Troubled UK outsourcer Interserve blames the blockade against Qatar for its woes, with debt mounting to £614.3m

- **Shares in Interserve slumped as it revealed debts of £614.3million**
- **Half-year sales fell from £1.64billion to £1.5billion while it made a £6million loss**
- **Bosses said revenue from Qatar was down £31.2million over last year**
- **Interserve's work in Qatar includes some work on World Cup projects**

Troubled outsourcer Interserve has blamed the blockade against Qatar for some of its woes as it swung to a loss and debts spiralled.

Shares slumped as it revealed debts of £614.3million – more than six times its market value – a near-60per cent increase on last year.

Half-year sales fell from £1.64billion to £1.5billion while it made a £6million loss compared to a £24.9million profit during the same period last year.

Bosses said revenue from Qatar was down £31.2million over last year as a trade blockade against the country by its neighbours delayed contract awards and made getting supplies harder.

Interserve's work in Qatar includes some work on World Cup projects, other construction projects and support services. It is not building stadiums for the 2022 tournament.

Interserve employs 80,000 around the world and about 25,000 in the UK, with sales of around £3.7billion. Its work includes security, probation, healthcare and construction services, as well as cleaning the London Underground and managing army barracks.

It has been struggling financially since last year partly due to losses on a waste project in Glasgow, and issued two profit warnings late last year.

In January it emerged Interserve was being monitored by the Government amid fears of a repeat of the collapse of builder and outsourcer Carillion.

Its shares have fallen nearly 70per cent since last year, slumping further yesterday, valuing the company at around £96million. Operating profits for the first half rose by £11.5million to £40.1million.

Chief executive Debbie White, 56, has spent £32.1million on financial advisers including PwC before reaching a rescue deal with creditors in March.

She said trading during the first half had been in line with expectations and the business was on a better footing to move forward. She added: ‘Whilst there remains a significant amount of work to do, we have energy and momentum.’

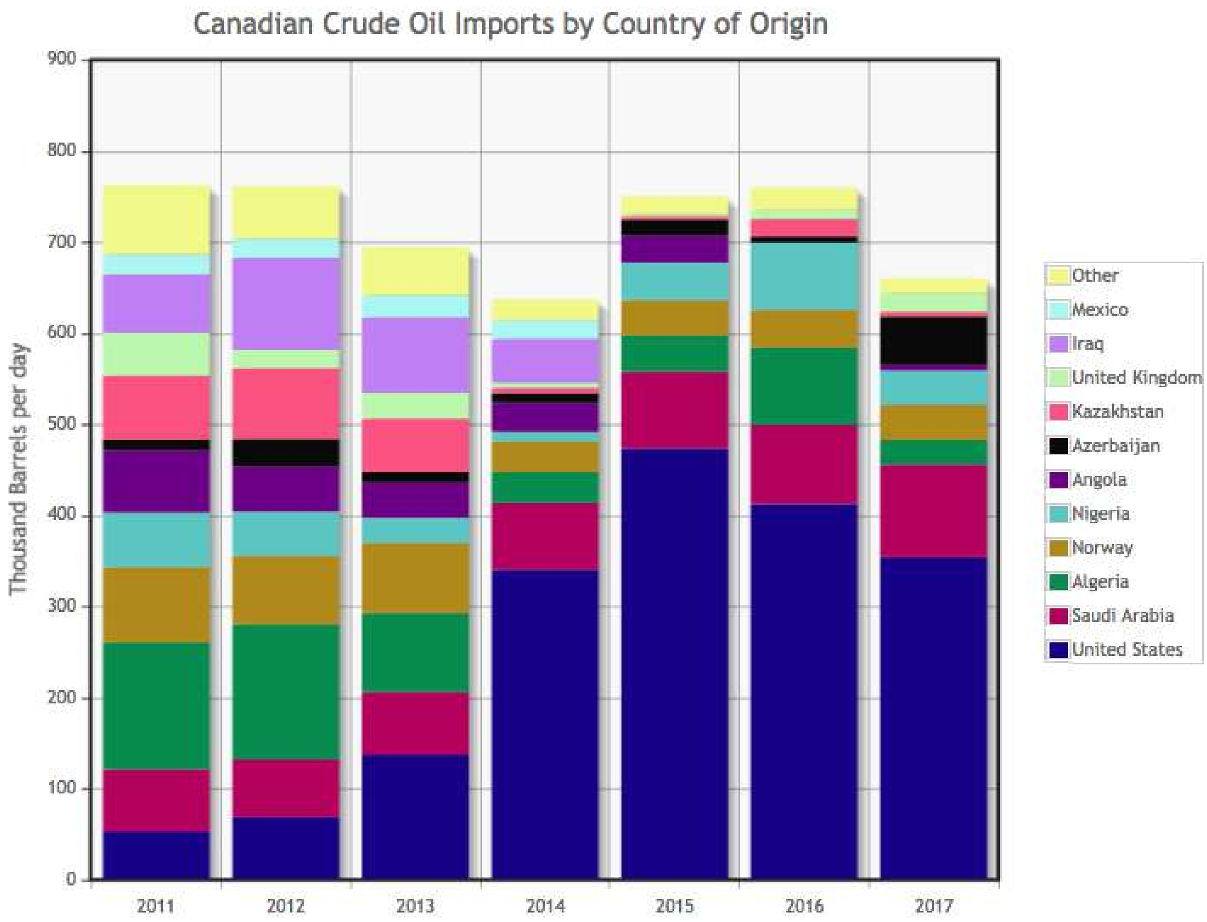
Saudi-Canada Fight Shows Need for Pipelines, Oil Group Says

The escalating trade battle between Canada and Saudi Arabia highlights the need for more pipelines to move oil and natural gas around the northern nation to improve its energy security, according to the Canadian oil industry’s largest trade group.

Canada’s energy producers could supply a greater portion of their domestic market and satisfy more of world demand if they could move supply from producing regions to both coasts, said Ben Brunnen, vice president of oil sands operations and fiscal policy for the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers. Canada imported about C$1.17 billion ($902.4 million) worth of oil and fuels from Saudi Arabia in the second quarter, according to Statistics Canada.

“Geopolitical tensions, whether they be with our largest trading partner, the U.S., or with other countries, illustrate the opportunity we have to improve energy security within our own borders and to expand our exports to global markets to ensure we are getting the best price for our products,” Brunnen said in an emailed statement.

Why has Canada spent billions of dollars buying Saudi Arabian oil?



Despite sitting on an ocean of oil, Canada still buys $300 million per month of Saudi crude

As Saudi Arabia aggressively severs ties with Canada, the two countries' trade relationship hangs in the balance. On one hand, Canada will lose out on Saudi foreign students, military contracts and sales of wheat and grain. On the other, Saudi Arabia will lose the billions of dollars it earns every year by selling oil to Canada.

For years, it has been an oft-repeated Alberta grievance that these imports exist at all. Despite sitting atop an ocean of proven oil reserves, Canada continues to spend a small fortune every year buying oil from a country that executes homosexuals, flogs dissidents and has a nasty habit of funding Islamic extremism.

Below, a quick guide to why Canadians are still gassing up their cars with Saudi crude.

Over the last 10 years, Canada has spent $20.9 billion on Saudi crude

Between 2007 and 2017, Statistics Canada figures show that Canada imported a total of $20.9 billion of Saudi Arabian petroleum oils. For context, this is almost precisely what Canada spends on its military per year. It's also way more than the expected $15.7 billion cost of the Energy East pipeline. On average, in recent years, Saudi Arabia supplies about 10 per cent of Canada's oil imports. Canada, in turn, is responsible for buying roughly 1.5 per cent of total Saudi oil exports. What's more, Saudi Arabia is climbing the leader board of countries that Canada's relies upon for its foreign oil. As recently as 2010, Saudi Arabia ranked as Canada's fifth largest supplier of foreign oil (behind Algeria, Norway, the U.K. and Kazakhstan). Now, Saudi Arabia is second only to the United States.

Right now, all the Saudi oil is coming through a single New Brunswick refinery

All of the Saudi oil imported into Canada in 2017 and 2018 came through New Brunswick, which only has one oil import facility: The massive Irving Oil-owned Saint John refinery. Between January and June of this year that refinery has imported $1.8 billion of Saudi oil — roughly $10 million per day. The amount of U.S. oil entering the refinery, for comparison, is equivalent only to about $3.8 million per day. Unlike most Canadian refineries, Saint John has no access to a pipeline; every barrel of oil it processes either comes by tanker or train. (The oil train that caused the Lac-Mégantic rail disaster, in fact, was headed to the Saint John refinery). "We source crude oil from all over the world for our refinery in Saint John, N.B.," a spokesman for Irving Oil told the National Post in 2016. And whenever someone is seeking out the cheapest product from the world market, it's not unusual that a lot of it is going to come from oil-rich Saudi Arabia. It's like turning to the world market to buy the cheapest possible t-shirts: Chances are that they're going to come from Bangladesh.

Alberta and Saudi oil aren't necessarily the same thing
On paper, Canada could become energy self-sufficient tomorrow. Every day we produce about 3.9 million barrels of oil per day, and use less than 2 million barrels. A study this year from the Canadian Energy Research Institute even calculated that energy self-sufficiency might reduce emissions. But think of oil like whiskey: There are many different types and qualities. A bourbon connoisseur probably isn't going to be happy with a bottle of Old Crow and a Manhattan isn't going to taste the same if it's made out of Scotch. Similarly, Alberta oil is not interchangeable with the stuff coming out of Saudi Arabia. Andrew Leach, an energy economist at the University of Alberta, even said that comparing the two is like comparing apples and oranges. "Saudi crude and WCS (Western Canadian Select) doesn't overlap much in terms of their markets," he told the National Post. For one thing, most eastern Canadian refineries cannot process bitumen, the thick tar-like hydrocarbon that comes out of the Athabasca Oil Sands. Almost anybody can process Saudi Arabian crude, but only an elite fraternity of the world's most complex refineries can turn Alberta bitumen into gasoline. To get to the east coast, Canadian bitumen also has to be shipped overland from more than 4,000 kilometres away, significantly adding to its total costs (Saudi Arabia is 10,000 kilometres away from the Canadian east coast, but tanker shipment is cheap). It's also why Western Canadian Select, the industry name for most oil sands bitumen, sells at such a steep discount to more conventional oil types coming out of Saudi Arabia. In June, for instance, WCS sold at an average of USD$52.10 a barrel, compared to USD$67.87 for West Texas Intermediate (WTI), an oil category priced similarly to most Middle Eastern oils. "The oil Alberta produces is simply of a lower quality than …

WTI, and is located farther away from customers," writes the Alberta government in an online briefing note describing the WCS "discount."

Even with a pipeline, it's not a guarantee that refineries would buy Canadian

The cancelled Energy East pipeline, of course, would have pumped Saskatchewan and Alberta petroleum into New Brunswick. Politicians touted the pipeline as a way to supplant foreign suppliers such as Saudi Arabia. "We believe this nation-building project would have benefited all of Canada through new jobs, investment, energy security and the ability to displace oil being imported into Canada from overseas," Alberta premier Rachel Notley said upon the project's cancellation. However, refineries are no different than a driver cruising gas stations looking for a fill-up: They seek out whoever has the best price and buy accordingly. If Alberta can't sell its oil on the Atlantic Coast for a lower price than Saudi Arabia, refineries aren't going to buy it – particularly if they can't process it. "Getting product from Western Canada, while conceptually sounding like a good way to push out Saudi oil, doesn't fix everything," said Jason Parent with the Canadian oil industry analyst Kent Group. As of press time, WCS is currently selling at an incredible $30 discount over more conventional oil types. While this would likely be enough to entice Atlantic buyers, the discount isn't always so competitive – particularly if Saudi Arabia is actively trying to overproduce and drop oil prices in order to kneecap the Canadian and U.S. oil industry. This is part of the reason why Canada never built a pipeline to the east coast in the first place. A west-to-east pipeline was indeed considered soon after the discovery of oil in Alberta in the 1940s, but it was soon scrapped. "Eastern provinces did the math and found it cheaper to import foreign oil by tanker, rather than bother with the extra cost of domestic supply," said Peter Tertzakian, director of the Calgary-based Arc Energy Research Institute. However, even if the business case is a little complicated, Tertzakian still advocates a pipeline as something Canada should do for strategic reasons. “We could be completely self sufficient if we wanted,” he said. “It’s just a question of how much we are willing to pay for it.”

Canada can’t really hurt Saudi Arabia’s bottom line
The easiest way for Canada to cut off Saudi Arabia imports would be simply to buy more American oil. It’s about the same price, it doesn’t require specialized facilities and considering that they already buy so much of ours, there’s a certain justice to it. The U.S. also has an excellent human rights record compared to the Saudis. But while such a move might assuage Canada’s moral compass, the practical effect would be almost nil. It’s a seller’s market for oil right now. Production of U.S. shale oil is slowing down, Iran is being hammered by sanctions and petroleum demand continues to tick upwards all over the world. All this means that if Canada could successfully prevent a drop of Saudi oil from ever entering our borders again, it’s unlikely that Riyadh would ever notice. Any oil tanker turned away at Saint John could simply set course for New Jersey. Unlike Canada, Saudi Arabia sells a product that is easy to transport and that can be processed by almost anyone. Said Andrew Leach, “Saudi oil will still sell at the world price.”

Turkey admits to 3 more years of missing inflation target

Bloomberg/Ankara

Turkey’s central bank yesterday acknowledged it won’t meet its 5% inflation target for three more years, disappointing investors seeking signs that monetary policy would tighten.

Although governor Murat Cetinkaya pledged to raise borrowing costs when needed, his prediction of 6.7% inflation by the end of 2020 was seen as a dovish signal by investors who gathered in Ankara for the bank’s quarterly inflation report. He expects prices to rise 13.4% through this year and 9.3% through 2019.

This was the first time the governor provided an above-target forecast for three years into the future since taking office in 2016, and it comes with the inflation rate at its highest in 15 years. For investors surprised that the bank didn’t raise borrowing costs at its last rate meeting on July 24, it’s another indication monetary policy makers will put a premium on stimulating economic activity, according to Erkin Isik, a strategist at Turk Ekonomi Bankasi AS in Istanbul. That’s an agenda demanded by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

“The upward revision to medium-term forecasts suggests that the bank will prioritize growth over inflation and let inflation remain high for much longer,” Isik said by e-mail as

Cetinkaya spoke.

The lira fell during the governor’s speech and was trading 0.4% lower at 4.90 per dollar at 12:31pm in Istanbul.

Unlike in his previous inflation reports, Cetinkaya went out of his way to explain last week’s rate decision. This year’s 500-basis-point increase in lending costs will take time to have an impact on demand conditions, which are set to soften with a re-balancing in the economy, he said.

His base-case scenario of a “moderate” slowdown in growth after last year’s 7.4% expansion is partly based on expectations the government will lower spending. Continued expansionary fiscal policies would result in higher inflation, according to the inflation report.

Taking into account the high inflation rate and current account deficit “at a time of tightening global financial conditions, such a situation would result in a higher country risk premium and increase the pressure on foreign-exchange levels, necessitating a tighter monetary policy stance to rein in price gains,” the report read.

Erdogan has repeatedly stressed he wants interest rates to come down, taking the anomalous approach that cheaper money would help to tame inflation by stimulating growth.

Higher Oil Price Boosts BP’s Recovery; Profit Up Fourfold

Higher oil prices and increased output helped BP Plc (NYSE: BP) quadruple its second-quarter profit from a year earlier as the oil major finally shakes off the after-effects of 2010’s Deepwater Horizon spill and the last oil market slump.

Second-quarter results have been a mixed bag for the world’s top oil companies. Total SA (NYSE: TOT) beat forecasts and boosted production targets while Royal Dutch Shell Plc (NYSE: RDS.A) launched a $25 billion share buyback program despite profits falling short of expectations.

U.S. majors Exxon Mobil Corp. (NYSE: XOM) and Chevron Corp. (NYSE: CVX) disappointed Wall Street.

BP confirmed it would increase its quarterly dividend for the first time in nearly four years, offering 10.25 cents a share, an increase of 2.5%. The company bought back shares to the tune of $200 million in the first half.

In a further sign of recovery, BP last week agreed to buy U.S. shale oil and gas assets from global miner BHP Billiton for $10.5 billion.

The deal, BP’s first major acquisition in 20 years, marked a watershed for the company in the United States as it looks to leave behind the $65 billion fallout from the deadly explosion of its Deepwater Horizon rig in the U.S. Gulf of Mexico.

Benchmark Brent crude futures, currently over $74 per barrel, rose about 16% in the first half of 2018 and are up about 60% since June last year.

BP’s output in the first six months of the year was 3.662 million barrels of oil equivalent per day (MMboe/d), including production at Russia’s Rosneft, of which it owns just under a fifth, from 3.544 MMboe/d a year earlier. That helped underlying replacement cost profit, BP’s definition of net income, rise to $2.8 billion, exceeding forecasts of $2.7 billion, according to a company-provided survey of analysts.

The company earned $0.7 billion a year earlier and $2.6 billion in the first quarter. BP’s shares were up about 1.2%, hitting a two-week high in early trading.

BP has paid around $2.4 billion of expected 2018 costs of just over $3 billion related to Deepwater Horizon, and plans to split the outstanding payments equally between the third and fourth quarters, CFO Brian Gilvary said.

Meanwhile, the company has tightened its investment budget for this year to about $15 billion from previously up to $16 billion and increased its divestment guidance to over $3 billion from $2 billion to $3 billion.

Gearing, the ratio between debt and BP’s market value, declined to 27.8% at the end of the quarter from 28.1% at the end of March. Net debt was $39.3 billion at the end of June compared with $40 billion at the end of March.

“With gearing nudging down sequentially, dividends raised, and execution on track, 1Q and 2Q are the start of a new positive trend for BP,” Bernstein analyst Oswald Clint said.

Time for Europe to redefine its interests

By Mark Leonard/Berlin

Donald Trump is the first US president to think that the US-led world order is undermining US interests.
Though the current order obviously benefits the United States, Trump is convinced that it benefits China even more.
Fearing China's ascendance as another pole of global power, Trump has launched a project of creative destruction to destroy the old order and establish a new one that is more

favourable for the US.
Trump wants to pursue this objective by engaging with countries bilaterally, thereby always negotiating from a position of strength.
He has shown particular disdain for traditional US allies, whom he accuses of free riding, while also standing in the way of his demolition derby.
Likewise, Trump cannot stand multilateral organisations that strengthen smaller and weaker countries vis-à-vis the US.
Given his “America First” strategy, Trump has spent his presidency undermining institutions such as the World Trade Organisation, and abandoning multilateral agreements such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), the Iran nuclear deal, and the Paris climate accord.
And because Trump has been able to pick new fights so fast, other countries have struggled to keep up, let alone form effective alliances against him.
In recent weeks, Trump has set his sights squarely on the European Union.
As Ivan Krastev of the Institute for Human Sciences recently observed, the EU now faces the possibility of becoming “the guardian of a status quo that has ceased to exist.” As a committed Atlanticist and multilateralist, it pains me to admit that he is right.
The time has come for Europe to redefine its interests, and to develop a new strategy for defending them.
First and foremost, Europeans will have to start thinking for themselves, rather than deferring to the US foreign-policy establishment.
The EU clearly has an interest in preserving the rules-based order that Trump hopes to tear down, and its interests with respect to the Middle East – particularly Turkey – and even Russia have increasingly diverged from those of the US.
Europeans should of course try to work with the US whenever possible; but not if it means subordinating their own interests.
Europeans must also start investing in military and economic

autonomy – not to break away from the US, but to hedge against America's abandonment of its commitments.
Fortunately, there is already a healthy debate in European capitals about increasing national defence spending to 2% of GDP; and both the EU Permanent Structured Co-operation framework (PESCO) and French President Emmanuel Macron's new European Intervention Initiative (EI2) represent steps in the right direction.
The question now is whether France's Force de Frappe (military and nuclear strike force) can be extended to provide a credible deterrent for the rest of the EU.
On the economic front, Europe is facing a dilemma as it weighs its values against its business interests.
Former Belgian foreign minister Mark Eyskens once described Europe as "an economic giant, a political dwarf, and a military worm." But Europe is now in danger of becoming an economic dwarf, too.
The fact that the US can threaten secondary sanctions on European companies for doing business with Iran is deeply worrying.
Though the EU is standing up for international law, it remains captive to the tyranny of the dollar system.
Looking ahead, the EU needs to gain more leverage for dealing with other great powers such as China and the US.
If Trump wants to make the transatlantic relationship more transactional, then the EU needs to be ready to trade across different policy areas to make deals.
Consider the US Department of Defence's recent request that the United Kingdom send more troops in Afghanistan.
If the EU were taking a muscular approach, it would deny any reinforcements until the US drops its threats of secondary sanctions on European companies.
Moreover, Europe needs to develop a strategy for political outreach to others.
The G7 is supposed to be the cockpit of the West, but at its recent summit in Quebec, it seemed to be short-circuiting.
So shocking was Trump's behaviour that some senior European

officials now wonder if US allies should form an independent middle-power alliance, lest they be crushed between the rocks of a rising China and a declining America.
In an increasingly deal-based world, a new G6 might offer a defence of the rules-based system.
Still, one wonders if the EU is capable of putting up a united front.
With the bloc splintering into distinct political tribes, it is becoming easier for other powers to pursue a divide-and-conquer strategy.
This has long been Russia's strategy, and it is now being adopted by China and the US, too.
For example, in 2016, southern and eastern EU member-states that rely on Chinese investment managed to water down a joint EU statement on China's territorial encroachments in the South China Sea.
Similarly, Trump routinely reaches out to eastern and southern EU member-states in order to sow divisions within the bloc.
For example, US Department of State officials reportedly made it clear to Romania that the US would not press it on rule-of-law violations if it breaks ranks with the EU and moves its embassy in Israel to Jerusalem.
With US-EU relations already fraught, the Trump administration will be all the more tempted to engage in such tactics.
It is unclear how the EU should respond.
It could impose heavier costs on countries that break ranks on foreign policy, or it could invest more in security so that even countries on the periphery feel as though they have something to lose by undermining EU cohesion.
Alternatively, the EU itself could strike a deal with member states, whereby it would go easy on internal political matters in exchange for foreign-policy co-operation.
Whatever is decided, the EU urgently needs to chart a new course.
Rather than being perpetually surprised and outraged by Trump's affronts, Europeans must develop their own foreign policy with which to confront his behaviour. – Project

Syndicate

* Mark Leonard is Director of the European Council on Foreign Relations.

UK firm PwC criticised over bid for major Saudi Arabia contract

One of Britain's biggest consulting and accountancy firms has been negotiating
to land a major contract to help streamline and modernise Saudi Arabia's
military, the Guardian can reveal.
PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) confirmed it had tendered for the project,
which will be part of a wholesale transformation of the

kingdom's defence
ministry designed to better equip and support its frontline forces.
PwC declined to comment further about the talks. It said there was an "ongoing
tender process with a number of participants pitching for work".
The negotiations, for a deal that could be worth millions to the company, have
drawn criticism from campaign groups. Campaigners have condemned the
country's involvement in the conflict in Yemen, claiming its airstrikes have
killed civilians and amount to war crimes.

Peter Frankental, Amnesty International UK's economic affairs programme
director, urged PwC to explain what due diligence it had undertaken before
pitching for the work.
"Like any company, international accountancy firms should ensure that they
avoid contributing to human rights violations in their operations, or being
directly linked to them by their business relationships.
"We'd like to know what due diligence the company has done. The United
Nations guiding principles on business and human rights make it clear that a
company may be viewed as complicit if they are seen to benefit from abuses
committed by another party."
The Saudi ministry of defence is run by Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin
Abdulaziz Al Saud. The 32-year-old, known as MbS, is said to be the world's
youngest defence minister and is also the kingdom's deputy

prime minister.

Described by critics as an inexperienced firebrand, he has been the architect of
the kingdom’s intervention in Yemen, in which it has backed the exiled
government over Iranian-supported Houthi rebels.

This year the UN said the conflict had led to more than 22 million Yemenis –
up to 80% of the population – requiring humanitarian aid.
Jamie McGoldrick, the UN’s humanitarian coordinator in Yemen, has
described it as “an absurd and futile war” and condemned the “mounting
civilian casualties caused by escalated and indiscriminate attacks throughout
Yemen”.
PwC already has a presence in Saudi Arabia, but it is the company’s UK
operation that is behind the defence project.
PwC has launched a “call for resources” – asking specialists and consultants in
London whether they would be interested in moving to Riyadh to start the
work – because, it has said, it is “currently finalising the deal”.
The company told staff that the Saudi ministry of defence was undergoing an
“ambitious transformation to modernise its armed forces at a size and scale
rarely seen before … [this] is at its most critical phase and they need support to
undertake this level of change.”
If it wins the contract, PwC is likely to be tasked with transforming several
support areas within the defence ministry. The first phase of

the work is likely
to focus on how to reshape recruitment, resourcing, performance management
and strategic workforce planning, and how to manage and communicate
change.

The Guardian asked PwC what due diligence it had undertaken and how it
would answer concerns about working with the Saudi military. The company
declined to respond.
The Saudi embassy in London was asked about the scale and scope of the
project but also declined to comment.
Frankental urged PwC to think again. “As any accountancy firm involved in
work for the Saudi ministry of defence must know, the Royal Saudi air force
has an appalling record in Yemen, with the Saudi-led military coalition having
indiscriminately bombed Yemeni homes, hospitals, funeral halls, schools and
factories. Thousands of Yemeni civilians have been killed and injured.”
Anna Macdonald, director of the Control Arms Secretariat, a global coalition
working for international arms control, said the UK “should be focusing on
trying to stop this terrible conflict, not assisting the Saudi government.”
She added: “British companies should be very cautious indeed in what they are
supporting. Yemen is the world’s worst humanitarian crisis and getting worse
by the day.

“The UK government and UK companies are fuelling this in continuing to
supply bombs and military equipment to Saudi Arabia and its coalition
partners. Ordinary Yemenis need access to water, to humanitarian aid and,
most pressingly of all, for the incessant bombing of their schools, hospitals,
markets and funerals to stop.”

Saudi Arabia has defended its military operations in Yemen. This year the
foreign minister, Adel al-Jubeir, said the critics were wrong. “They criticise us
for a war in Yemen that we did not want, that was imposed on us,” he told the
BBC. “They criticise us for a war in Yemen that is a just war, that is supported
by international law.”
Judeir blamed the Houthi rebels for blocking aid and contributing to the
humanitarian crisis.
A spokesman for the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
said firms had to operate by UK and international law, and there was no
restriction on accountancy services in Saudi Arabia.

LNG becomes more volatile on

heat wave, Trump’s trade war: Russell

LAUNCESTON, Australia, July 30 (Reuters) – Prices for spot cargoes of liquefied natural gas (LNG) in top-consuming region Asia have become more volatile amid a northern hemisphere heat wave, China’s switch to cleaner fuels and a side-helping of Donald Trump-inspired trade disruptions.

The spot LNG price LNG-AS for September delivery in North Asia rose to $9.75 per million British thermal units (mmBtu) in the week to July 27, the first increase in six weeks.

Soaring temperatures in Japan and South Korea were behind the move higher, as utilities ramped up electricity output to meet demand for air-conditioning. Japan even resorted to restarting old and dirty oil-fired power plants, in addition to boosting natural gas generation.

The boost to prices last week was the latest turn in a spot LNG market that has become more volatile and sensitive to even

relatively modest moves in supply and demand.
The spot price reached $11.60 per mmBtu in mid-June, an unusual occurrence as it meant the peak summer price exceeded that for the previous winter for the first time since 2012.

LNG has a seasonal pattern, with the peak price usually occurring in the northern winter, followed by a lower high in summer and troughs in autumn and spring.

The mid-June price peak was built on strong demand from China, the world’s No. 2 importer, whose rapid growth took it past South Korea last year, although it still has some way to go to dislodge Japan from the top spot.

Some supply outages at the same time in major producer Australia, as well as Malaysia and the United States, also drove prices higher in June.

While the spot price has shifted up a gear, the extra demand has yet to show up in trade flows.

Northeast Asia, which includes the three top LNG buyers of Japan, China and South Korea, is on track to import around 14.2 million tonnes of LNG in July, according to vessel-tracking and port data compiled by Thomson Reuters.

This would be largely steady to June’s 14.8 million tonnes and 14.5 million tonnes in July last year.

JAPAN DRIVING DEMAND

Looking at the breakdown by country shows Japan on track to import about 6.4 million tonnes in July, up from June’s 6.03 million, but below last July’s 7.1 million.

China will import around 3.85 million tonnes in July, down a tad from June’s 3.95 million, but up from 2.91 million in July of 2017.

South Korea’s July imports are headed for 2.5 million tonnes, a 26 percent slump from June’s 3.4 million and also well below the 3 million from July a year ago.

While China is still posting large year-on-year gains, it seems current demand for LNG is largely being driven by Japan.

The dynamics of LNG flows are also shifting, partly as a result of U.S. President Donald Trump’s escalating trade dispute with China.

While trade in LNG isn’t restricted in any way as yet, it seems China is quietly discouraging its major oil and gas companies from buying from the United States.

Only two cargoes arrived China in July from the United States, carrying just 0.13 million tonnes of the super-chilled fuel.

This was an unchanged number of cargoes from June, but down on five vessels that arrived in May, and well below seven that unloaded in January this year.

The winner in China is Australia, with imports totalling to 12.4 million tonnes in the first seven months of the year, up from 9.1 million tonnes in the same period last year.

Australia has also upped its shipments to Japan, with 15.9 million tonnes arriving in the first seven months, up from 14.6 million in the same period in 2017.

U.S. LNG suppliers have had some success in shipping to Asian countries other than China, with Japan taking three cargoes in July, down from four in June and level with May.

South Korea brought in four U.S. cargoes in July, the same number as June and down from five in May.

But with Chinese demand for U.S. LNG under a cloud, it’s likely that U.S. producers will have to offer more competitive prices to other buyers in Asia, or perhaps in Europe.

This may prompt changes in the way LNG producers such as Qatar and Australia market spot cargoes, increasing volatility in a market that has shifted from being fairly predictable to one characterised by quicker and larger price swings.

Turkish steel makers eye exports to West Africa amid U.S. tariff setbacks

By Ceyda Caglayan

ISTANBUL, July 30 (Reuters) – Turkish steel makers are looking to expand in West Africa and other emerging markets in response to tariffs and planned quotas which threaten their sales to the United States and the European Union, a senior sector official said.

Namik Ekinci, board chairman for the Turkish Steel Foreign Trade Association, told Reuters that Turkey was looking to boost its trade with West Africa and sub-Saharan countries, where there is demand for the less capital-intensive steel products that Turkey mainly exports.

“Looking at the product types these countries consume, it’s products that we have the capability to produce like rebar and pipes. Therefore, these countries are markets where we have a chance,” Ekinci said.

“This is why the market we are working with in the first stage is West Africa,” he said, adding that the Caribbean, South America and Southeast Asia were the next targets.

According to data from the Turkish Steel Exporters Association, more capital-intensive products, used in the automotive and white goods sectors, account for a quarter of Turkey’s steel production, while products like rebar and pipes account for 53 percent.
The world’s eighth biggest steel producer, Turkey ranks second in global exports of rebar, figures from the World Steel Association show.

In a move that ignited fears of a global trade war, U.S. President Donald Trump in March imposed a 25 percent tariff on steel imports and a 10 percent tariff on aluminium imports, leading to a 56 percent slump in Turkey’s exports to the United States between January and May.

In early July European Union countries also voted in favour of a combination of quota and tariffs to prevent a surge of steel imports into the bloc that could follow the U.S. levies.

In order to tackle the U.S. tariffs and protectionist measures, Ekinci said Turkey wanted to increase its effectiveness in other emerging markets “as the United States and the European Union adopt measures to make trade harder.”

He said a union of Turkish exporters would jointly start a new firm to penetrate the target markets through time charter shipments, aiming to increase Turkey’s market share in West Africa from below 5 percent to 15 percent by cutting shipping costs.

The project is expected to cut transport costs of steel exported to West Africa to around $30 per tonne, from nearly $100, making it significantly more competitve, Ekinci said.

L'aggressiva politica dell'Arabia Saudita ha fallito: il Qatar è piccolo, ma forte

La corte dell'Aja ha stabilito che il blocco imposto al Qatar dagli Emirati Arabi (insieme ad altre nazioni tra cui l'Arabia Saudita) è discriminatorio. Un precedente importante, che mostra l’illeggittimità e il fallimento delle politiche saudite che volevano isolare il piccolo (ma ricco) Paese

Certo, esaltare l’apertura dei cinema in Arabia Saudita è più facile e forse più conveniente. Ma la notizia cui dovremmo prestare attenzione è quella che arriva dall’Aja, dove la Corte Internazionale di Giustizia (il principale organo giudiziario delle Nazioni Unite) si è espressa a proposito della “causa” intentata dal Qatar contro gli Emirati Arabi Uniti, uno dei Paesi (gli altri sono Arabia Saudita, Bahrein ed Egitto, ai quali in seguito si sono aggiunti anche Maldive, Libia e Yemen), che il 5 giugno decisero di imporre un blocco “via terra, mare e aria” contro l’emirato guidato da Tamim bin-Hamad al-Thani. **Il Qatar aveva richiesto l’intervento della Corte accusando gli Emirati di violazione dei diritti umani dei cittadini qatarioti** che, in seguito all’embargo, erano stati espulsi dagli Emirati oppure erano rimasti separati dalle famiglie, in molti casi miste.

La Corte, che per la prima volta era chiamata a esprimersi su questa controversia tra i Paesi del Golfo Persico, si è basata sulla Convenzione Internazionale per l’Eliminazione di tutte le forme di Discriminazione Razziale, varata nel 1965, e ha stabilito che quei provvedimenti in effetti erano discriminatori e violavano i diritti dei cittadini qatarioti. **Così ha decretato che gli Emirati dispongano immediate misure per arrivare a tre risultati**: consentire la riunificazione delle famiglie, permettere agli studenti provenienti dal Qatar di concludere i cicli di studi già iniziati negli Emirati al momento del varo dell’embargo, garantire il libero ricorso dei cittadini del Qatar ai tribunali e agli organismi giudiziari degli Emirati.

> *Quella della Corte, insomma, potrebbe essere solo il primo di una serie di interventi a livello internazionale che mostrerebbero l’illegittimità e il sostanziale fallimento dell’aggressione ispirata soprattutto dall’Arabia Saudita. Il Qatar ha affrontato e superato le difficoltà economiche che*

l’embargo avrebbe potuto causare. Ma soprattutto non è stato isolato dal resto del mondo, mandando così a monte il progetto politico che stava alla base dell’embargo stesso

Come si diceva, la Corte Internazionale di Giustizia non si era mai pronunciata su tale disputa internazionale. Ma le sue decisioni costituiscono, ora, un importante precedente. Il Qatar, infatti, ha intrapreso analoghe azioni anche in altre sedi. Per esempio, ha depositato un reclamo ufficiale presso l’Organizzazione Mondiale del Commercio (Wto) contro Emirati, Arabia Saudita e Bahrein, una mossa che obbliga tali Paesi ad aprire un tavolo di consultazione e trattativa per provare a risolvere le reciproche divergenze, che in questo caso sono riassunte nel termine “embargo”. **Se il tentativo di composizione pacifica dovesse fallire, sarebbe il Wto stesso a formare una commissione interna per giudicare la questione e prendere eventuali provvedimenti.** E difficilmente potrebbe mostrarsi indifferente a una situazione di palese persecuzione economica e discriminazione razziale come quella che è stata costruita contro il Qatar (una nazione con soli 400 mila abitanti che dà lavoro a più di 2 milioni di immigrati economici) dai Paesi a esso più vicini.

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Pentagono ha trovato un accordo con il Governo dell’emirato per ampliare a sua volta la propria base militare.

Resta cordiale anche il rapporto con l’Iran, una delle vere ragioni dell’embargo. Ed è più che solido il cordone ombelicale di buoni affari che lega l’emirato alla vecchia Europa. Nel recente passato l’emiro Al-Thani ha saggiamente investito in una miriade di grandi aziende europee (da British Airways a Volkswagen, da Deutsche Bank a Royal Dutch Shell), per non parlare dell’industria del lusso e della moda, dalla maison Valentino a Harrod’s, e ora raccoglie i frutti politici dell’albero dell’economia. **Brutte notizie, quindi, per i sauditi e i loro alleati. Il Qatar è piccolo ma non debole. I loro conti erano sbagliati.**