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Enhancing port and logistics
infrastructure resilience in the GCC
through regional cooperation
Resilience Redefined

100
مئة عام
Years in the Middle East

A system under pressure

The GCC region plays a central role in global trade, acting as a key transit hub for international freight flows. Recent disruptions have reinforced the importance of critical maritime routes, including those passing through the Strait of Hormuz and the Red Sea.

While ports across the GCC have historically sought to optimize their performance and competitiveness at an individual level, the current operating environment highlights the importance of complementing this approach with mechanisms that enhance system-wide resilience.



The role and value of regional cooperation

Regional cooperation is increasingly recognized as a practical enabler for addressing shared challenges, mitigating risks, and supporting operational continuity. By pooling resources, sharing information, and aligning responses, ports can strengthen their ability to anticipate, withstand, and recover from disruptions.

Regional cooperation can contribute to:



Enhanced situational awareness: information sharing across ports and authorities improves visibility on emerging risks and supports more informed decision-making.



Operational continuity: mutual support mechanisms, including resource sharing and alternative routing, can reduce downtime and maintain cargo flows.

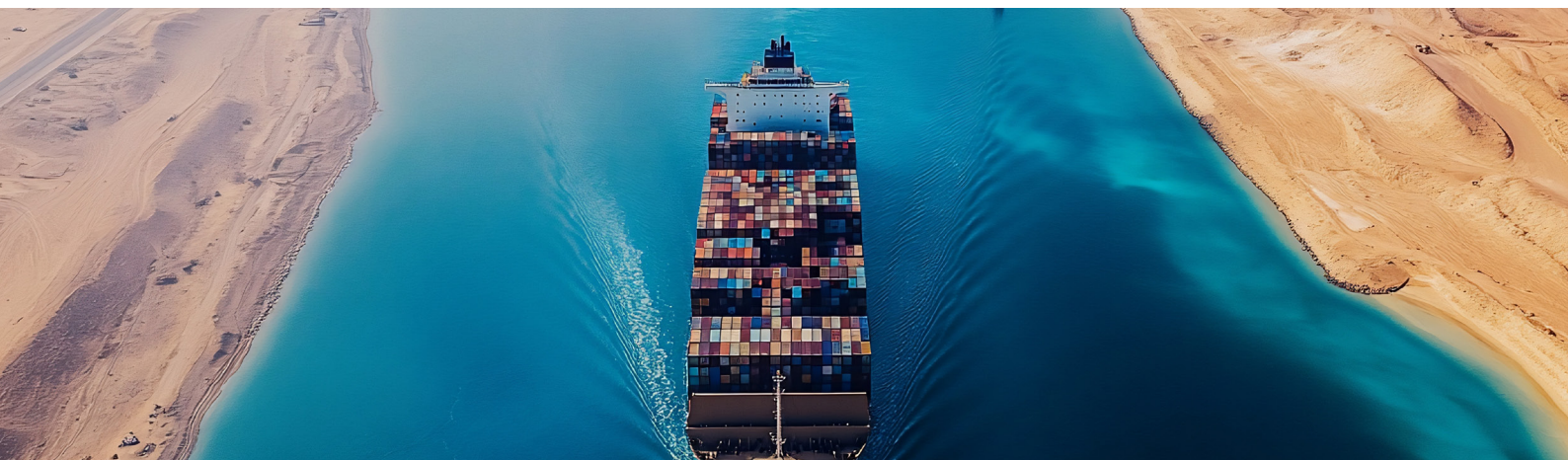


Cost efficiency: coordinated investments across infrastructure, security, and technology reduce duplication and optimize resource allocation.



Regional stability: alignment on operational and policy responses contributes to a more reliable and predictable logistics environment.

Regional cooperation therefore complements national efforts, particularly in periods of increased operational complexity.





Key areas of cooperation

A number of levers can strengthen cooperation across GCC ports and logistics systems. These areas are not mutually exclusive and are most effective when implemented in combination.

Intelligence and information sharing

Timely and accurate information exchange is critical in enabling coordinated responses to disruptions. Establishing secure communication channels for sharing operational data, threat assessments, and maritime updates allows ports and authorities to anticipate risks and respond more effectively.

Recent initiatives in the region demonstrate growing efforts to enhance information accessibility and improve utilization of port infrastructure and routes, for example, KSA has freshly published an introductory guide for beneficiaries in the logistics sector explaining how to make optimal use of the ports located on the western coast (1). These approaches support more proactive decision-making across dynamic operating environments.

Joint operations

Coordinated operational approaches, including aligned procedures and joint readiness initiatives, can improve response effectiveness across multiple ports and jurisdictions. Harmonized protocols reduce friction and enable smoother coordination during disruptions.

Recent developments in rail and inter-port connectivity illustrate how coordinated operations can strengthen system-wide continuity and flexibility; Jebel Ali Rail Terminal for instance, has officially commenced operations earlier this month of March 2026, effectively allowing joint operations between DP World and Etihad Rail (2).

Corridor-level integration and multimodal connectivity

There is increasing focus on managing logistics flows across integrated corridors that combine maritime, land, and rail infrastructure. This approach supports more flexible routing and reduces reliance on single nodes.

Regional infrastructure initiatives point towards a gradual shift to more integrated, corridor-based logistics systems across the GCC. A great example is the GCC Railway Project, which will connect all six member states and key seaports by rail (4).

Mutual support and resource sharing

Ports can establish mutual support arrangements to access specialized equipment, technical expertise, and operational capacity during periods of disruption. This helps reduce pressure on individual ports and supports recovery.

In practice, resource sharing also enables the reallocation of capacity across locations, helping maintain continuity of cargo flows when constraints arise at specific nodes.

Standardization of procedures and technologies

Alignment of customs processes, cargo handling procedures, and digital platforms is a key enabler of cross-border interoperability. Standardization reduces administrative complexity and allows cargo to move more efficiently across different jurisdictions.

Emerging corridor initiatives in the region demonstrate how aligned processes can enable alternative routing options and support continuity of trade flows. A recent example is the Dubai–Oman Green Corridor, activated in March 2026, which enables goods to be routed through Omani ports and cleared via coordinated customs procedures into Dubai through land border crossings (3).





Considerations for stakeholders

As regional cooperation evolves, stakeholders can take targeted actions:



Operators: exploring bilateral and multilateral agreements, investing in interoperable systems, and enhancing operational coordination mechanisms.



Governments and regulators: supporting alignment of policies and procedures and facilitating cross-border infrastructure development.



Investors and ecosystem players: identifying opportunities that leverage network effects.

In some cases, this may include establishing formal coordination platforms or working groups.

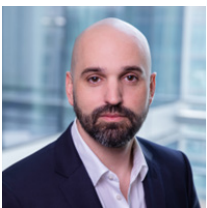


Conclusion

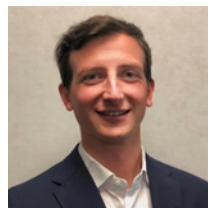
Competition will remain a defining feature of GCC port dynamics. At the same time, regional cooperation offers a complementary pathway to enhance resilience and ensure continuity of trade flows.

As operating environments become more complex, coordinated approaches across infrastructure, operations, and policy are expected to play an increasingly important role in shaping the future of GCC logistics systems.

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2. <https://www.dubaitrade.ae/en/news-announcements/dp-world/jebel-ali-rail-terminal-now-operational-view-tariffs>
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