Gulf Research Centre Cambridge
Knowledge for All

14th Gulf Research Meeting

Cambridge, 9-11 July 2024

Workshop No. 11

GCC Energy Transition in the Era of Energy Security

1. Directors

Dr. Sara Vakhshouri
Founder and President, SVB Energy International and The Institute of World Politics

Dr. Neil Mason Quilliam
Managing Director, Azure Strategy Consulting

2. Abstract

The workshop seeks to address the multifaceted challenges and opportunities presented by the changing global energy landscape, with a specific focus on the Gulf region. This transformation is driven by various factors, including environmental concerns, technological advancements, and geopolitical shifts. Energy security has evolved beyond ensuring a reliable energy supply, with a new emphasis on resilience and sustainability. The transition to a sustainable energy future is imperative for addressing the challenges of climate change and energy security. These nations have a unique opportunity to lead the way in this transition, given their abundant renewable energy resources and financial wealth. The Gulf nations, traditionally dependent on hydrocarbon exports, now face the need to diversify their energy sources and reduce reliance on volatile global markets. The workshop will feature a mix of plenary sessions, panel discussions, and breakout sessions. It will bring together experts from academia, industry, government, and civil society to share their insights and perspectives on the energy transition in the Gulf region. The workshop aims to explore the evolving concept of energy security, the imperative of energy transition towards sustainability, and the role of AI in energy demand management. Furthermore, the workshop aims to foster interdisciplinary discussions and collaborative solutions, catalyzing a strategic roadmap for the Gulf region's energy transition. By bringing together diverse perspectives, the workshop seeks to cultivate a holistic understanding of the challenges and opportunities inherent in navigating the path toward a resilient and sustainable energy future for the Gulf nations.

3. Context

The global energy landscape is experiencing seismic shifts, driven by a confluence of factors including environmental concerns, technological advancements, and geopolitical dynamics. The Gulf region, a crucial player in the international energy market, faces a unique set of challenges and opportunities due to its heavy reliance on hydrocarbon exports. This reliance, while a source of economic strength, exposes the region to vulnerabilities, particularly in the context of climate change. Rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and water scarcity are among the direct impacts that make the Gulf particularly susceptible to the consequences of a changing climate. Compounding these challenges, the region's dependence on fossil fuels contributes significantly to greenhouse gas emissions, further exacerbating global climate change.

Furthermore, the Gulf nations are navigating an increasingly competitive global energy market. The emergence of new energy producers and the swift decline in the costs of renewable energy technologies are placing considerable pressure on Gulf countries to diversify their energy sources and reduce their dependence on traditional oil and gas exports. In addition to economic considerations, geopolitical tensions in the Middle East introduce a critical layer of complexity to the region's energy security. Disruptions to energy infrastructure or supply chains in the Gulf could have far-reaching consequences for the global economy, emphasizing the need for strategic planning and risk mitigation.

Despite these formidable challenges, the Gulf region is not without significant opportunities as it engages with the ongoing energy transition. Abundant resources such as sunlight, wind, and geothermal energy position the Gulf countries as prime candidates for the adoption of renewable energy technologies. Moreover, the financial and technological resources at their disposal empower these nations to invest in innovative energy solutions and infrastructure. Transitioning to a more sustainable energy future offers the Gulf nations the prospect of not only reducing greenhouse gas emissions but also enhancing energy security and unlocking new economic opportunities.

This workshop, aims to delve into the intricacies of these challenges and opportunities. By bringing together experts from academia, industry, and government, the workshop will provide a collaborative platform to dissect the multifaceted nature of the Gulf region's energy landscape. The workshop will delve into an in-depth exploration, fostering a holistic understanding of the evolving concept of energy security, the imperatives of transitioning towards sustainability, and the pivotal role of artificial intelligence in managing energy demand.

As the Gulf nations stand at a crossroads, grappling with the need to balance economic imperatives, environmental sustainability, and geopolitical complexities, the workshop aims to chart a course toward a resilient and sustainable energy future for the region. By fostering interdisciplinary discussions and collaborative solutions, the workshop seeks to contribute to a strategic roadmap that will guide the Gulf nations through the complexities of their energy transition journey.

4. Focus/objectives

1. Foster in-depth discussions and knowledge sharing among experts, researchers, policymakers, and industry professionals: The commitment to promoting in-depth talks that go beyond the surface and delve into the key challenges facing energy security and transition is at the heart of this conference. The conference aims to encourage a meaningful conversation by bringing together professionals from diverse sectors that analyze and discuss, not only the technical aspects of energy, but also the socioeconomic and geopolitical variables that influence decision-making. Panels and workshops will

be designed to stimulate intellectual exploration, debate, and analysis, ensuring that attendees obtain a comprehensive understanding of the Gulf region's challenges and prospects in energy security.

2. Explore innovative solutions and best practices for addressing energy security and transition challenges in the Gulf region: The conference intends to be an innovative learning experience, actively involving attendees in the discovery of relevant energy discussions and solutions. Recognizing that energy security and transition are complex topics, the conference will include presentations demonstrating innovative initiatives, technologies, and credited strategies. The event aims to inspire new perspectives and promote the development of forward-thinking solutions that are tailored to the unique context of the Gulf area.

3. Provide a platform for networking and collaboration to facilitate the exchange of ideas and expertise: Networking is frequently the missing link in breakthrough collaborations. The conference is organized to create a powerful platform for attendees to connect and build a collaborative community that goes beyond the event itself. To enable the sharing of ideas and skills, official and informal networking opportunities will be woven into the program. Whether through planned roundtable talks, topic seminars, or informal social gatherings, the conference attempts to foster an environment conducive to building connections. The ultimate goal is to facilitate a collaborative experience that will last beyond the conference, adding to the ongoing dialogue and efforts aimed at addressing the Gulf region's complex energy concerns.

In conclusion, the conference is envisioned as a comprehensive and experiential experience. It seeks to be a transformative force in tackling the complex concerns of energy security and transition in the Gulf area by stimulating in-depth conversations, exploring new and untested solutions, and providing a networking platform. The conference's varied design guarantees that it will serve as a catalyst for change, uniting its participants in a shared commitment to defining the Gulf's sustainable energy future.

5. Papers focus/topics

The workshop will encompass a range of topics related to energy security and transition in the Gulf region and the broader global context. These topics include:

- Concept of energy security in a post-Russia-Ukraine War world
- Energy transition and its implications on a global scale
- AI and energy demand management for optimized energy grids
- Alternative sources of energy, particularly renewable energy (solar, wind, etc.) adoption and grid integration
- CCS and CCSU (Carbon Capture and Storage/Utilization) technologies for emissions reduction
- Investment in energy, financing mechanisms, and investment strategies
- Geopolitics of energy transition and its implications, particularly for the Gulf region
- The role and influence of Gulf energy producers in shaping the future of the global energy landscape
- Geopolitics of strategic minerals in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region
- Gulf countries' energy cooperation and energy security, exploring collaborative efforts and regional energy integration

These topics reflect the comprehensive approach the workshop takes in addressing the evolving energy landscape and the unique challenges and opportunities it presents to the Gulf nations.

Paper proposals should fit as closely as possible with this workshop description, notably section 4, and the publication plans (section 7).

6. Paper structure, referencing, and format

Abstract: Write a clear and concise abstract that provides a summary of the paper, including the research question, methodology, key findings, and significance.

Introduction: Clearly introduce the research problem, provide background information, and state the objectives of your study.

Literature Review: Review relevant literature to establish the context of your research. Cite key works and explain how your research fits into the existing body of knowledge.

Methodology: Describe your research methods, data collection, and analysis procedures in detail.

Results: Present your findings logically, using appropriate visuals and tables. Ensure that your results align with your research objectives.

Discussion: Analyze and interpret your findings in the context of existing literature. Discuss the implications and limitations of your research.

Conclusion: Summarize your key findings and contributions. Reiterate the significance of your work and suggest areas for further research.

Authors should also adhere to the GRM Paper Guidelines.

Participants who do not submit a paper by the 31 May 2024 deadline or whose submitted paper does not meet the requirements will be disinvited by GRCC.

7. Publication plans

The primary publication plan for the workshop revolves around producing an edited book and a special issue in a leading journal. The edited book will feature contributions from workshop participants, and Springer is being considered as a potential publisher, aligning with GRC and GRM regulations. We remain open to suggestions for alternative publishers. Additionally, we plan to approach Chatham House to explore the possibility of a concluding paper summarizing the workshop's outcomes. The anticipated completion date for these publications is set for Spring 2024, ensuring timely dissemination of the workshop's valuable insights.

Papers that may not be publishable in the volume/journal will still be reviewed by the directors and considered for individual publication in either a peer-reviewed journal or as a GRC paper. Directors will make reasonable efforts to ensure that all accepted papers are published in one of these forms.

8. References

AI and energy demand: https://agsiw.org/the-rising-energy-demand-of-ai-and-clouds-unraveling-the-environmental-conundrum/

Energy Policy Pathways to Inform Climate Policy in Saudi Arabia, https://www.kapsarc.org/research/publications/energy-policy-pathways-to-inform-climate-policy-in-saudi-arabia/

EIA: https://www.eia.gov

IEA: https://www.iea.org

KAPSARC Oil Market Outlook (KOMO), https://www.kapsarc.org/research/publications/kapsarc-oil-market-outlook-8/

OPEC: https://www.opec.org/opec_web/en/publications/338.htm

9. Directors' bio notes

Dr. Sara Vakhshouri is the founder and president of SVB Energy International and SVB Green Access, Professor and Director of the Center for Energy Security and Diplomacy at the IWP. She is an energy strategist and humanitarian visionary with two decades of experience working in the energy industry. She has extensive experience in energy strategy, energy security geopolitical risk, and global energy market studies. She has advised numerous countries on their energy roadmap strategy and consulted public and private entities, and international organizations like the IMF, World Bank, IEF, EIA, and IEA. Dr. Sara Vakhshouri has advised various governments, energy companies, investment banks, financial institutions, law firms, and international corporations on energy security strategies and energy transition, energy markets, trading and the geopolitics of energy, and investment patterns.

Dr Neil Quilliam is an energy policy, geopolitics, and foreign affairs specialist, with extensive knowledge and experience in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. He is the energy research director at SRMG Think and a partner at Azure Strategy Consulting. Previously, Neil headed the Chatham House MENA program's Future Dynamics in the Gulf project, was project director of the 'Syria and its Neighbours' policy initiative, and acting program head.