



China and Russia Bolster Civilian Nuclear Capabilities in the Middle East

OE Watch Commentary: The UAE recently became the first Arab country to produce nuclear energy, joining Israel and Iran at the regional level. By the end of the decade, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Turkey all stated that they expect to have functioning nuclear programs. Turkey's Akkuyu Plant and Egypt's El Dabaa Plant, scheduled to begin operating in 2023 and 2026 respectively, are being built by Russia's Rosatom. The accompanying excerpt, from the prominent Saudi daily *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, highlights the importance of Russian technology to nuclear power in the Middle East, including its bid to become Saudi Arabia's main partner in the kingdom's official foray into domestic nuclear production.

China too is seeking greater involvement in the Middle East's nuclear development. The accompanying excerpt from the Chinese *Xinhua* news agency, posted on the Arabic-language website of China's *People's Daily*, highlights Chinese interest in nuclear collaboration with Arab countries. The interest is framed in the context of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and its focus on alternative energy sources. The article, published prior to claims of surreptitious Saudi-Chinese collaboration on uranium enrichment, specifically emphasizes collaboration with Saudi Arabia and the UAE (whose reactors use South Korean technology). **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

“...In recent years, China has maintained close cooperation and exchange with some Arab countries in developing nuclear energy...”

Source:

“Nuclear Energy... a Gateway to Post-Corona Economic Recovery,” *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 29 July 2020. <https://tinyurl.com/y2a2tfsq>

الطاقة النووية... باب للتعاقي الاقتصادي بعد كورونا

The Middle East and North Africa has enormous potential to benefit from nuclear technology to restore its economic growth and achieve sustainable development in fields that improve the quality of life, such as medicine, water desalination, scientific research and others. Cooperation between Russia and the countries of the region has increased in recent years. Alexander Voronkov, Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa at the Russian Energy Agency “Rosatom,” pointed out that “the cooperation between the agency and the countries of the region spans several decades.” Two high-capacity nuclear power plants are currently being built in Egypt and Turkey, he said, adding that “Rosatom is also participating in the bidding process to build a nuclear power plant in Saudi Arabia”...

The use of nuclear technology in the health sector has become more important with the outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic, which imposed an urgent need for sterilization and disinfection, evidenced by the high demand for companies operating in this field, especially sterilization using nuclear technology.

Source:

“Nuclear Energy Development as a Promising Field for Developing Chinese-Arab Relations,” *People's Daily (Arabic)*, 3 August 2020. <http://arabic.peopledaily.com.cn/n3/2020/0803/c31660-9717805.html>

تطوير الطاقة النووية مجال واعد لتعزيز التعاون بين الصين والدول العربية

China has a full nuclear industrial and technology chain and stands ready to share advanced nuclear technology, engineering construction techniques, project management, equipment manufacturing, operation and maintenance, personnel training, technology exchange, experience and other know-how... There is a good foundation for cooperation between the Chinese and Arab sides in this field. In recent years, China has maintained close cooperation and exchange with some Arab countries in developing nuclear energy. The two parties reached a cooperative agreement regarding the establishment of the Nuclear Training Center for the Peaceful Use of Nuclear Energy and the Clean Energy Center... In terms of practical cooperation between the two sides, the Chinese National Nuclear Corporation has maintained close contact with relevant companies and institutions in the United Arab Emirates and conducted exchanges and cooperation in the fields of research and development of nuclear energy, application of nuclear technology, construction engineering, equipment manufacturing, capital investment, infrastructure, and training for talent exchange. In July 2019, China and the United Arab Emirates signed a Memorandum of Understanding, by which the Chinese National Nuclear Corporation and UAE companies will cooperate in the field of nuclear energy. In January 2018, a Saudi delegation visited the nuclear power project in Fuqing, Fujian Province, in eastern China, and exchanged technology and engineering construction around the Hualong-1 reactor. The delegation pointed out that nuclear energy plays an important role in promoting the transformation of the Saudi energy strategy and achieving “Vision 2030.” Saudi Arabia is willing to deepen cooperation with China in the nuclear power industry chain and personnel training. The Arab countries are an important partner in the joint construction of the “Belt and Road” initiative, of which sustainable development is an important part. With the increase in the demand for manufacturing and construction, the demand for electricity is expected to and has actually grown in Arab countries that seek to meet their needs through the development of nuclear energy.