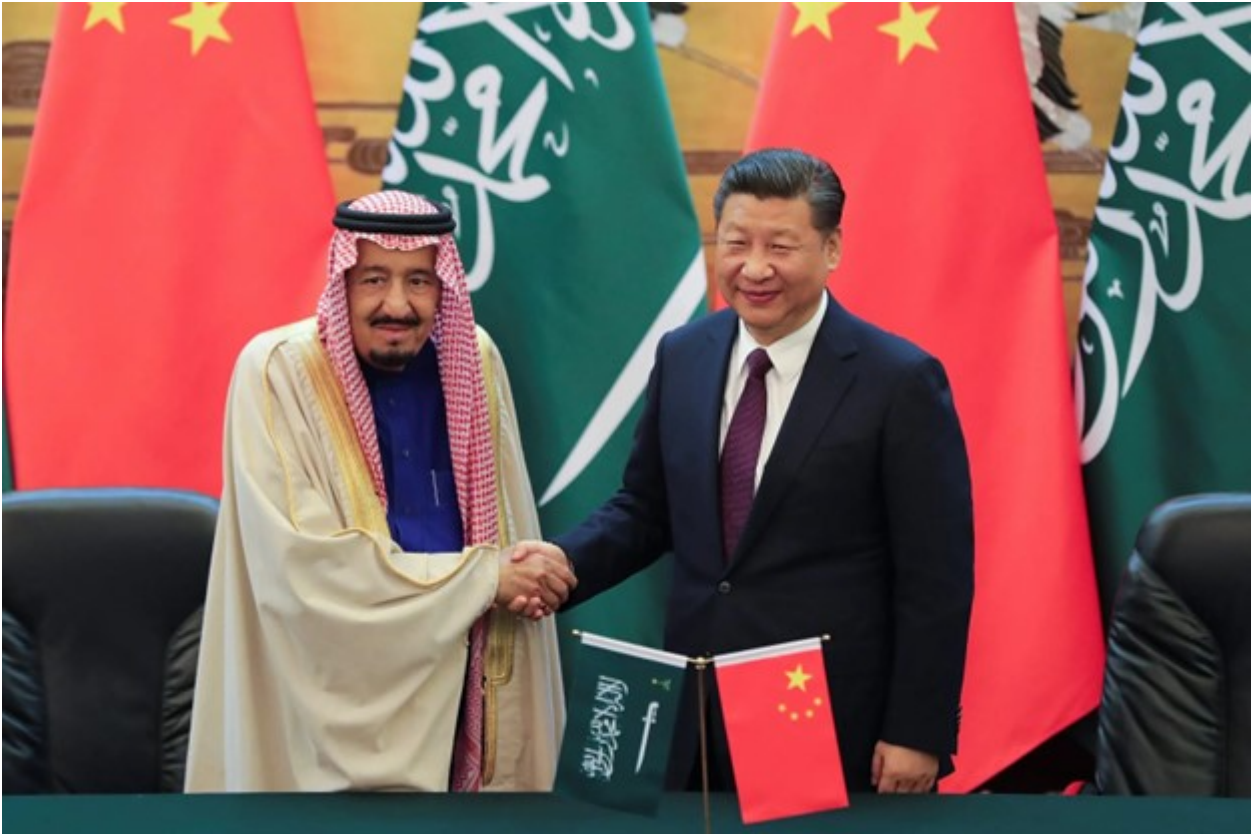


AS AMERICA “PIVOTS TO ASIA”, SAUDI ARABIA IS ALREADY THERE – BY ROUDI BAROUDI



The biggest news in the energy industry last week was that a state-owned Chinese company had completed a massive offshore oil and gas platform for Saudi Aramco. Breathless media reports shared impressive details about the facility's record-setting size, weight, and output capacity, with some describing it as a massive bet on continuing strong demand for fossil fuels despite the meteoric rise of renewables.

The real significance of this news, though, is not to be found at the Qingdao shipyard where it was made, at the headquarters of the China Offshore Oil Engineering Company that built it, or at the Marjan field off Saudi Arabia's east coast where it will be installed and operated.

In fact, in order to truly appreciate the implications

involved, one needs to travel back in time a little more than 50 years. For on 8 June 1974, the United States and Saudi Arabia reached a historic agreement that has bound the two countries ever since.

Signed by then-US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and then-Minister of Interior Prince Fahd bin Abdulaziz, the pact established two joint commissions tasked, respectively, with increasing bilateral economic cooperation and with determining the kingdom's military needs. It also created several joint working groups responsible for specific elements to support growth and development, including efforts to: a) expand and diversify Saudi Arabia's industrial base, beginning with the manufacture of fertilizers and other aspects of the petrochemical sector; b) increase the number of qualified scientists and technicians available to make the most of technology transfers; c) explore partnerships in areas like solar energy and desalination; and d) find ways to cooperate in agriculture, especially in the desert.



Henry Kissinger with Prince Fahd of Saudi Arabia, 1974

Contrary to widespread misperceptions, the agreement did not say anything about Saudi crude being priced and/or transacted exclusively in US dollars. In a side-deal that remained secret until 2016, however, the United States pledged full military support in virtually all circumstances and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia committed to investing a massive share of its oil revenues in US Treasury bills. While there was no public quid pro quo, therefore, this was to some extent a distinction without a difference: the world's biggest oil exporter ended up spending hundreds of billions of dollars on American debt and American-made weapons, making it only sensible that the vast majority of its crude sales would be in greenbacks. By extension, the sheer weight of Saudi oil in world markets – and especially within the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries – virtually guaranteed that the dollar would become

the de facto default currency of those markets, Petrodollars.

These arrangements suited both sides at the time, which featured a very particular set of circumstances. The previous year, as Egypt and Syria attempted to regain territories occupied by Israeli forces since the 1967 war, US President Richard Nixon authorized an unprecedented airlift of weaponry – everything from tanks, artillery, and ammunition to helicopters, radars, and air-to-air missiles – to Israel. Arab oil producers responded by playing their strongest card, announcing an oil embargo against states that supported the Israeli war effort. That led directly to supply shortages, soaring prices, and long lines at filling stations across the United States and many other countries, too, and indirectly to several years of higher inflation. Although the embargo had been lifted in March 1974, Washington was keen to prevent similar shocks in the future.

The American economy was particularly vulnerable to longer-term repercussions because of several factors, including a general slowdown caused by its long, expensive, and ultimately unsuccessful war in Vietnam. The real problem, though, stemmed from another issue: in 1971, as the dollar continued to lose ground against major European currencies, Nixon had taken the United States off the gold standard, gutting the Bretton Woods arrangements put in place after World War II and throwing foreign exchange markets into disarray. With the Cold War as backdrop, America appeared to be losing ground in its strategic competition with the Soviet Union.

The so-called “side-deal”, then, was actually far more important than the public agreement because it would restore the dollar’s primacy in international markets, making it once again the world’s favorite reserve currency, while simultaneously reducing the likelihood of future Arab oil embargos. The new system worked very well for a very long time: the US economy regained its stability, and Saudi Arabia embarked on a long program of socioeconomic development that

continues to this day. Even as the Americans have sought further protection by reducing their reliance on Saudi and other OPEC crude, their bilateral partnership and the dollar's general prevalence in the oil business have likewise persisted despite all manner of diplomatic spats, crises, and other obstacles.

Back in the present-day, the Soviet Union is no more, and although the United States has an even more formidable strategic rival in China, this competition carries neither the day-to-day intensity nor the seeming inevitability of nuclear Armageddon that the Cold War engendered. In addition, the United States is now producing more crude oil than any country ever has, further insulating its economy against exogenous shocks, while China's rapid expansion has made it the world's most prolific energy importer. In fact, Washington is years into a "pivot to Asia" that will see it focus less attention on the Middle East.

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia is now led by Crown Prince, Mohammed bin Salman (MBS), a young and highly ambitious ruler who has shown himself more than willing to act independently of American desires or even demands. Accordingly, it should not surprise anyone that the behemoth facility now being transported to Marjan is just the most visible tip of the Sino-Saudi iceberg. There is a burgeoning relationship driven by complementary needs, with both parties investing in one another's economies and cooperating on large-scale energy and industrial projects.

Given all of the foregoing, it is much too early to declare the end of an era. Even if rumors that the Saudis will soon start selling oil futures contracts in yuan or other currencies turn out to be true and the results include an erosion of the dollar's value, the US-Saudi economic relationship remains very much in place, as do defense ties ranging from procurement and maintenance to joint exercises and training. This is not to mention the approximately 60,000

Saudi students who study at American universities every year, or the countless other business and/or personal ties nurtured over decades.



Then, US President, Jimmy Carter receiving the Crown Prince Fahd of Saudi Arabia at the White House in Washington, 1977. Seeing the continuation of the Petrodollar Agreement.

All the same, a new era has definitely begun: just as the Americans have opened up other avenues to secure their energy needs, the Saudis are now moving decisively to diversify their foreign partnerships and have been doing so for many years. Inevitably, the global oil and gas economy's center of gravity will shift eastward, but how could it be otherwise when China and several other Asian economies have become such powerhouses? The diversification path will almost certainly include occasional stretches where Riyadh will have to make difficult decisions, but this, too, reflects the confidence

that MBS has in his country's ability to determine its own destiny.

Roudi Baroudi has worked in the energy sector for more than four decades, with extensive experience in both the public and private sectors. Having advised dozens of companies, governments, and multilateral institutions on program and policy development. He has been a loyal advocate for energy stability and peace. He is also the author or co-author of numerous books and articles, and currently serves as CEO of Energy and Environment Holding, an independent consultancy based in Doha, Qatar.

السعودية – الصين: شراكة نفطية ترسم معالم عصر جديد في الطاقة

يمثل #التعاون النفطي بين السعودية والصين أحد أهم الشراكات الاستراتيجية في العصر الحديث، إذ يجمع بين أكبر مصدر للنفط في العالم وأكبر مستورد له. إلا أن هذا التعاون لا يقتصر على تجارة النفط وحدها، بل يشمل استثمارات مشتركة تهدف إلى تعزيز العلاقات الاقتصادية الثنائية، خصوصا مع توسع “#أرامكو السعودية” في السوق الصينية.

!“منصة”مرجان

بلغت #الاستثمارات الصينية في السعودية 16,8 مليار دولار في عام 2023، في مقابل 1,5 مليار دولار في عام 2022، استنادا إلى بيانات بنك الإمارات دبي الوطني. في هذا الإطار، يوضح الدكتور خالد رمضان، الخبير النفطي ورئيس المركز الدولي للدراسات الاستراتيجية بالقاهرة، لـ “النهار” أن هذا #لتعاون النفطي السعودي – الصيني يؤثر إيجابا في #أسواق الطاقة العالمية، “وما منصة

'مرجان' النفطية البحرية التابعة لأرامكو في الصين إلا ترجمة فعلية لهذا التعاون"، وستستخدم لزيادة الإنتاج السنوي لحقل المرجان النفطي إلى 24 مليون طن.

وتعد منصة "مرجان" أثقل منصة نفط وغاز بحرية في الصين مخصصة للأسواق الخارجية، وواحدة من أكبر المنصات في العالم، فهي أطول من مبنى مكون من 24 طابقًا، وتعادل مساحة سطحها 15 ملعب كرة سلة، ويمكنها جمع ونقل 24 مليون طن من النفط و7,4 مليارات متر مكعب من الغاز سنويًا.

شراكة في التنمية

يضيف رمضان: " أبرمت أرامكو السعودية في عام 2023 صفقات بقيمة 8 مليارات دولار مع شركاء صينيين في قطاعي المنبع أي الاستكشاف والإنتاج، والمصب أي التكرير والتوزيع". إلى ذلك، توظف نظرتها المتفائلة إلى إمكانات النمو في الصين على المدى الطويل، والفرص عالية الجودة، "من أجل توسيع عملياتها المتكاملة في قطاع الصناعات التحويلية الصينية، والتي يمثل الاستثمار فيها أهمية". "استراتيجية لنمو أعمال أرامكو في آسيا

يلفت رمضان إلى أن دور أرامكو يتجاوز الاستثمار، "لأنها تريد أن تكون شريكًا رئيسيًا في التنمية الاقتصادية في الصين، والاستفادة من الفرص الجديدة التي تلوح في الأفق، من خلال شراكات استراتيجية تعزز وجودها في قطاع الصناعات التحويلية في الصين، بما فيها المواد الكيميائية والمواد المركبة المتقدمة والمواد غير المعدنية".

وهكذا، تظل الصين محورية في استراتيجية أرامكو لتنويع محفظتها، لتشمل منتجات كيميائية أكثر تخصصًا وعالية القيمة، خصوصًا أن الصين تمثل 40 في المئة من مبيعات المنتجات الكيميائية العالمية.

تعزيز سلاسل التوريد

الصين ثاني أكبر اقتصاد في العالم، لذا تعد أكبر مستورد للنفط الخام، إذ تستهلك 14 مليون برميل يوميًا، تليها أوروبا بنحو 12,8 مليون برميل يوميًا. من ناحية أخرى، تعد السعودية أكبر مصدر للنفط الخام في العالم، تليها روسيا وكندا والنرويج ونيجيريا وانطلاقاً من هذا الواقع، "سهل أن نرى كيف يمنح توسيع التعاون النفطي بين الصين والسعودية الأسواق استقراراً أكبر، ويعزز أمان سلاسل الإمداد النفطية، ويزيد فرص المنافسة في الأسواق العالمية"، بحسب ما يقول الخبير النفطي الدولي رودي بارودي.

ويضيف لـ "النهار": "بالنسبة إلى السعوديين، سيضمنون شريكاً استراتيجياً طويلاً الأمد، لن يشتري النفط الخام فحسب، بل يستثمر أيضاً في سلسلة النفط اللاحقة، من المصافي إلى مصانع البتروكيماويات". فأرامكو السعودية، أكبر شركة نفط في العالم، مستثمر كبير في مشروع "رونغشينغ سينوبيك فوجيان" للتكرير (Rongsheng Sinopec Fujian Refining & البتروكيماويات

وفي شركتين كبيرتين للبتروكيماويات هما (Petrochemical venture)، (Rongsheng Petrochemical) و"رونغشينغ (Hengli Petrochemical) "هينغلي وتفاوض أرامكو لشراء 10 في المئة في "هينغلي"، (Hengli Petrochemical). وتسعى لإبرام صفقات مماثلة مع شركتين صينيتين أخريين، بعدما أبرمت صفقة منفصلة قيمتها 3,4 مليارات دولار لشراء حصة في شركة "رونغشينغ" في العام الماضي.

تحالف مؤثر

في الضفة الأخرى، استثمرت الصين مليارات الدولارات في السعودية، "حيث دخلت الشركات الصينية على خط مشاريع سعودية واسعة النطاق تركّزت في معظمها في التكرير والبنية الأساسية للغاز"، بحسب بارودي، الذي يضيف: "من شأن التعاون الطويل الأجل بين البلدين أن يعيد تشكيل أجزاء من المشهد النفطي والبتروكيماوي العالمي ويؤكد الخبر النفطي الدولي أن أرامكو السعودية مستثمر كبير في صناعة الهيدروكربون في الصين، "والجانبان يركزان جهودهما على توسيع مصانع إنتاج السوائل وتحويلها إلى كيماويات في مصفاة الجبيل بالسعودية، وفي وحدة البتروكيماويات في نينغبو تشونجين بالصين".

ويرى بارودي أن هذا التطوّر في العلاقة التصنيعية والتحويلية هو "نتاج علاقة استراتيجية دبلوماسية سعودية - صينية، بدأت تحاك قبل أكثر من ثلاثة عقود، لا تقتصر على التجارة والاستثمارات المتبادلة، بل تتعداها إلى تحالف تنعكس آثاره على الاقتصاد العالمي، ما من شأنه أن يقلل من تأثير أي تباطؤ اقتصادي في المستقبل، وأن يحمي "أسواق الهيدروكربون والبتروكيماويات".

إلى جانب ذلك، يعزز التعاون بين السعوديين والصينيين التحول العالمي في مجال الطاقة، بفضل التوافق في الرؤى التنموية بين البلدين. رؤية "السعودية 2030" ومبادرة "الحزام والطريق" الصينية تستهدفان إضافة المزيد من الاستثمارات في الطاقة المتجددة. ومن هنا، تستهدف أرامكو الاستفادة من الطلب المتزايد على الصناعات الخضراء الناشئة في الصين، "ليتطوّر التعاون الصيني - السعودي في مجال الطاقة من مجرد تعاون في مصادر طاقة تقليدية. ليشمل قطاع الطاقة الجديدة"، بحسب رمضان.

شراكة تبادلية

يقول بارودي إن هذا التعاون يرتقي يوماً بعد يوم إلى مستوى الشراكة التبادلية، "فالفوائد متبادلة، ويعمل كل من الطرفين على تنويع إيراداته، وخفض إنفاقه الإنتاجي"، مذكراً بأن هذا التعاون "يدعم قدرة البلدين على تحقيق استقرار الاقتصاد العالمي، إذ يبشر "بتغييرات مالية ضخمة".

فمحتمل جداً أن تبدأ السعودية بقبول اليوان الصيني، من بين عملات آسيوية أخرى، بوصفه عملة معتمدة في التبادلات النفطية. وهذا، برأي بارودي، يمنح الصين والسعودية مزايا اقتصادية كبيرة، خصوصاً أن المملكة جادة في مسيرة تنويع مصادر اقتصادها، والخروج من دائرة

”الاعتماد الكلي على الإيراد النفطي

يضيف بارودي: ”إن تحققي المملكة هذا الهدف سيشكل نقطة تحول أساسية في سياستها الاقتصادية عموماً ، والنفطية خصوصاً ، إذ ستكمل تحررها من قيود البترو-دولار بعد اتفاقية مع الولايات المتحدة دامت 50 عاماً ، وبعد دخولها مع الصين في مجموعة الـ ’بريكس‘ التي وضعت نصب عينيها الوقوف في وجه هيمنة الدولار الأميركي على الاقتصاد العالمي”.

China delivers heaviest offshore oil and gas platform for Saudi deployment



The Marjan oil and gas collection and transportation platform is seen as breakthrough of construction technology of large-scale offshore oil and gas platform for the Chinese builders, weighing more than 17,200 tons, making it one of the world's largest.

The platform is expected to collect and transport 24 million tonnes of crude oil and 7.4 billion cubic meters of associated

gas every year. Its platform scale, pipeline types and sizes, and system complexity all setting new records compared to similar platforms.

Construction of the project took 34 months.

Delivery of the platform project will help the Chinese industry players transform from sub-contractor to main-contractor in global offshore engineering market, said China Offshore Oil Engineering.

The platform will be transported to its installation site 6,400 nautical miles away in the waters off Saudi Arabia at the end of August to improve Marjan oilfield's production capacity.

China advocates shared future with Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence



This year marks the 70th anniversary of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. The commemorative conference of the 70th anniversary of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence was held in Beijing on June 28. Xi Jinping, President of the People's Republic of China, attended the commemorative conference and delivered an important speech. He expounded on the essence of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence and their relevance for our times, pointed the direction for building a community with a shared future for mankind amid major global transformation, and voiced a strong message of the Global South to work with people around the world for a better future.

70 years ago, in face of the scourge of hot wars and the confrontation of the Cold War, the Chinese leadership specified the Five Principles in their entirety for the first

time, namely, mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence. The Five Principles are included in the China-India and China-Myanmar joint statements, which jointly called for making them basic norms for state-to-state relations.

After 70 years of practice, the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence have set a historic benchmark for international relations and international rule of law, served as the prime guidance for the establishment and development of relations between countries with different social systems, remained a powerful rallying force behind the efforts of developing countries to pursue cooperation and self-strength through unity, and contributed historic wisdom to the reform and improvement of the international order.

Over the past 70 years, the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence have extended its reach from Asia to the world, transcending ideological differences, social system variations and uneven levels of development. They have become open, inclusive, and universally applicable basic norms for international relations and fundamental principles of international law, making indelible historic contributions to the cause of human progress.

Seventy years on, we are now in a volatile and unstable era where changes and turbulence are intertwined. At this historic moment when mankind has to choose between peace and war, prosperity and recession, unity and confrontation, the spirit of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence has become more appealing rather than obsolete. Bearing the intertwined destinies of countries and the shared and fundamental interests of all peoples in mind, President Xi Jinping put forward the vision of building a community with a shared future for mankind, providing a new answer to what kind of world to build and how to build it. This is the best way to inherit, advance and enrich the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence under new circumstances.

From the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence to building a community with a shared future for mankind, China has remained consistent in the exploration for new ways of state-to-state relations, remained committed to our responsibility in upholding world peace and development, and remained steadfast in pursuing a just and equitable international order.

Over the past decades, the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence conformed to the trend for national independence and liberation in Asia, Africa and Latin America, and answered the very important question of how to handle state-to-state relations. Going forward, the Chinese initiative of building a community with a shared future for mankind has become an international consensus. The beautiful vision has been put into productive actions. It is moving the world to a bright future of peace, security, prosperity and progress.

Of all the forces in the world, the Global South stands out with a strong momentum. Standing at a new historical starting point, the great cause of building a community with a shared future for mankind requires the Global South to stay ahead of the historical trend. The Global South should be more open and more inclusive, jointly maintain peace and stability, promote open development, construct global governance, and advocate for the exchange among civilisations.

Both China and Qatar are important members of the Global South. In recent years, under the strategic guidance of President Xi Jinping and His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, China-Qatar relations have developed rapidly and comprehensively, serving as a model for countries with different social systems to firmly adhere to the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, engage in friendly exchanges, and foster mutually beneficial co-operation.

Both China and Qatar are the staunch forces for peace, dedicated to promoting peaceful settlement of international disputes, and participating constructively in the political settlement of international and regional hotspot issues. They are core driving forces for open development, committed to restoring development as the central international agenda item

with clear and feasible national development visions and goals, reinvigorating global partnerships for development, and deepening South-South co-operation as well as North-South dialogue.

China and Qatar are also construction teams of global governance and advocates for exchange among civilisations. Both countries actively participate in reforming and developing the global governance system and contribute to enhancing inter-civilisation communication and dialogue.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the China-Qatar strategic partnership. China wishes to work with Qatar to take this opportunity to strengthen the political foundation of bilateral relations, elevate the mutually beneficial cooperation between the two countries to a new level.

China stands ready to join hands with Qatar and other countries in the world to overcome challenges, achieve shared prosperity, create an open, inclusive, clean and beautiful world of lasting peace, universal security, and shared prosperity, build a community with a shared future for mankind, and open up a brighter future for humanity.

Global oil demand growth to cool as China slows, says EIA



The US government's energy-tracking agency added to a chorus of concerns about falling demand for oil next year caused by an economic slowdown in China, the world's largest crude importer.

Global crude consumption will be about 104.5mn barrels a day in 2025, down 200,000 barrels a day from a previous forecast, cutting next year's projected demand growth rate to 1.6%, according to a monthly Energy Information Administration report on Tuesday. The downward revision was driven by concerns that China's economy has been slowing.

China reported its weakest economic growth in five quarters last month, and traders and banks have flagged slowing demand in Asia as a bearish factor for crude. The concerns have helped keep oil prices restrained this year even as Opec and its allies dial back production and the conflict in the Middle East raises the risk of supply disruptions in the region.

Despite signs of an economic slowdown across the Pacific, jet fuel remains a bright spot in US consumption. Increased air travel led to an upward revision in projected demand for the fuel this year, and next year's consumption is still expected to exceed pre-pandemic levels, the EIA said.

The EIA also dialled back forecasts for US oil production growth amid a wave of corporate consolidation and efforts to boost output while using less gear. While the EIA still expects US production to increase this year and next, its forecasts were revised down from last month's report by 0.2% for this year and 0.6% for 2025.

The figures are the latest sign the US shale patch is growing more modestly after last year's surprising pop in production that added more than 1mn barrels a day.

Still, the expansion in annual US oil production – the EIA projects 2.3% growth this year to 13.23mn barrels a day and an additional 3.5% increase next year – shows producers are achieving the efficiency gains in drilling and fracking that allows them to grow output.

"We are clearly doing more with less and becoming more operationally efficient each quarter," Diamondback Energy Inc, one of the biggest producers in the Permian Basin of West Texas and southeast New Mexico, wrote in a letter to stockholders this week.

The Permian, which is the world's largest shale field, is forecast to add a modest 20,000 barrels a day through the end of this year and another 340,000 barrels of production next year, according to the latest EIA projections.

'Prerequisites for peace': Expert applauds Skylakakis

for endorsing energy transition policies that ‘open the way to dialogue and cooperation’



ATHENS, July 7, 2024 Greece: Energy and Environment Minister Theodoros Skylakakis is on the right track with his approach to Greece’s energy transition plans, a noted regional expert says.

“He’s got the right perspective,” industry veteran and author Roudi Baroudi said after Skylakakis spoke at this week’s Athens Energy Summit. “He understands that although the responsibility to reduce carbon emissions is universal, the best policy decisions don’t come in ‘one-size-fits-all’.”

Baroudi, who has more than four decades in the field and currently serves as CEO of Doha independent consultancy Energy and Environment Holding, made his comments on the sidelines of

the forum, where he also was a speaker.

In his remarks, Skylakakis expressed confidence that Greece's increasing need to store electricity – as intermittent renewables generate a growing share of electricity – would drive sufficient investment in battery capacity, without the need for subsidies. Among other comments, he also stressed the need for European Union policymakers to account for the fact that member-states currently face the costs of both limiting future climate change AND mitigating the impacts that are already under way.

“Every country is different in terms of how it can best fight climate change. Each one has its own set of natural resources, industrial capacity, financial wherewithal, and other variables. What works in one situation might be a terrible idea elsewhere. That's crucial and Skylakakis gets it,” Baroudi said. “He also understands that an effective transition depends on carefully considered policies, policies that attract investment to where it can not only have the greatest impact today, but also maximizes the impact of tomorrow's technologies and tomorrow's partnerships.”



“What Skylakakis is saying and doing fits in nicely with many of the same ideas I spoke about,” Baroudi added. “When he talks about heavier reliance on wind farms, the added storage capacity is a foundation that will help derive a fuller return from each and every turbine. When he highlights the utility – pun intended – of power and gas interconnections with other countries and regions, these are the prerequisites for peace, the building blocks for cooperation and dialogue.”

In his own speech shortly after Skylakakis’, Baroudi told the audience at the capital’s Hotel Grande Bretagne that countries

in the Eastern Mediterranean should work together to increase cleaner energy production and reduce regional tensions.

“Surely there is a method by which we can re-establish the same common ground enshrined in the wake of World Wars I and II, recall the same common interests and identify new ones, and work together to achieve common goals, just as the UN Charter implores us to,” he said.

Baroudi advises companies, governments, and international institutions on energy policy and is an award-winning advocate for efforts to promote peace through dialogue and diplomacy. He told his audience that with both climate change and mounting geopolitical tensions posing threats to people around the world, policymakers needed to think outside the usual boxes.

In this way, he argued, “we might develop the mutual trust which alone can create a safer, happier, and better world for our children and grandchildren.”

“Consider the possibilities if Greece, Türkiye, and Cyprus became de facto – or de jure – partners in a pipeline carrying East Med gas to consumers in Bulgaria, Romania, and Italy,” he said. “Imagine a future in which Israeli and Lebanese gas companies were similarly – but independently – reliant on the same Cypriot LNG plant for 10-20%, or even more, of their respective countries’ GDPs.”

He also envisioned bilateral cooperation scenarios between Greece and Turkey and Syria and Turkey, as well as a regional interconnection that would provide backup energy for multiple coastal states.

“Instead of accepting certain ideas as permanently impossible, we ought to be thinking ahead and laying the groundwork,” Baroudi said. “For Greece and Türkiye – as for other pairs of coastal states in the region – a good starting point would be to emulate the Maritime Boundary Agreement agreed to by

Lebanon and Israel in 2022.”

Stressing the potential for cooperation to address both energy requirements and the stability required for stronger growth and development, Baroudi – whose books include a 2023 volume about the Lebanon-Israel deal and a forthcoming one urging other East Med countries to do the same – called on the EU to take up the challenge.



“Using dialogue and diplomacy to expand energy cooperation would benefit not just the countries of the East Med but also the entire European Union and much of its surrounding ‘neighborhood’,” he told an audience of energy professionals and key government officials. “That level of promise more than merits the attention of Brussels, the allocation of support resources, and even the designation of a dedicated point-person tasked with facilitating the necessary contacts and negotiations.”

“This is how we need to be thinking if we want to get where we need to go,” Baroudi said. “Instead of allowing ourselves to be discouraged by the presence of obstacles, we need to be investigating new routes that go around them, strengthen the

rule of law – especially human rights law – as a basis for the international system, and promote lasting peace among all nations. Only then can we declare victory over what the 18th-century Scottish poet Robert Burns called ‘man’s inhumanity to man’.”

الخبير في مجال الطاقة رودري بارودي: دول شرق البحر المتوسط يجب أن تتعاون بمجال الطاقة



أشار أحد أهم الخبراء في مجال الطاقة رودري بارودي، في مؤتمر انعقد في أثينا، إلى أن “دول شرق البحر الأبيض المتوسط يجب أن تتعاون مع بعضها لزيادة إنتاج وتصدير الطاقة والتخفيف من التوترات الإقليمية”.

وقال بارودي امام المشاركين في المؤتمر: "يجب ان نضع في الاعتبار الاحتمالات الايجابية إذا أصبحت اليونان وتركيا وقبرص شركاء بحكم الواقع أو بحكم القانون في خط أنابيب ينقل غاز شرق المتوسط إلى المستهلكين في بلغاريا ورومانيا وإيطاليا، وان نتخيل مستقبلاً تعتمد فيه شركات الغاز الإسرائيلية واللبنانية ولكن بشكل مستقل "على نفس مصنع الغاز الطبيعي المسال في قبرص".

وأضاف بارودي "لننتصور اهمية وايجابية سيناريوهات التعاون الثنائي بين اليونان وتركيا من جهة وسوريا وتركيا من جهة ثانية إضافة إلى الترابط الإقليمي الذي سيوفر طاقة احتياطية لدول ساحلية متعددة"، لافتاً إلى أنه "بدلاً من قبول أفكار معينة على أنها مستحيلة بشكل دائم، يجب أن نفكر في المستقبل ونضع الأساس لعمال ايجابية مشتركة على ان تكون نقطة البداية الجيدة مماثلة لاتفاقية الحدود البحرية بين لبنان وإسرائيل في عام 2022".

وشدد بارودي أمام حشد من المتخصصين في مجال الطاقة ومسؤولين حكوميين على أن "استخدام الحوار والدبلوماسية لتوسيع التعاون في مجال الطاقة لن يفيد فقط دول شرق البحر المتوسط ولكن أيضاً جميع دول الاتحاد الأوروبي والكثير من" الجوار "المحيط به وان هذا الاستحقاق المهم يستحق أكثر من اهتمام بروكسل، لا بل يستحق تخصيص موارد الدعم، وتعيين موفد مكلف بتسهيل الاتصالات والمفاوضات اللازمة".

وختم بارودي بالقول: "هذه هي الطريقة الفضلى التي نحتاجها للتفكير إذا أردنا الوصول إلى حيث يجب ان نكون بدلاً من السماح لأنفسنا بالإحباط بسبب وجود عقبات، فنحن نحتاج إلى التفتيش عن طرق جديدة وحديثة تلتف على الافكار والمواقف القديمة، وتعزيز سيادة القانون وخاصة قانون حقوق الإنسان كأساس للنظام الدولي، وتعزيز السلام الدائم بين جميع الدول، عندها فقط يمكننا إعلان النصر على ما أسماه الشاعر الاسكتلندي روبرت بيرنز في القرن الثامن عشر: وحشية "الإنسان للإنسان".

Potential Qatar-Greece investment ties seen in energy, high-tech industries

Greece's economic resurgence with Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis at the helm is seen to open potential Qatari investments in a wide range of sectors, including energy, tourism, and high-tech industries.

In an exclusive interview with Gulf Times, Energy and Environment Holding CEO Roudi Baroudi underscored the growing bilateral ties of both countries, saying Qatar is well-positioned to capitalise on Greece's economic stability, which has been attracting foreign direct investments (FDI).

"After the bond and fiscal crisis that Greece went through in 2012-2014, it took them a few years of solid reconsolidating their books with the assistance of the IMF, the World Bank, and especially the EU...the stupendous economic growth brought about by Prime Minister Mitsotakis has brought a lot of FDI back.

"Qatar has always had certain private investments in the financial and energy sectors. Today, Greece is a hub for diverse investment opportunities and its economy is open to different markets other than just tourism, real estate, and industry, but they have direct access to Europe, as well, in terms of oil and gas," Baroudi explained.

Baoudi noted that the energy sector, particularly liquefied natural gas (LNG), is vital in enhancing further Qatar-Greece investment opportunities and economic ties. He also said Qatar's decades-long expertise in the LNG industry could help catalyse Greece's bid to become a major logistics centre.

"Greece has probably the largest ships, crude tankers, and gas

tankers in the world, making them one of the leaders in the global maritime business. Qatar's LNG capabilities are already well-established with more than a dozen LNG ships working for QatarEnergy subsidiaries," Baroudi noted.

At the Qatar Economic Forum held in Doha last month, HE the Minister of Finance Ali bin Ahmed al-Kuwari emphasised that Qatar's energy sector is performing "very well," citing QatarEnergy's plans for a new LNG expansion project that would further raise the country's LNG production capacity to 142mn tonnes per annum.

Al-Kuwari said, "We are going to increase Qatar's (liquefied natural gas) production by 85% in a phased manner until 2030. We are going to be reaching 142mn tonnes per annum of LNG."

According to Baroudi, recent developments in Qatar's energy industry could extend potential investment opportunities with Greece beyond shipping to LNG infrastructure. "Qatar's expertise could be crucial as Greece expands its LNG port to supply gas to neighbouring countries following the Ukraine-Russian war. QatarEnergy is also making strategic investments in the Eastern Mediterranean, such as in Cyprus and Egypt as part of a larger regional strategy," he said.

Baroudi also pointed to knowledge exchange as another avenue for collaboration and investment in terms of port management. "There is no question that Hamad Port will benefit a lot from further co-operation with the Port of Piraeus, which is Greece's largest port, and the second largest in the Mediterranean," Baroudi stated.

Asked about potential partnerships outside the energy sector and port management, Baroudi said both countries could also forge joint opportunities in digital connectivity, artificial intelligence (AI), and clean tech. Among other industries, Baroudi also noted that Qatar could expand its tourism and hospitality footprint amidst Greece's favourable economic

environment.

QatarEnergy to acquire two new exploration blocks offshore Egypt



QatarEnergy has signed a farm-in agreement with ExxonMobil to

acquire a 40% participating interest in two exploration blocks offshore Egypt.

Under the terms of the agreement, which is subject to customary approvals by the government of Egypt, QatarEnergy will acquire a 40% working interest in each of the “Cairo” and “Masry” Offshore Concession Agreements, while ExxonMobil (the Operator) will retain the remaining 60% working interest.

Commenting on the signing of this agreement, HE Minister of State for Energy Affairs, the President and CEO of QatarEnergy Eng. Saad bin Sherida Al Kaabi said: “I am pleased with our entry into the Cairo and Masry offshore exploration blocks as they expand QatarEnergy’s presence in the Arab Republic of Egypt and extend our ambitious exploration program in-country.”

“We look forward to working with our valued long-term strategic partner ExxonMobil, as well as with the Egyptian Natural Gas Holding Company (EGAS) and the Egyptian Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Resources, in this promising and prospective region. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Egyptian authorities and our partners for their valuable support and cooperation,” His Excellency added.

The Cairo and Masry offshore exploration blocks were awarded to ExxonMobil in January 2023, and cover an area of approximately 11,400 square kilometers in water depths of 2,000 to 3,000 meters.

Opec sticks to oil demand

view, nudges up economic growth



LONDON, March 12 (Reuters) – OPEC on Tuesday stuck to its forecast for relatively strong growth in global oil demand in 2024 and 2025, and further raised its economic growth forecast for this year saying there was more room for improvement.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries said in a monthly report that world oil demand will rise by 2.25 million barrels per day (bpd) in 2024 and by 1.85 million bpd in 2025. Both forecasts were unchanged from last month.

A further boost to economic growth could give additional tailwind to oil demand. OPEC's 2024 growth forecast is already higher than that of the International Energy Agency (IEA), and the two are further apart than they have been for at least 16 years in their demand views.

In the report, OPEC said a "robust dynamic" for economic growth towards the end of 2023 was expected to extend into the first half of 2024 and raised its 2024 economic growth forecast by 0.1 percentage points, following a hike last month.

"While some downside risks persist, a continuation of the expected momentum from the beginning of the year could result in additional upside potential for global economic growth in

2024.” OPEC said in the report.

“The 2024 and 2025 growth trajectories of India, China, as well as the United States, could exceed current expectations.”

OPEC has stuck to the same demand growth figure since making its first 2024 prediction last July.

Conflict in the Middle East and supply outages have supported oil prices in 2024, although concerns about continued high interest rates have weighed. Brent crude on Tuesday was trading around \$82 a barrel.

A rise in prices in February took place as oil market fundamentals continued to strengthen, OPEC said in the report, adding that geopolitical tensions also supported prices.

OPEC now sees world economic growth of 2.8% in 2024, supported by the expectation of a continued easing in general inflation throughout this year. It kept next year’s forecast steady at 2.9%.

“It is anticipated that domestic political and geopolitical developments will likely not significantly impact the growth momentum,” OPEC said.

BULLISH OPEC, CAUTIOUS IEA

For this year, OPEC’s expectation of oil demand growth is much more than the expansion of 1.22 million bpd so far forecast by the IEA. The IEA, which represents industrialised countries, is scheduled to update its forecasts on Thursday.

OPEC believes oil use will keep rising for the next two decades, while the IEA predicts it will peak by 2030 as the world shifts to cleaner energy. The two have clashed over this and related issues such as the need for more oil industry investment.

According to a Reuters analysis of IEA and OPEC monthly reports dating back to 2008, the 1.03 million bpd gap in their February demand growth forecasts was the biggest in per-barrel terms for this point in the year.

OPEC and the wider OPEC+ alliance have implemented a series of output cuts since late 2022 to support the market. A new cut for the first quarter took effect in January and earlier this month was extended to cover the second quarter.

The OPEC report also said that OPEC oil production rose by 203,000 bpd in February to 26.57 million bpd led by Nigeria

and Libya, despite a new round of voluntary output cuts by the OPEC+ alliance that started in January.