"The 3S axis: Syria, Saudi Arabia and the SilkLink revolution", Op-ed in Arabian Gulf Business Insight (AGBI), 2 Dec 2025

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The 3S axis: Syria, Saudi Arabia and the SilkLink revolution

A crossborder fibre network could recast Syria's role in Gulf technology

The criticality of [Syria's recently announced SilkLink](#) should not be underestimated. It is the pivotal project spearheading the nation's digital transformation: a $400-$500 million national fibre network designed to bring the country's shattered infrastructure into the modern age.

Faster broadband, inclusive access and a modern data network are the minimum requirements for any digital economy — from digital payments to [AI](#) to elearning — and Syria sits near the bottom of every global index.

Since the [Assad regime fell in late 2024](#), Syria has [re-entered the global economy](#)at remarkable speed, driven by major diplomatic and economic shifts from the transitional

government.

The process began with rapid political re-engagement, including a historic White House meeting in November between presidents Donald Trump and Ahmed al-Sharaa, and renewed dialogue with the UN, the IMF and the World Bank.

Sanctions relief has been the key to Syria's economic reintegration, enabling its return to the Swift banking system, its first World Bank loan in more than a decade and financial support from Saudi Arabia and Qatar to clear debts and pay public salaries.

This has paved the way for regional partners, particularly Turkey, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, to lead reconstruction efforts and for global corporations to begin exploring investment in energy, technology and infrastructure.

Digital economies are built on connectivity: broadband, speed, data generation, storage, analysis and accessibility. Accessibility, in particular, is the bridge between algorithms and users — delivered via land, sea, air and space.

The SilkLink project, a public-private partnership, is designed to position Syria as a strategic data connector within a high-speed, low-latency data corridor connecting Saudi Arabia via Syria to Turkey, Europe and Asia. Saudi Arabia, which has pledged over $40 billion in efforts to become a global AI hub, is a key bidder.

For Riyadh, SilkLink provides a vital alternative data route to vulnerable, congested Red Sea cables

SilkLink and the renewal of Saudi-Syrian relations carry multiple objectives: geopolitical stabilisation, reconstruction and the strategic reintegration of Syria into the Arab fold.

The IMF's digital infrastructure score for Syria stood at 0.07

in 2023 — compared with 0.14 for Saudi Arabia and 0.15 for the UAE. SilkLink is the mechanism that allows Syria to leapfrog rather than slowly retrofit its way out of technological stagnation.

For Riyadh, SilkLink provides a vital alternative data route bypassing the [vulnerable, congested Red Sea cables](#), enabling the massive data centres and computing capacity (supported by deals with companies such as Nvidia and AWS) [required to fuel its AI strategy](#).

SilkLink positions Syria's digital infrastructure as a direct connector of one of the world's largest planned AI investments. Digital economies cannot develop within archaic telecommunications infrastructures and governance.

Saudi Arabia and [other GCC countries](#) are natural strategic partners for Syria in this new phase. The GCC has a comparative advantage in developing solar-powered, green data centres, creating an opportunity to develop and integrate the region's economies into the emerging global digital space.

In enabling Syria's digital transformation, lessons from China's investment in AI and robotics are relevant. The China model is not about inventing the most advanced AI, but more about mass-scale, low-cost applications and state-driven inclusion.

A post-conflict nation such as Syria has no entrenched legacy systems to protect. Instead of slowly digitalising the old economy, Syria can implement low-cost automation, robotics and AI-driven logistics from day one.

A mobile-first digital inclusion strategy can be adapted, as seen in China with WeChat and digital payment systems such as Alipay.

A national digital ID and payment system would finally bring financial services to Syria's unbanked, bypassing the

country's outdated, paper-based banking system.

China has used its digital platforms to deliver everything from government services to healthcare and education. For Syria, that model points to a single national portal for digital government, business services, health records and, crucially, AI-driven elearning to upskill a population whose education has been disrupted for years.

The bottom line: 3S-Saudi-Syria-SilkLink digital infrastructure will link the GCC's $1 trillion AI investment into the emerging global digital economy while enabling Syria's digital transformation.

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