European goodbye to negative rates – or is it just ‘au revoir’?

By Mark John And Dhara Ranasinghe/ London

Europe’s decade-long experiment with negative interest rates, which ended on Thursday with the Swiss National Bank’s return to positive territory, showed one thing: they can exist beyond the realms of economic science fiction.

Launched to revive economies after the 2007/08 financial crisis, the policy flipped standard money wisdom on its head: banks had to pay a fee to park cash with their central banks; some home-owners found mortgages that paid them interest; and rewards for the act of saving all but vanished.

With the exercise now abandoned in the face of galloping inflation brought on by pandemic and the Ukraine war, doubts linger over its effectiveness and under what circumstances it will ever be used again.

“I think that probably the bar is going to be higher in the future,” said Claudio Borio, head of the Monetary and Economic

Department of the Basel-based Bank of International Settlements which acts as bank to the world’s central banks.

Rarely does monetary policy generate as much sound and fury as did the recourse in the early 2010s to negative rates by four European central banks and the Bank of Japan – now the only monetary authority still sticking with them.

With interest rates back then already close to zero, they had run out of conventional ammunition to ward off the threat of outright deflation they feared would choke off the economic recovery. The only way out, they decided, was to go below zero.

Bank chiefs fumed as the European Central Bank, Swedish Riksbank, Swiss National Bank (SNB) and Denmark’s Nationalbank went negative in moves they said undermined the whole banking business model of being able to make a profit out of lending.

Local media joined in the criticism, with Swiss newspapers in 2015 calling the moment “Frankenshock” and Germany’s Bild labelling the then ECB chief Mario Draghi “Count Draghila” for “sucking our accounts dry”.

For sure, those who relied on the return from cash savings clearly suffered during Europe’s period of ultra-low to negative rates – even if they could at least take solace from the fact that low inflation was protecting their initial savings.

Other side-effects are harder to pick apart.

Fears of negative rates leading to money-hoarding proved largely unfounded: in Switzerland, for example, the number of 1,000-franc notes in circulation remained the same, suggesting customers were not withdrawing cash to store in a safe at home.

As one Danish bank vaunted the world’s first negative rate mortgage, it is likely that cheap borrowing added steam to house price spikes across the region. But prices were often being squeezed higher by local factors including tight supply.

While many other elements have been at play, euro area bank stocks have fallen some 45% since 2014 – despite ECB moves to shield them with exemptions from charges on some deposits and

access to ultra-cheap borrowing.
Yet a report to European Parliament by the Bruegel think tank last year concluded that overall bank sector profits had not been significantly harmed by negative rates, noting that the downside was being offset by gains in asset investments.
“In the end, they worked the same as normal rate cuts,” said report co-author Gregory Claeys, while acknowledging the impact may have been greater had the experiment gone on for longer.

No future?
The question of whether negative rates actually achieve their goals is harder to answer given the modest extent of the trial – no-one ever went lower than minus 0.75% – and the fact that they have been swept aside by the turmoil of the last two years.
ECB policy-makers point to data showing that lending in the euro zone was shrinking year after year in the 2010s until negative rates helped turn that into growth by 2016 – even though that growth has never attained its pre-2009 heights.
Others point to the fact that the negative rate period coincided with the vast quantitive easing with which the ECB and other central banks around the world also boosted demand with trillions of dollars of asset purchases.
“That was a much bigger deal – much more impactful,” said Brian Coulton, chief economist at Fitch Ratings. “Using your balance sheet aggressively – that is a powerful weapon.”
Some economists argue negative rates create perverse incentives that ultimately do a disservice to the economy – for example by keeping alive “zombie companies” that by rights should fold, or by removing the impetus for governments to push tough reforms.
“What is lacking, in Europe, is the focus on structural reforms. Why didn’t they happen in the last 10 years, why didn’t we strengthen productivity growth?” said Societe Generale senior European economist Anatoli Annenkov.
Burkhard Varnholt, Chief Investment Officer Switzerland,

Credit Suisse Switzerland, goes further, saying the message they send about investing in the future was even akin to the nihilism of the No Future refrain of the 1977 Sex Pistols' punk rock track God Save the Queen.

"It's the central bankers who have taken interest rates to a level where we attach no value to the future," he said. "Today's punks wear white shirts, grey suits and a blue tie."

As the negative rate era closes, the global pool of assets with negative yield has shrunk to less than $2tn from a 2020 peak of some $18tn.

Despite the misgivings, others say the experiment has at least shown policy-makers that rates can go below zero and so is an option for them: witness the fact the Bank of England for a while considered that path as Covid-19 was ravaging the economy.

Even if the current inflationary bout means it could be a while before Europe's central bankers need to use negative rates again, it is unlikely they will want to rule them out.

"They will always be spoken of as something that remains in the toolkit," said Rohan Khanna, strategist at UBS in London. "I am very doubtful anyone here is ready to say never again for negative rates." – Reuters

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Russian gas cuts will not kill German economy

By Daniel Gros/Brussels

Much of the conventional wisdom about Europe’s current natural-gas crisis – triggered by reduced deliveries from Russia – rests on two assumptions: that the German economy depends on cheap Russian gas, and that this bet has gone spectacularly wrong. But while German industry is strong, and the country imports a lot of natural gas from Russia, a closer inspection of the numbers and economics involved does not support the prevailing narrative.

For starters, natural gas does not play a large enough role to drive an industrial economy. In 2019, gas imports via pipeline cost Germany $30 billion, representing only 0.75% of its GDP, and the overall value of the country’s gas consumption was below 2% of GDP. These modest ratios are similar across industrialised economies and suggest that cheap gas imports are highly unlikely to be a major growth factor. Moreover, even though gas consumption has stagnated in Germany and most of Western Europe over the past two decades, the economy grew, albeit slowly.

The argument that cheap Russian gas might have favoured Germany more than other countries also is not backed up by the numbers. In 2019, Germany accounted for only about 2.3% of global natural-gas consumption, but 4.5% of world GDP. Germany’s gas intensity per unit of GDP is thus about one-half of the global average, much lower than that of the United States and many other industrialised countries, including Japan and South Korea.

European economies tend to be thriftier in their energy use than the rest of the world. But even within Europe, Germany performs well, with lower gas consumption per unit of GDP than other large European economies, such as Italy and Spain. This is surprising since these two Mediterranean countries have much less need for heating in winter (and air conditioning in summer requires an order of magnitude less power than heating). Only France, with its large nuclear-power sector, is less dependent on gas.

A similar picture emerges from related metrics, such as the value of energy imports as a percentage of GDP, or gas usage for industrial purposes as a share of industrial value added. All these indicators show that the German economy uses energy less intensively than most others.

The idea that German industry gained an advantage from access to cheap Russian gas ignores the reality that there is a European gas market with, up to now, only small differences in wholesale prices across countries. One could of course argue that Russia sold its energy cheaply to Germany to make the country dependent. But the data challenge the common perception that Germany receives cheap gas.

Over the past decade, German industry has paid about 10% more for natural gas than its competitors in other major European economies. Supplies from North Sea fields have enabled British industrial firms to pay even less than their continental peers, but this does not appear to have helped them much.

The implication is that Russia obtained a non-economic benefit (German dependence on its gas supplies) for almost no cost. The inverse of this is that Germany experienced a loss of energy independence without gaining a noticeable economic advantage.

The one large economy that is both energy-intensive and has cheap natural gas is the United States. The average US citizen uses more than twice as much natural gas as a European – 25 megawatt-hours per year for the US, compared to about 10MWh for European countries. Moreover, US natural-gas prices have been somewhat lower than German or EU prices for most of the past two decades, and are now only a fraction of the European price, as European prices have increased by a factor of five, whereas US prices have changed little. Despite this cost advantage, however, the manufacturing industry of the US – and that of the United Kingdom – has not grown particularly strongly.

Adjusting to a world without Russian gas is of course a major problem for Europe. Yet, although Germany seems more vulnerable because it used to receive a large share of its gas from Russia, this can change quickly. Germany is building new regasification capacity in record time to allow the country to import the quantities of liquefied natural gas needed to fill the gap between lower Russian supplies and domestic demand, which is already falling because of high prices.

Once this import capacity has been constructed, Germany will be in the same situation as its European neighbours, which also have to bid for LNG. Prices are likely to stay high for some time. But with an energy intensity below the EU average, Germany should be able to bear the burden slightly better than Italy, Spain, and some Eastern European countries. France, of course, will be much less affected, at least if its nuclear reactors can resume full production.

We should also not forget the global picture. Bottling up a large percentage of Russian gas (which is what will happen if Europe no longer buys from Russia) increases the global gas price, which affects Asian countries as well, because they compete with Europe on LNG. South Korea and Japan have a higher energy intensity than Europe, and even China imports large quantities of LNG, at a price similar to what European countries pay.

Expensive energy, particularly natural gas, poses a difficult economic and political challenge for all energy-importing industrialised countries. Only the US and some other smaller energy producers such as Norway, Canada, and Australia benefit from this situation. But the data suggest that Germany is better placed to weather this crisis than most of its main competitors. – Project Syndicate

* Daniel Gros is a member of the board and a distinguished fellow at the Centre for European Policy Studies.

No net zero without nature

By Nigel Topping And Mahmoud Mohieldin/ London

Businesses, investors, and governments that are serious about fulfilling net-zero emissions pledges before 2050 should be rushing to protect, conserve, and regenerate the natural resources and ecosystems that support our economic growth, food security, health, and climate. Yet there appear to be worryingly few trailblazers out there.
Worse, we are quickly running out of time. The science makes

clear that to avoid the most catastrophic effects of climate change and to build resilience against the effects that are already inevitable, we must end biodiversity loss before 2030. That means establishing lasting conservation for at least 30% of land and sea areas within eight years, and then charting a course toward living in harmony with nature by 2050.

Though the challenge is massive, ignoring it makes no sense from a business perspective. A World Economic Forum white paper estimates that nature-positive policies “could generate an estimated $10tn in new annual business value and create 395mn jobs by 2030.” Among other things, such policies would use precision-agriculture technologies to improve crop yields – diversifying diets with more fruit and vegetables in the process – and boost agroforestry and peatland restoration.

A nature-positive approach can also be more cost-effective. For example, the Dasgupta Review (the Final Report of the United Kingdom’s Independent Review on the Economics of Biodiversity) finds that green infrastructure like salt marshes and mangroves are 2-5 times cheaper than grey infrastructure such as breakwaters.

Nonetheless, private-sector action is lagging, including in economic sectors where the health of value chains is closely tied to that of nature. That is one key finding from an analysis just released by the UN Climate Change High-Level Champions, Global Canopy, Rainforest Alliance, and others.

Out of 148 major companies assessed, only nine – or 6% – are making strong progress to end deforestation. Among them are the Brazilian paper and pulp producer Suzano and five of the largest consumer goods companies: Nestlé, PepsiCo, Unilever, Mars, and Colgate-Palmolive.

Unilever, for example, is committed to a deforestation-free supply chain by 2023, and thus is focusing on palm oil, paper and board, tea, soy, and cocoa, as these contribute to more than 65% of its impact on land. Nestlé has now made over 97% of its primary meat, palm oil, pulp and paper, soy, and sugar supply chains deforestation-free. And PepsiCo aims to implement regenerative farming across the equivalent of its agricultural footprint by 2030, and to end deforestation and development on peat.

These are positive steps, but they represent exceptions, rather than any new normal. Moreover, the financial sector has also been slow to turn nature-positive. Since the COP26 climate-change conference in Glasgow last year, only 35 financial firms have committed to tackle agricultural commodity-driven deforestation by 2025. The hope now is that more firms will join the deforestation commitment by COP27 this November. Under the umbrella of the Glasgow Financial Alliance for Net Zero, 500 financial firms (representing $135tn in assets) have committed to halving their portfolios' emissions by 2030 and reaching net zero by 2050. And now, the Alliance has issued new net-zero guidance that includes recommended policies for addressing deforestation.

Nature functions as a kind of global capital, and protecting it should be a no-brainer for businesses, investors, and governments. The World Economic Forum finds that "$44tn of economic value generation – over half the world's total GDP – is moderately or highly dependent on nature and its services." But this profound source of value is increasingly at risk, as demonstrated by the current food crisis, which is driven not just by the war in Ukraine but also by climate-related disasters such as drought and India's extreme heatwave, locust swarms in East Africa, and floods in China.

Businesses increasingly have the tools to start addressing these kinds of problems. Recently, the Science Based Targets initiative released a methodology for targeting emissions related to food, land, and agriculture. Capital for Climate's Nature-Based Solutions Investment platform helps financiers identify opportunities to invest in nature with competitive returns. And the Business for Nature coalition is exploring additional moves the private sector can make.

Governments have also taken steps in the right direction. At COP26, countries accounting for over 90% of the world's forests endorsed a leaders' declaration to halt forest loss and land degradation by 2030. And a dozen countries pledged to provide $12bn in public finance for forests by 2025, and to do more to leverage private finance for the same purpose. They can now start meeting those commitments ahead of COP27 in Sharm El-Sheikh, by enacting the necessary policies, establishing the right incentives, and delivering on their financial promises.

Meanwhile, the UN-backed Race to Zero and Race to Resilience campaigns will continue working in parallel, helping businesses, investors, cities, and regions put conservation of nature at the heart of their work to decarbonise and build resilience. The five strong corporate performers on deforestation are in the Race to Zero, and the campaign’s recently strengthened criteria will pressure other members to do more to use biodiversity sustainably and align their activities and financing with climate-resilient development.

The world is watching to see if the latest promises of climate action are robust and credible. By investing in nature now, governments and companies can show that they are offering more than words. – Project Syndicate

• *Nigel Topping is the United Kingdom’s High-Level Climate Champion for COP26 in Glasgow. Mahmoud Mohieldin is Egypt’s High-Level Climate Champion for COP27 in Sharm El-Sheikh*.

Absorbing energy transition shock

By Owen Gaffney/ Stockholm

The challenge for politicians is to devise fair policies that protect people from the inevitable shocks

Russia’s war on Ukraine has sent shockwaves around the world. Oil prices have skyrocketed and food prices have soared, causing political instability. The last time food prices were this volatile, riots erupted across the Arab world and from Burkina Faso to Bangladesh. This time, the energy and food shock is happening against the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic. When will the shocks end?

They won’t. So, we can choose either resignation and despair, or a policy agenda to build social and political resilience against future shocks. Those are our options, and we had better start taking them seriously, because the shocks are likely to get worse. On top of geopolitical crises, the climate emergency will bring even greater disruptions, including ferocious floods, mega-droughts, and possibly even a simultaneous crop failure in key grain-producing regions worldwide. It is worth noting that India, the world’s second-largest wheat producer, recently banned exports as part of its response to a devastating heatwave this spring.

But here's the thing: reducing vulnerability to shocks, for example, by embarking on energy and food revolutions, will also be disruptive. The energy system is the foundation of industrialised economies, and it needs to be overhauled to phase out fossil fuels within a few decades. Huge industries like coal and oil will have to contract, and then disappear. And agriculture, transportation, and other sectors will need to change radically to become more sustainable and resilient.

The challenge for politicians, then, is clear: to devise fair policies that protect people from the inevitable shocks.

One idea with significant potential is a Citizen's Fund, which would follow a straightforward fee-and-dividend equation. Companies that emit greenhouse-gas emissions or extract natural resources would pay fees into the fund, which would then distribute equal payments to all citizens, creating an economic cushion during a period of transformation and beyond.

This is not just an idea. In 1976, the Republican governor of Alaska, Jay Hammond, established the Alaska Permanent Fund, which charges companies a fee to extract oil and then disburses the proceeds equally to all the state's citizens. In 2021, each eligible Alaskan received $1,114 – not as a "welfare payment" but as a dividend from a state commons (in this case, a finite supply of oil). The largest dividend ever paid was during Republican Sarah Palin's governorship in 2008, when every Alaskan enjoyed a windfall of $3,269.

In 2017, James Baker and George Shultz, two former Republican secretaries of state, proposed a similar plan for the whole United States, estimating that fees on carbon emissions would yield a dividend of $2,000 per year to every US household. With backing from 3,500 economists, their scheme has broad appeal not just among companies and environmental-advocacy groups but also (and more incredibly) across the political aisle.

The economics is simple. A fee on carbon drives down emissions by driving up the price of polluting. And though companies would pass on these costs to consumers, the wealthiest would be the hardest hit, because they are by far the biggest, fastest-growing source of emissions. The poorest, meanwhile, would gain the most from the dividend, because $2,000 means a lot more to a low-income household than it does to a high-income household. In the end, most people would come out ahead.

But given that food- and energy-price shocks tend to hit low-income cohorts the hardest, why make the dividend universal? The reason is that a policy of this scale needs both broad-based and lasting support, and people are far more likely to support a programme or policy if there is at least something in it for them.

Moreover, a Citizen's Fund is not just a way to drive down emissions and provide an economic safety net for the clean-energy transition. It would also foster innovation and creativity, by providing a floor of support for the entrepreneurs and risk-takers we will need to transform our energy and food systems.

A Citizen's Fund could also be expanded to include other global commons, including mining and other extractive industries, plastics, the ocean's resources, and even knowledge, data, and networks. All involve shared commons – owned by all – that are exploited by businesses that should be required to pay for the negative externalities they create.

Of course, a universal basic dividend is not a panacea. It must be part of larger plan to build societies that are more resilient to shocks, including through greater efforts to redistribute wealth by means of progressive taxation and empowerment of workers. To that end, Earth4All, an initiative I co-lead, is developing a suite of novel proposals that we see as the most promising pathways to build cohesive societies that are better able to make long-term decisions for the benefit of the majority.

Our most important finding is perhaps the most obvious, but it is also easy to overlook. Whether we do the bare minimum to address the grand challenges or everything we can to build resilient societies, disruption and shocks are part of our future. Embracing disruption is thus the only option and a

Citizen's Fund becomes an obvious shock absorber. — Project Syndicate

• Owen Gaffney is an analyst at the Stockholm Resilience Centre and the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research.

Double-edged sword: Global hunger and climate goals

Poor or rich, societies across the world are now suffering from an unprecedented food and hunger crisis.

A United Nations gauge of world food prices has jumped more than 70% since mid-2020 and is near a record after Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Battling hunger has garnered heightened attention this year, as the Ukraine crisis choked exports from one of the world's

biggest crop suppliers, stoking food inflation and potentially leaving millions more undernourished.
The global agriculture sector won't eradicate hunger by the end of the decade or meet climate goals from the Paris Agreement without a major overhaul, key agencies have cautioned.
A UN pledge to eliminate hunger by 2030 appears out of reach, as low-income nations struggle to afford better diets, the Food and Agriculture Organisation said in a joint report with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.
Greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture are also seen continuing to rise on a business-as-usual path.
The challenges are two of the most vital issues facing the world's food sector.
Reversing current trends to meet both goals would require a 28% increase in agricultural productivity this decade – triple the rate of the last ten years – highlighting the scale of the problem.
The world's hunger problem has already reached its worst in years as the pandemic exacerbates food inequalities, compounding extreme weather and political conflicts.
The prolonged gains across the staple commodities are trickling through to store shelves, with countries from Kenya to Mexico reporting higher food costs.
The pain could be particularly pronounced in some of the poorest import-dependent nations, which have limited purchasing power and social safety net.
Soaring food and fuel costs recently helped send US inflation to a 40-year high. The US Department of Agriculture now expects retail food prices to gain 5% to 6% this year – roughly double its forecast from three months ago.
In Lebanon, poverty rates are sky-rocketing in the population of about 6.5mn, with around 80% of people classed as poor, says the UN agency ESCWA.
Last September, more than half of families had at least one child who skipped a meal, Unicef has said, compared with just over a third in April 2021.

Amid a devastating foreign exchange crisis, Sri Lanka, a country of 22mn people, is unable to pay for essential import of food items, fertiliser, medicines and fuel due to a severe dollar crunch.

Food costs account for 40% of consumer spending in sub-Saharan Africa, compared with 17% in advanced economies.

In 2020, Africa imported $4bn of agricultural products from Russia.

Across the world, approximately 1.2bn people live in extreme poverty, on less than one dollar per day, according to a 2018 World Health Organisation report.

At least 17mn children suffer from severe acute malnutrition around the world, which is the direct cause of death for 2mn children every year.

Here’s the disturbing other side of the lingering tragedy.

One-third of all food produced – around 1.3bn tonnes a year – is lost or wasted, according to the FAO. It costs the global economy close to $940bn each year.

In the Gulf, between a third and half of the food produced is estimated to go to waste.

Improving food access through social safety nets and distribution programmes, especially for the most vulnerable, is key to reducing global hunger, according to the latest joint FAO-OECD report. Curbing emissions, reducing food waste and limiting calorie intake in rich countries are measures needed to meet climate goals, it said.

Germany: “A Whole Prosperity Built On Low-Cost Energy Is

Going Up In Smoke”

Lhe tocsin is sounding at full speed in the German cities and countryside at the start of summer. A whole prosperity built on low-cost energy is going up in smoke. For the first time since 1991, the country’s trade balance, a national pride, plunged into the red in May, and the government is expected to submit a law to parliament this week authorizing it to come to the aid of the country’s energy companies. At the forefront of which is the company Uniper, one of the main importers of gas across the Rhine. The state could advance him nearly 9 billion euros and enter his capital, as he did with Lufthansa at the height of the health crisis.

Read also: Article reserved for our subscribersGermany ill-prepared for life without Russian gas and oil
Make no mistake, as the Minister of the Economy, environmentalist Robert Habeck, said this Sunday: *“We are not facing erratic decisions but facing a completely rational and very clear economic war. »* Faced with rising prices and falling deliveries, he openly talks about rationing energy. Unheard of since World War II.

With its trade deficit of nearly 85 billion euros (excluding services), France is obviously in no position to give any advice, and even less to be happy about the situation, Germany being its first partner. Over the last twelve months, Berlin still records a surplus of more than 170 billion, but the trend is not good. In May, sales abroad fell by 0.5% while imports increased by 2.7%. The main culprit is of course inflation, with import prices up 30% in May year on year, while export prices rose only 16%.

Achilles' heel

Vibrant heart of happy globalization with its extremely sophisticated logistics chains, Germany appears to be the first victim of the current new situation. His model was based on cheap Russian gas, tight industrial organization and unlimited Chinese outlets. These three well-oiled machines suddenly seize up with the war in Ukraine, the logistical chaos and the confinements in China.

First short-term observation: European sanctions have not only not brought Russia to its knees, but have had the opposite effect. By announcing restrictions that will only come later, the West has caused an immediate surge in gas prices which fully benefits Russia. Its currency has stabilized and its budget has even gone into surplus. It might have been necessary, as the economist Philippe Martin suggests, to immediately impose customs duties or a ceiling price. Not easy. Second observation, that of the extreme dependence of our economies, and especially of Germany, on imported gas. Unlike the United States, energy sovereignty is Europe's Achilles' heel, and its reconquest will be long and painful.

Allemagne : « Toute une prospérité construite sur une énergie à bas coût est en train de partir en fumée »

L'Allemagne a dévoilé son premier déficit commercial depuis trente ans et envisage d'aider les entreprises du secteur énergétique, comme Uniper, qui subissent de plein fouet la guerre en Ukraine. Une mobilisation qui repose la question de la souveraineté énergétique de l'Europe souligne Philippe Escande, éditorialiste économique au « Monde ».

Le tocsin sonne à toute volée dans les villes et les campagnes allemandes en ce début d'été. Toute une prospérité construite sur une énergie à bas coût est en train de partir en fumée. Pour la première fois depuis 1991, la balance commerciale du pays, fierté nationale, a plongé dans le rouge en mai, et le gouvernement devrait soumettre cette semaine au Parlement une loi l'autorisant à venir au secours des entreprises énergétiques du pays. Au premier rang desquelles figure la société Uniper, l’un des principaux importateurs de gaz outre-Rhin. L’Etat pourrait lui avancer près de 9 milliards d’euros et entrer à son capital, comme il l’a fait avec Lufthansa au plus fort de la crise sanitaire.

Ne nous trompons pas, comme l’a affirmé ce dimanche, le ministre de l’économie, l’écologiste Robert Habeck : *« Nous ne sommes pas face à des décisions erratiques mais face à une guerre économique complètement rationnelle et très claire. »* Face à la hausse des prix et à la baisse des livraisons, il parle ouvertement de rationner l’énergie. Du jamais-vu depuis la seconde guerre mondiale.

Avec son déficit commercial de près de 85 milliards d’euros (hors services), la France est évidemment mal placée pour donner le moindre conseil, et encore moins pour se réjouir de la situation, l’Allemagne étant son premier partenaire. Sur les douze derniers mois, Berlin enregistre encore un excédent de plus de 170 milliards, mais la tendance n’est pas bonne. En mai, les ventes à l’étranger ont baissé de 0,5 % quand les importations ont augmenté de 2,7 %. Le premier coupable est bien sûr l’inflation, avec des prix des importations en hausse de 30 % en mai sur un an, alors que le prix des exportations n’a progressé que de 16 %.

Talon d’Achille

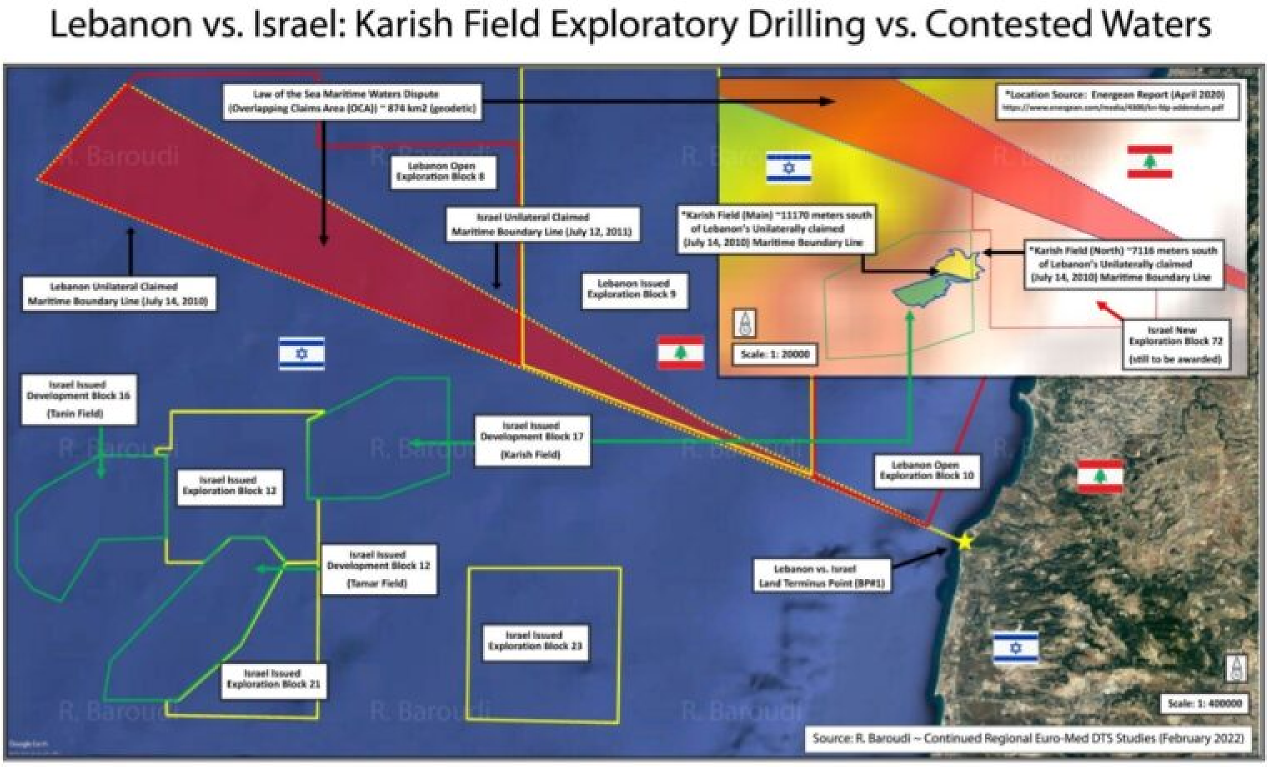
Cœur vibrant de la mondialisation heureuse avec ses chaînes logistiques sophistiquées à l’extrême, l’Allemagne apparaît comme la première victime de la nouvelle donne actuelle. Son modèle reposait sur un gaz russe à bon marché, une organisation industrielle au cordeau et des débouchés chinois sans limite. Ces trois machines bien huilées se grippent d’un coup avec la guerre en Ukraine, le chaos logistique et les confinements en Chine.

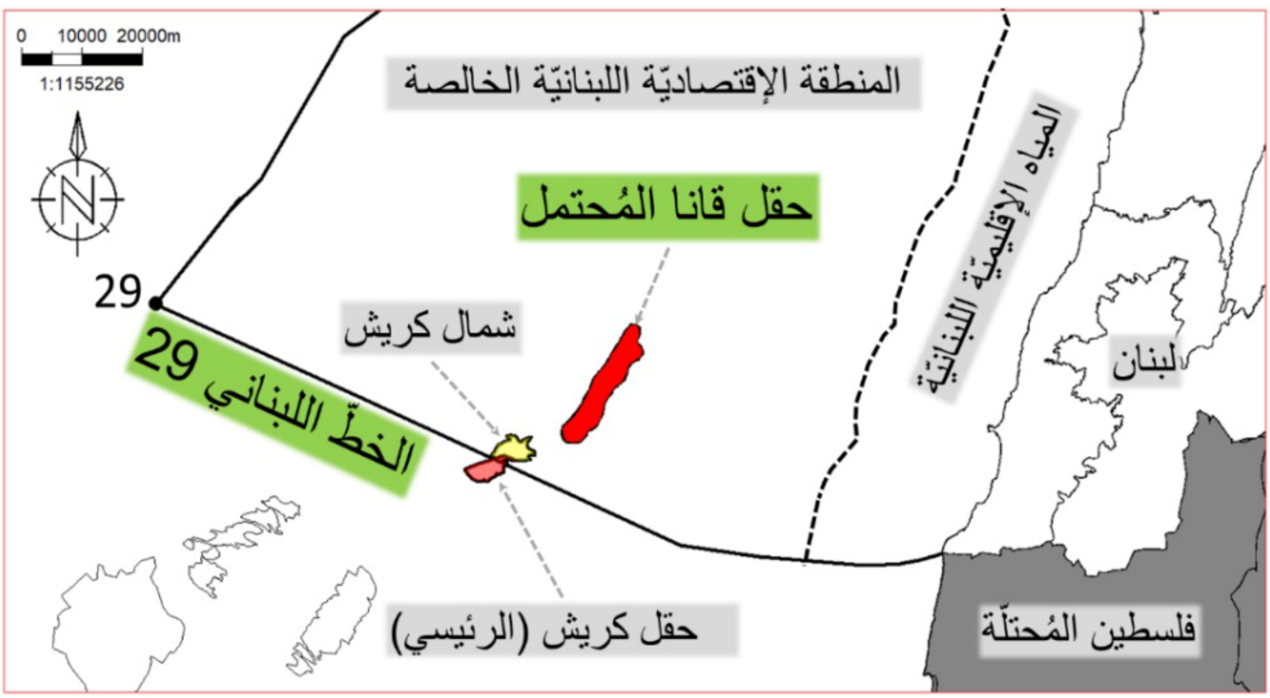
Premier constat de court terme : les sanctions européennes n’ont non seulement pas mis à genoux la Russie, mais ont abouti à l’effet inverse.

بارودي يؤكد صوابية طلب لبنان الخاص بالمباحثات والمفاوضات على الحدود البحرية

بارودي يؤكد صوابية طلب لبنان الخاص بالمباحثات والمفاوضات على الحدود البحرية ويؤكد صوابية طلبه مستعيناً بقضايا مماثلة حصلت في السابق وتم البت بها من قبل محكمة العدل الدولية

ثروة "كاريش" بين 22 و25 مليار دولار





كَثُرَت في الفترة الأخيرة الخيارات المتاحة في نظر بعض المسؤولين

في لبنان، لتأمين مصادر يتم عبرها تسديد أموال المودِعين… فما أن طُرِح إنشاء الصندوق السيادي، حتى ارتأى البعض اللجوء إلى رهن جزء من احتياطي الذهب… لكن ما لم يكن في الحسبان أن يقترح أحدهم استخدام أموال ثروة لبنان النفطية لتسديد الودائع ولتغطية كلفة الدين العام! علماً أن مفاوضات ترسيم الحدود البحرية بين لبنان وإسرائيل عالقة منذ أيار 2021، ولا تزال الضبابية تلف هذا الملف محلياً ودولياً.

الخبير الدولي في مجال الطاقة رودي بارودي يعلّق, في حديث إلى موقع القوات اللبنانية الإلكتروني، على الفائدة المالية من حقول النفط التي يؤمَل أن تشكّل الثروة النفطية للبنان، ليؤكد أنه "في حال حصول لبنان على جزء من حقل كاريش, فإن حصته لا تكفي لتغطية الدين العام اللبناني حتى وفق أسعار النفط والغاز المعتمدة حالياً"، ويقول "ربما قد تغطي حصّة لبنان من حقل كاريش أو غيره، جزءاً ضئيلاً فقط من الدين العام".

ويعتبر أنه "من غير المؤكد ما إذا كان لبنان سيتمكّن من الحصول على الخط 23، من دون معالجة مجموعة من الأخطاء الجسيمة التي ارتُكِبَت عند البدء بوضع الخطوط من 1 الى 23 قبل نحو 12 عاماً".

ويكشف بارودي عن أن حقل "كاريش" المكتشَف العام 2013 يحتوي على 2.5 ترليون قدم مربّع من الغاز. وهذا الحقل تم اكتشافه من قبل الشركة الإسرائيلية "ديليك" العام 2013 والتي باعته بدورها إلى "إينيرجيان"".

ويقول، إذا تم احتساب الكمية على أساس أسعار الغاز والنفط الحالية، فإن المردود المتوقع من حقل "كاريش" يتراوح ما بين 22 و25 مليار دولارٍ أميركي. لكن لا يمكن تقدير مردود حقل "قانا" لأنه قد يكون ممتداً إلى إسرائيل، كما أن حقل "كاريش" متداخل بين لبنان وإسرائيل.

ويُلفت إلى أن إسرائيل أنجزت التحضيرات اللازمة لبدء الإنتاج النفطي وذلك بعد أعوام عدة من الدراسات وعمليات الاستكشاف، فقد عاودت شركة "إينيرجيان" المطوِّرة لحقل "كاريش" الحَفر في الحقل ذاته بحثاً عن المزيد من الغاز والنفط، ويوضح أن "إسرائيل تقوم حالياً بالحَفر في محاذاة الخطّ اللبناني التفاوضي "29" لتنتقل بعد ذلك إلى شمال "كاريش".

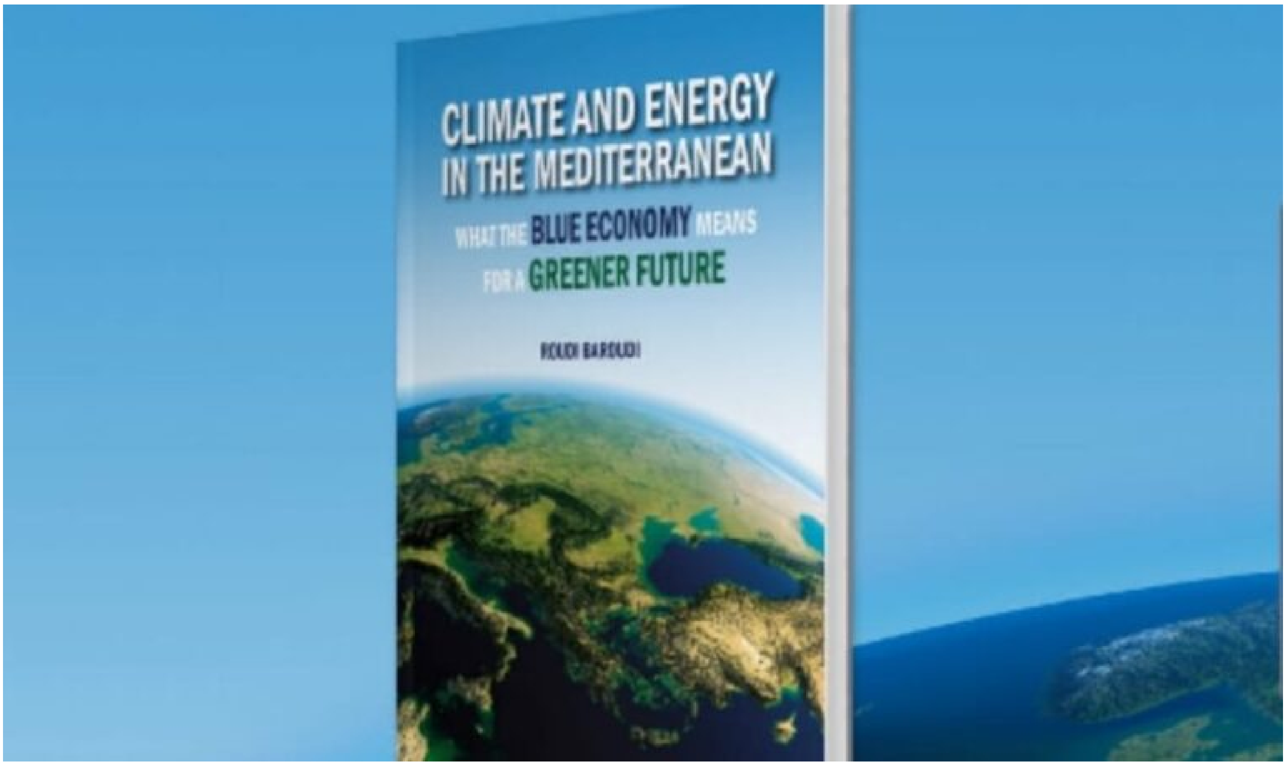
ويُذكِّر في السياق بأن "لبنان أعلن في رسالتَيه إلى الأمم

المتّحدة الأولى في 22 أيلول 2021 والثانية في 28 كانون الثاني 2022، أن حقل كاريش يقع في منطقة متنازع عليها… لكن على الرغم من ذلك، يتم التنقيب في المياه المتنازَع عليها عموماً، ولا سيما في البلوك رقم "9" المُعطّل حالياً إلى أن تُحَلّ قضية الترسيم بين لبنان وإسرائيل".

أما بالنسبة إلى الموقع الجغرافي لحقل "كاريش" المكوَّن من جزءين: شمالي وجنوبي (الخريطة مرفقة)، يؤكد بارودي من خلال الدراسة التي أعدّها خلال السنوات الممتدة من العام 2011 إلى العام 2021، أن "حقل كاريش الشمالي يَبعد عن الخط المقترح من قبل لبنان في 14 تموز 2010 (الخط 23) حوالي 7 كلم و116 متراً، كما أن حقل كاريش الجنوبي يَبعد عن الخط نفسه، حوالي 11 كلم و170 متراً جنوباً، وذلك بحسب الخريطة المرفقة والتي تؤكد المواقع والبُعد عن الحَقلين".

أما بالنسبة إلى البلوك الإسرائيلي الرقم "72" والمتداخل في الأراضي اللبنانية، فهو ملاصق بشكل مباشر للخط "23"، بحسب بارودي.

رياح المتوسط تنتج طاقة تضاهي طاقة المفاعلات النووية في العالم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