

Comments on UAE-China economic linkages & prospects in The National, 28 May 2024

Dr. Nasser Saidi's comments appeared in an article in The National titled "[Trade deals and tech in focus as President Sheikh Mohamed visits China and South Korea](#)" published on 28th May 2024.

The comments are posted below.

"Energy remains at the heart of the UAE's burgeoning relation with China, though in recent years it has extended beyond," Nasser Saidi, Lebanon's former economy minister, told The National.

The UAE could benefit from linking its financial markets to Shanghai and Hong Kong, greatly helping financial flows, Mr Saidi said.

Potential linkages could also include the adoption of yuan for trade and the extension of China's Cross-Border Interbank Payment System, which is considered an alternative to the SWIFT payment system, he added.

"Digitalization and the Future of Global Economy":

Panelist at the 8th Abu Dhabi Strategic Debate, 14 Nov 2021

Dr. Nasser Saidi joined as a panelist in the session titled "Digitalization and the Future of Global Economy", at the Eight Annual Abu Dhabi Strategic Debate organised by the Emirates Policy Centre on 14th November 2021.

Watch the full session below from 10:13 till 1:21:24:

"Post-Coronavirus Economy: Trajectories of Global Order": Panelist at Abu Dhabi Strategic Debate, 11 Nov 2020

Dr. Nasser Saidi joined as a panelist in the session titled "Post-Coronavirus Economy: Trajectories of Global Order", at the Seventh Annual Abu Dhabi Strategic Debate organised by the Emirates Policy Centre on 11th November 2020.

The session discussed two broad questions: *How long will COVID-19 continue to affect global economy? How will COVID-19 change the global economy in the future?*

Dr. Nasser Saidi, the Founder and President of Nasser Saidi & Associates, stated that the global economy is being hit by higher uncertainty as global production has dropped by 4.5 percent, global labour income is estimated to have declined by 11 percent and direct foreign investments have fallen by 15 percent at a minimum in the first half of 2020.

"It is important to realise that world top technology

companies such as Amazon, Apple, and Microsoft have developed into major powers in the global arena. The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the need for bridging the digital gaps between various countries and the need for addressing internal divisions in these countries themselves," he added.
Watch the full session below:

A summary of the event can be accessed at:
<https://wam.ae/en/details/1395302885959>

"Clean Energy in MENA: Industry & Workforce Readiness", CEBC report launch, 23 Apr 2019

The Clean Energy Business Council (CEBC) launched a survey-based report titled "Clean Energy in MENA: Industry & Workforce Readiness" on 23rd Apr, 2019, at the Capital Club in Dubai.

To download the report, please access the CEBC webpage – [here](#)
To download the presentation, which discusses the climate change-related challenges facing the MENA region as well as the results of the CEBC survey, please click [here](#).

“Is the Middle East Ready for China?”, Presentation at NUS Middle East Institute Annual conference, Feb 11-12 2019

Dr. Nasser Saidi participated in the National University of Singapore(NUS)'s Middle East Institute's annual conference held in Singapore over 11th and 12th of February, 2019.

Part of the panel on “Finance and Economics”, Dr. Saidi presented his views on whether [the Middle East is ready for China](#), also identifying the building blocks of a strategic China- Middle East partnership. He stated that if Middle Eastern states could behave like the 10-member regional trading bloc, it could pave the way for a regional free-trade agreement with China to further improve trading volumes and future infrastructure investments from the Chinese; working together would also help the region battle the ongoing threat of terrorism.

Click to play the video of the panel session below:

More on the event: <https://mei.nus.edu.sg/event/the-middle-east-pivot-china-as-bri-between-geostrategy-and-commercial-opportunity/>

Media coverage:

<https://www.scmp.com/news/asia/southeast-asia/article/2185754/middle-eastern-states-have-lessons-learn-asean-building>

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/arielcohen/2019/02/14/will-china-replace-the-u-s-as-the-middle-east-hegemon>

"2019 Outlook: Navigating Choppy Waters", Presentation at the Chalhoub Group seminar, 27 Jan 2019

Speaking at the Chalhoub Group's annual seminar in Dubai on 27th Jan 2019, Dr. Nasser Saidi shared his views on the changing global economic landscape, while highlighting a macroeconomic overview for the GCC region. The presentation also identifies the global consumption trends drivers, and focuses on the luxury segment including trends, use of technology and disruption. The talk ended with some key takeaways for the Group.

Click [here](#) to access the presentation titled "2019 Outlook: Navigating Choppy Waters".

A New Approach to MENA's Refugee Crisis, Project Syndicate Article, Jul 2018

The article titled "A New Approach to MENA's Refugee Crisis", was first published on Project Syndicate on 10 July 2018, and can be directly accessed [here](#). The [Arabic](#) and [French](#) versions of the article have also been published.

There are now more people displaced by conflict than at any time since World War II, and violent conflict in the Middle East and North Africa accounts for the majority of today's refugees. With no evidence that the fighting will end anytime soon, host countries and major donors must adjust their aid accordingly.

The human toll from violence in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) has reached [historic proportions](#). Since 2000, [an estimated 60%](#) of the world's conflict-related deaths have been in the MENA region, while violence in Iraq, Libya, Syria, and Yemen continues to displace millions of people annually.

For countries hosting refugees from these conflicts, the challenges have been acute. According to a [2016 report](#) by the International Monetary Fund, MENA states bordering high-intensity conflict zones have suffered an average annual GDP decline of 1.9 percentage points in recent years, while inflation has increased by an average of 2.8 percentage points.

Large influxes of refugees put downward pressure on a host country's wages, exacerbating poverty and increasing social, economic, and political tensions. And yet most current aid strategies focus on short-term assistance rather than long-term integration. Given the scale and duration of MENA's refugee crisis, it is clear that a new approach is needed, one that shifts the focus from temporary to semi-permanent solutions.

To accomplish this, three areas of refugee-related support need urgent attention. First, donor countries must do more to strengthen the economies of host states. For example, by buying more exports from host countries or helping to finance health-care and education sectors, donors could improve economic conditions for conflict-neighboring states and, in the process, create job opportunities for refugees.

For this to pay off, however, host countries will first need to remove restrictions on refugees' ability to work legally.

Allowing displaced people to participate in formal labor markets would enable them to earn an income, pay taxes, and eventually become less dependent on handouts as they develop skills that eventually can be used to rebuild their war-ravaged countries.

Employment might seem obvious, but most MENA host countries currently bar refugees from holding jobs in the formal sector (Jordan is one exception, having issued [some 87,000 work permits](#) to Syrian refugees since 2016). As a result, many refugees are forced to find work in the informal economy, where they can become vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

But evidence from outside the region demonstrates that when integrated properly, refugees are more of a benefit than a drain on host countries' labor markets. For example, a [recent analysis](#) by the Refugee Studies Centre at the University of Oxford found that in Uganda, refugee-run companies actually increase employment opportunities for citizens by significant margins.

A second issue that must be addressed is protecting refugees' "identity," both in terms of actual identification documents and cultural rights. For these reasons, efforts must be made to improve refugees' digital connectivity, to ensure that they have access to their data and to their communities.

One way to do this would be by using blockchain technology to secure the United Nations' refugee registration system. This would strengthen the delivery of food aid, enhance refugee mobility, and improve access to online-payment services, making it easier for refugees to earn and save money.

Improved access to communication networks would also help refugees stay connected with family and friends. By bringing the Internet to refugees, donor states would be supporting programs like "[digital classrooms](#)" and online health-care clinics, services that can be difficult to deliver in refugee

communities. Displaced women, who are often the most isolated in resettlement situations, would be among the main beneficiaries.

Finally, when the conflicts end – and they eventually will – the international community must be ready to assist with reconstruction. After years of fighting, investment opportunities will emerge in places like Iraq, Syria, and Sudan, and for the displaced people of these countries, rebuilding will boost growth and create jobs. Regional construction strategies could reduce overall costs, increase efficiencies, and improve economies of scale.

In fact, the building blocks for the MENA region's postwar period must be put in place now. For example, the establishment of a new Arab Bank for Reconstruction and Development would ensure that financing is available when the need arises. This financial institution – an idea I have [discussed elsewhere](#) – could easily be funded and led by the Gulf Cooperation Council with participation from the European Union, China, Japan, the United States, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, and other international development actors.

With this three-pronged approach, it is possible to manage the worst refugee crisis the world has experienced in decades. By ensuring access to work, strengthening communication and digital access, and laying the groundwork for post-war reconstruction, the people of a shattered region can begin planning for a more prosperous future. The alternative – short-term aid that trickles in with no meaningful strategy – will produce only further disappointment.

The future of energy: innovation, technology and geopolitics, Panel discussion at Aspen Institute Italia, 3 Jul 2018

Dr. Nasser Saidi participated as a panelist at the Aspen Institute Italia event titled “Il futuro dell’energia: innovazione, tecnologia, geopolitica” (The future of energy: innovation, technology and geopolitics) on 3rd July 2018.

Innovation in the field of energy takes place at various levels simultaneously, resulting in a truly “disruptive” combination: new digital technologies (with the growing role of artificial intelligence and blockchains); “smart grids” that permit an improved and increasingly steady coordination between supply and demand; greater storage capacity (batteries of varying sizes) that will make it possible to overcome the problem of discontinuity among renewable fonts; the availability of low-cost abundant, clean energy (low environmental impact) for people and businesses. With the push toward digital technology generating more rapid transformations, it is not easy to accurately predict the timeframes and means of future efforts; but the direction is quite clear, as is its influence on the daily life of anyone who is going to be using electrical power – i.e. an unprecedented number of persons.

More: <http://www.aspeninstitute.it/en/programs/future-energy-innovation-technology-and-geopolitics>