, monitoring, and revision, which could affect institutional adaptability and coherence. Saudi Arabia’s Vision 2030 is distinguished by a robust investment

narrative and bold economic diversification targets; however, it appears to face challenges related to structural coherence and the transparency of data reporting. Kuwait falls between these categories; its macroeconomic agenda is clearly stated, but its microeconomic pathways and performance metrics are underdeveloped.

These findings support critiques (e.g., Harrison, 2023; Hvidt, 2014) that GCC economic visions often function as symbolic instruments rather than actionable blueprints. While all six plans articulate transformative goals, only a subset present rigorous, evidence-based strategies capable of navigating complex economic transitions.

RQ2: How Do GCC Economic Visions Compare Across the Five Dimensions?

The comparative analysis highlights notable disparities, especially within the dimensions of accuracy and complexity. Bahrain and Oman outperform in holism and integrated economic modeling, while Qatar and the UAE appear to place less emphasis on independent validation, third-party assessments, or empirically grounded baselines in their current formulation. Kuwait and Saudi Arabia demonstrate strong macroeconomic orientation, particularly in scale and projected impact; however, they may face limitations in fully integrating complexity and articulating adaptive governance mechanisms.

Economically, all visions emphasize reducing oil dependency, increasing private sector contribution, and enhancing global competitiveness. However, the treatment of income inequality, labor market dynamics, and fiscal accountability varies considerably. For instance, while Saudi Arabia and Kuwait reference Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SME) development and fiscal reforms, Oman and Bahrain include specific mechanisms for equitable regional investment. Qatar and the UAE emphasize innovation-driven economies but tend to present less detailed or operational redistribution frameworks. ESG integration is mentioned across most visions, but only Oman and Bahrain present operational strategies tied to environmental, social, and governance criteria.

A recurring finding is the disconnect between ambitious economic objectives and operational readiness. This is most visible in the dimensions of accuracy and complexity, where implementation plans are not always presented with clarity, and inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms may benefit from further specification. Strengthening robustness requires more than intent; it demands enforceable policies, adaptable planning, and granular economic KPIs embedded in governance structures. Additionally, inclusive economic development is unevenly addressed. As Al-Saidi and Zaidan (2024) observe, initial gains often favor urban, educated populations. Our findings corroborate this, highlighting the absence of rural development policies and the need for targeted programs such as vocational training, public investment in underserved areas, and equitable social protection mechanisms.

Despite rhetorical commitment to reform, several economic visions appear to offer limited detail on mechanisms for review and adaptation, at least in their public-facing documents. The lack of external evaluations, independent audits, and performance monitoring frameworks may contribute to a persistent disconnect between strategic intent and implementation pathways (Kauark Fontes et al., 2023). Oman's Implementation Follow-up Unit provides a notable exception. To enhance economic governance, future visions should adopt cyclical evaluation schedules, multi-stakeholder consultations, and flexible policy instruments informed by evolving data (Woiwode et al., 2024).

Though not explicitly framed as a research question, one significant implication of this study is the potential of magnitude thinking to foster regional economic policy learning. The comparative analysis reveals transferable strengths. Bahrain's participatory governance and Oman's use of modeling and regional equity stand out as exemplary. Saudi Arabia's scale and resource mobilization could serve as a blueprint if complemented by enhanced transparency and strengthened institutional accountability frameworks. Magnitude thinking offers a coherent evaluative language through which the GCC countries can engage in mutual learning, establish cross-border benchmarks, and coordinate development efforts, particularly in economic diversification, labor market reform, and fiscal governance.

This study's primary limitation is its reliance on publicly available economic vision documents, which may exclude internal policy deliberations and implementation challenges. While inter-rater reliability

was established, qualitative interpretation remains subjective. Additionally, the magnitude thinking framework requires further empirical validation. Future research should explore longitudinal economic performance, integrate economic modeling per dimension, and examine applicability beyond the GCC, such as in ASEAN, Mercosur, or the African Union, to assess cross-regional economic visioning practices.

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