

هيل إلى بيروت... القديم على ! قدّمه؟



منذ ولاية جورج دبليو بوش، إقترنت السياسة الاميركية بالنفط. تهتم أميركا أوّلاً بأسعار النفط الذي تستخدمه لبسط سيطرتها على الأسواق حاميةً بذلك اقتصادها الوطني، وفي الوقت عينه، تضغط من خلاله على قوى منافسة تعتمد بشكل أساسي عليه وعلى رأسها الصين. يتكئ الاقتصاد الأميركي إذاً على "التموين النفطي" الذي يؤمّن بدوره استقراراً في السوق، كما يؤمّن نوعاً من "التسيّد" يزخر به الدولار على حساب العملات الاخرى.

من هنا، يتخذ موضوع الغاز اللبناني - بكل ما يحمله من تفاصيل تقنية - منحى استراتيجياً بامتياز، علماً أن أبعاده السياسية في شقّيها الداخلي والخارجي مرتبطة بشكل عضوي. فخارجياً يتخذ النفط اللبناني أهمية مضاعفة نظراً "للكميات الهائلة" التي بات من شبه المؤكد انه يخبئها براً وبحراً. وان كانت هذه الكميات نظرياً لا تغيّر الميزان الاستراتيجي المتعلق بانتاج الطاقة في الشرق الاوسط والمطلوبة بغالبيتها للانتاج الصناعي، إلا أن الحقول اللبنانية متصلة جغرافياً بالحقول المصرية والاسرائيلية والسورية والأهم القبرصية. ذلك يعني انه وعدا عن الدور المباشر الذي يحظى به "غاز لبنان" فهو قد يبرز أيضاً لدى طرح إشكالية أساسية هي المتعلقة بأماكن انشاء محطات تسييل وتكرير الغاز بالإضافة الى المنشآت والبنى التحتية الضرورية لتسييله مع آليات نقله وتسويقه. وعليه، لا يمكن التنبؤ بهويّة الدولة التي ستتحوّل بما قد يستجد من تحالفات إقليمية ودولية؛ هذا الامر سيحتم حداً أدنى من التعاون

بين الدول المعنية، وهنا يكمن بيت القصيد، بما أن هذه البلدان في حالة عداوة أو في حالة تصادم ما بين المحاور السائدة في الاقليم والمرشّح للتفاقم بسبب التنافس الشرس على الثروة الجديدة . في شرق المتوسط .

اما البعد الثالث الذي يكتسبه غاز لبنان فـ"مالي" بحت والمقصود هنا ليس مالية الدولة بل الميل الى الالتفاف حول القانون لاستفادة الفريق السياسي المهيمن، وذلك من خلال السمسرات وعقود الخدمة للشركات والانشاءات المرتبطة بهذا القطاع فضلاً عن القدرة على توظيف "الازلام" تماماً كما جرى ولا يزال في شركتي الاتصالات وكازينو لبنان والكسارات والسدود وغيرها من المجالس التي قد تكون اكثر إغراء، خصوصاً اذا استغلت المراسيم كمنفذ مقونن للهيمنة على ما تبقى من موارد في البلاد، لا سيّما وأن التعويل على العائدات النفطية "اليوم"، أي في ظلّ عدم وجود قانون واضح ينظّم وجهة استخدام هذه الاموال من خلال الصندوق السيادي، يعني حُكماً أننا تخلينا عن ثروتنا هذه لخدمة الدين وتحويلها من أموال استثمارية الى أموال "منهوبة".

من هذا المنطلق، لا يجوز الإفراط في التعويل على الثروة النفطية لانتشال لبنان من مأزقه النقدي، فالجدوى الاقتصادية، بحسب الخبراء، للنفط والغاز في المنطقة ككلّ لم تُثبّت بعد لا سيما وأن كلفة استخراج هذه المواد من قعر البحر تفوق بكثير الكلفة التي تتكبدها روسيا لاستخراج غازها. وبراى الخبراء، فإنّ امكان تصدير هذا الغاز الى أوروبا على سبيل المثال قد يكون صعباً بما أن الاسعار ستكون عاجزة عن منافسة الغاز الروسي من جهة، ومن جهة ثانية بسبب العوامل الجيو - سياسية في منطقة شرقي المتوسط. أما كلّ ما أثير عن احتمال إنشاء أنابيب لربط هذه الآبار بأوروبا مروراً باليونان فقد سقط عملياً بعد دخول اسرائيل الى طاولة المباحثات اضافة الى صعوبة تأمين الاموال الاستثمارية اللازمة له.

لا تعني كلّ هذه الفرضيات أن دولة من دول العالم الثالث كـلبنان "عاجزة عن الاستفادة من ثرواتها النفطية بل يمكن استغلالها، وإن لم يكن للتصدير، فذلك في إصلاح الكهرباء وتحويل الانتاج ليرتكز على الغاز، وهكذا يتم تخفيض العجز وتالياً تقليص الخضوع لهيمنة صندوق النقد الدولي كلما وجدنا أنفسنا مضطرين الى الاقتراض بنسب وشروط تعجيزيّة"، بحسب الخبراء.

الطروحات الاميركية

من جهة ثانية، تُضاف معضلة ترسيم الحدود التي لا تزال تتخذ حيّزاً من المفاوضات والتي يوليها الجانب الأميركي أهمية كبيرة خصوصاً في ظلّ التواجد الصيني والروسي في المنطقة. ولا شكّ أنّ مساعد وزير الخارجية الأميركي للشؤون السياسية ديفيد هيل سيتطرق الى هذا الملف خلال زيارته إلى بيروت في الايام القليلة المقبلة.

طروحات ثلاثة، هي ما قدّمه الطرف الأميركي في ما خصّ مسألة ترسيم الحدود مع الكيان الإسرائيلي في المنطقة المتنازع عليها: الاول هو تقسيم رضائي بنسبة ثلث للكيان وثلثين للبنان. الثاني هو تصنيفها كمنطقة عدم أنشطة وبالتالي اعتبارها محظورة للطرفين؛ أما الطرح الثالث فيتمثّل باعتبارها منطقة أنشطة مشتركة، وهو ما يرفضه الجانب اللبناني حتى الساعة متسلّحاً بالقوانين التي ترعى حقوقه في المياه الاقليمية إضافة الى الطلب الذي كان تقدّم به الى الامم المتحدة لحلّ النزاع في هذه القضية" يقول الخبير في قوانين وسياسات الطاقة المحامي علي برّو.

ويضيف برّو في اتصال مع "نداء الوطن" أنّ "قبرص تتحمّل مسؤولية مخالفة أحكام الاتفاقية مع لبنان سندا لاتفاقية 2007 حيث لم يكن ينبغي عليها ترسيم الحدود مع الكيان الاسرائيلي من دون موافقة الدولة اللبنانية. من جهتها، أودعت الدولة اللبنانية الامم المتحدة ادعاءات منطقتها الاقتصادية الخالصة، إلا أنها قصرت في مطالبتها قبرص لخرقها احكام الاتفاقية معه. من الناحية القانونية، لبنان جاهز لعملية إعادة الترسيم وفقاً للوسائل العلمية التابعة لقانون البحار. ومن خلال لجوئنا الى القانون الدولي، سنتمكن من "استعادة حقوقنا السيادية في المياه البحرية".

في الاطار عينه، يوضح الخبير النفطي رودي بارودي أنه "من المتوقع أن يأتي ديفيد هيل وفي جعبته ملف ترسيم الحدود البحرية. هذا الموضوع بحاجة الى حلّ جذريّ لا سيّما مع بدء لبنان بحفر أول بئر استكشافي مطلع العام المقبل. وبحسب قانون الامم المتحدة للبحار لا شكّ أنّ لبنان سيحظى بالحصة الاكبر من المنطقة (UNCLOS) الاقتصادية الخالصة المتنازع عليها، فصحیح أن الكيان الاسرائيلي ليس طرفاً في المعاهدة مع الامم المتحدة، الا أنه طبق قواعدها من خلال تقيده ببنود الاتفاقية بينه وبين قبرص. بالتالي أصبح من الممكن اللجوء الى إتفاقية تنمية مشتركة تماماً كما هي الحال بين الكويت والسعودية في ما يُعرف بالمنطقة المحايدة. بهذه الطريقة، تقوم شركة محايدة بعمليات الاستخراج وتوزّع لكلّ دولة حصّتها وفق "المعايير الدولية".

كثيرة تصبح التأويلات عندما يتعلّق الأمر بغاز لبنان وليس هناك من حقيقة مطلقة عندما تكون المسألة جيو - سياسية. وحدها الايام المقبلة ستُظهر نوايا الولايات المتحدة تجاه لبنان إلا أنّ معيار ترسيم الحدود البحرية يجب أن يبقى القانون الدولي منفرداً . ولعلّه من الافضل لهذه الثروة أن تبقى نائمة في قعر البحر لحين ايجاد حلول آنية تُعيد خلق اقتصاد منتج بدلاً من اقتصاد ريعيّ وترك هذا الملف يأخذ مساره الطبيعي لئلا تصبح عوائده... "أموالاً" منهوبة .

Sweden's energy deal collapses amid clash over nuclear power



- * Capacity tax to be phased out over 2 years from 2017
- * New reactors to be built to replace old ones (Adds Energy Minister comment, background)

STOCKHOLM, June 10 (Reuters) – Sweden said on Friday it would phase out some taxes on nuclear power and build new reactors to replace aging plants and secure energy supplies for decades to come.

Nuclear power providers in Sweden have said they would be forced to shut the country's loss-making nuclear reactors unless a tax on nuclear capacity is abolished, risking a spike in electricity prices and energy shortages for industry.

"The aim is ... to make sure we can always guarantee electricity at competitive prices, in a stable and sustainable way, both in the short and long term," Energy Minister Ibrahim Baylan told reporters.

The tax, which brought in about 4 billion Swedish crowns (\$488 million) in 2015, will be phased out over two years starting from 2017, but households will see their energy bills rise as Baylan said the government would increase taxes on energy users to make up for the nuclear tax. Heavy industry, however, would be excluded from the tax rise.

In a broad deal agreed with the main opposition parties, the government also said it would allow up to 10 new reactors to be built as the country closes its old plants, built in the 1970s and 80s.

The tax on capacity – which was increased last year – has hurt profitability at plants already under pressure from low market prices and the need for expensive upgrades to meet tougher safety standards since Japan's Fukushima nuclear disaster.

Swedish state-owned utility Vattenfall and Germany's E.ON have said they will shut four of Sweden's 10 nuclear reactors earlier than previously planned. One of them was shut last year.

In April, Vattenfall said all the remaining six reactors would have to close by 2020 if the capacity tax was not abolished.

Nuclear plants produced around 34 percent of Sweden's electricity in 2015.

The deal to end the tax is a blow for the Green Party, which wants nuclear power phased out as soon as possible and instigated the increase in the tax last year. (\$1 = 8.1964 Swedish crowns) (Reporting by Johan Sennero; Editing by Simon Johnson and Susan Fenton)

Can Pakistan make transition to electric vehicles soon?



KARACHI: When you think of electric vehicles, you think of Elon Musk, a noiseless Tesla and luxury more than zero emissions. But today the government wants to use the same technology for the common man – to run bikes, rickshaws and even buses, jeeps and trucks. Will this transition from fossil fuel vehicles to electric vehicles in Pakistan happen anytime soon?

Cities are witnessing the worst ever smog. This was followed

by a climate march with youth demanding climate justice.

Thus the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf government could not have chosen a better time than when the UN climate summit COP 25 is taking place to make a strong case against tailpipe emissions from urban transportation, a major contributor to air pollution and climate change.

Little wonder then they quickly got the nod of approval by the cabinet for the first national electric vehicle (EV) policy.

With 43 per cent of the airborne emissions in the country coming from the transport sector, federal Minister for Climate Change Malik Amin Aslam said that transitioning to EV provided a “huge opportunity” for the country.

“These will have many advantages for Pakistan – it will reduce pollution, will cut the cost of fuel by 70pc thereby [leading to] huge saving for FFV (fossil fuel vehicle) owners, and will cut the country’s import bill tremendously.”

There are three million private cars and 20m motorcycles and motorised rickshaws plying the roads, according to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, as cited in the Economic Survey 2018-19, mainly due to the absence of a good public transport system.

Riaz Haq, who has worked in various tech firms for 35 years in the Silicon Valley and is an EV enthusiast, said that with 32m households and 17.5m motorcycles registered in Pakistan, the motorcycle ownership increased from 41pc in 2015 to 53pc in 2018.

The new policy envisions using electricity to get 100,000 cars, 500,000 two- and three-wheelers, 1,000 buses and trucks to ply the roads in the next five years. By 2030 it sees 30pc of all new cars, big and small trucks, vans, and jeeps and 50pc of all two-, three- and four-wheelers to be electric vehicles reducing tailpipe emissions by 65pc. By 2040, if all

goes well, 90pc of all vehicles on the roads will be EVs.

“The PM wants all new buses coming on the road to be electric hybrid – run both on electricity and CNG (compressed natural gas),” said the federal minister.

Most experts are lauding the policy as a step in the right direction. “It is a forward-looking step needed to deal with climate concerns from growing transport sector emissions with rapidly rising vehicle ownership,” Mr Haq wrote in his blog.

Another proponent for EVs, Islamabad-based energy expert Vaqar Zakaria, said that “surplus power generation capacity, building off-peak demand for better utilisation of generation capacity which also brings down generation costs, poor urban air quality, high levels of noise from traffic and safer cars” are some of the reasons to make the move.

The automobile industry remains sceptical though. “I would love to see EV launched in Pakistan, but it means developing a huge set-up anew,” said Juzer Amreliwala, the chief executive officer of a Honda partner in Karachi.

“On the face of it, it looks great. But establishing proper after-sales set-up requires both capital and human investment. Although most dealerships have come quite far in technology development, much training is still needed,” he added.

Aware of the infrastructure that will be needed for EVs, the minister for climate change sees it as an opportunity with a whole new service industry and numerous livelihood options opening up. “Pakistan is thirsting for new business opportunities and markets. If we build our capacity technologically, Pakistan can become a hub for exporting EVs – especially two- and three-wheelers,” Mr Aslam said.

However, a potential problem with the policy is the plethora of government supervisors – nine ministries, the Higher Education Commission, the State Bank of Pakistan and various

authorities in energy sectors. “This industry transcends so many domains that all these stakeholders had to be included,” explained Mr Aslam. “Interaction and cooperation between stakeholders are the mark of good governance.”

Vaqar Zakaria warns of the “vested interests” who may not like the transition. “Those that sell low quality fuel and cheat on quantity sold will not like it, the refiners will not like it, the car traders will not like it as the EVs will last longer, the industry as it presently will not like it, the FBR may say the government will lose taxes on imported fuel which are huge at the moment and a significant source of revenue for the government. But as a consumer I will be delighted... if they only let me import EVs and E-bikes at reasonable cost.”

EU bank takes ‘quantum leap’ to end fossil-fuel financing



By Ewa Krukowska, Bloomberg

The European Investment Bank adopted an unprecedented strategy to end funding for fossil fuel energy projects, in a move expected to support Europe's plans to become the first climate-neutral continent.

The board of the Luxembourg-based lending arm of the European Union decided at a meeting on Thursday to approve a new energy policy that includes increased support for clean-energy projects. The bank will not consider new financing of unabated fossil fuels, including natural gas, from the end of 2021.

With more than half a trillion dollars in outstanding loans, the EIB is the biggest multilateral financial institution in the world. Given the EIB's market impact and influence over the lending strategies of investors, its decision could end up

depriving polluting projects from other sources of financing as well.

The lender's move to prioritize energy efficiency and renewable-energy projects will reinforce the Green Deal being pushed by Ursula von der Leyen, the incoming president of the European Commission. She wants the institution to become a climate bank and help unlock 1 trillion euros (\$1.1 trillion) to shift the economy toward cleaner forms of energy.

"Climate is the top issue on the political agenda of our time," EIB President Werner Hoyer said in a statement, calling the decision to transition away from financing fossil fuels a "quantum leap in its ambition."

The EIB decision is part of a broader push across the EU's most powerful institutions that's catapulted the bloc to the forefront of global efforts to fight climate change. New European Central Bank President Christine Lagarde has pledged to make climate change more of a focus for the institution, which is considering adding climate-related risks to its stress-test scenarios, in what could potentially make exposure to high-carbon footprint projects a liability for the balance sheets of financial firms in the continent.

The 28-nation EU wants to step up its climate ambition in sync with the landmark 2015 Paris agreement to fight global warming, after the U.S. turned its back on the accord. With EU leaders considering committing to climate neutrality by 2050, Europe is a step ahead of other major emitters, including China, India and Japan, which haven't so far translated their voluntary Paris pledges into equally ambitious binding national measures.

"For the EIB to stop funding fossil fuel projects is a game-changer that begins to deliver the EU's vision for climate leadership as laid out in the Green Deal," said Eliot Whittington, director of the European Corporate Leaders Group.

“We need this to act as an unequivocal signal into the financial system to encourage other multilateral lenders to follow suit.”

Von der Leyen, who is due to assume her new job as head of the EU’s executive arm in the coming weeks, also wants the bloc to raise its current target of cutting emissions by at least 40 percent by 2030 from 1990 levels. That may involve a reduction in pollution in the order of 50% or even 55% to counter the more frequent heat waves, storms and floods tied to global warming. Fossil fuels such as coal, oil and natural gas are leading contributors to climate change.

The EIB deal resolved a two-month deadlock where Germany and some central European nations sought to soften the proposed rules and make certain natural-gas projects eligible for financing. The strategy adopted on Thursday allows for continued support for projects already in the works that are vital for Europe’s energy security as long as they are appraised and approved by the end of 2021.

“Hats off to the European Investment Bank and those countries who fought hard to help it set a global benchmark today,” said Sebastien Godinot, economist at the environmental lobby WWF Europe. “All public and private banks must now follow suit and end funding of coal, oil and gas to safeguard investments and tackle the climate crisis.”

New Standards

The EIB new policy includes a new Emissions Performance Standard of 250 grams of carbon dioxide per kilowatt-hour, replacing the current 550 grams standard. That means that in order to qualify for financing, new power-generation projects have to be mitigated by various technologies that significantly improve their emissions performance, EIB Vice President Andrew McDowell said in a conference call.

The EIB, which last year invested more than 16 billion euros in climate-action projects, is preparing to play a larger role in spurring low-carbon technologies.

“This is not a last step, there are many more steps to come,” McDowell said. “But this is probably one of the most difficult parts of this journey that we’re having to take.”

Shale Oil Pioneers Say the Boom Times Are Over



The days of relentless production growth from U.S. shale oil fields are ending, potentially aiding OPEC’s years-long effort to drain a worldwide supply glut, according to industry

pioneers Scott Sheffield and Mark Papa.

Investor calls for shale producers to shut down rigs and stop burning through cash are being heeded, Sheffield, Pioneer Natural Resources Co.'s chief executive officer, said on Tuesday. Across the American shale industry, output growth will slow next year, providing a boost for crude prices through the early 2020s, he said.

"I don't think OPEC has to worry that much more about U.S. shale growth long term," Sheffield said during a conference call with analysts. He's "definitely becoming more optimistic that we're probably at the bottom end of the cycle regarding oil prices."

Talk of a shale slowdown reached a fever pitch this year as investors crushed drillers' stocks and demanded spending discipline. As if on cue, Occidental Petroleum Corp., Apache Corp., Cimarex Energy Co. and Pioneer are all signaling plans to trim budgets. Explorers' capital spending in 2020 will be 17% lower than this year, according to Cowen & Co., citing guidance from 14 third-quarter earnings reports.

Mark Papa, who built Enron Corp. castoff EOG Resources Inc. into one of the world's biggest independent oil explorers and now runs Centennial Resource Development Inc., has been sounding the alarm on shale growth since at least February. In reiterating that warning on Tuesday, he said the slowdown will be more dramatic than he predicted as recently as nine weeks ago.

Beyond 2020

Papa downgraded his 2020 shale growth forecast to 400,000 barrels a day compared from the 700,000 estimate he discussed in early September.

"This is likely not just a 2020 event," Papa said during Centennial's third-quarter results call. "I believe U.S. shale

production on a year-over-year growth basis will be considerably less powerful in 2021 and later years than most people currently expect.”

Sheffield sees about 700,000 barrels a day being added next year while the Energy Information Administration predicts that next year’s daily production will expand by 910,000 barrels. Even that would be half of last year’s increase.

Crowded Wells

For Papa, there’s a more fundamental reason driving the downturn in shale than investor sentiment. Many producers have drilled their best locations and are now turning to lower-quality sites. Some also have been drilling wells too close together, resulting in a loss of overall performance.

The counterpoint to Sheffield and Papa’s gloomy outlook is the supermajors Exxon Mobil Corp. and Chevron Corp., which are ramping up Permian Basin drilling. Each plan to produce about one million barrels a day from the basin by the early 2020s. That may provide a silver lining for independent producers: an opportunity to get bought, Sheffield said.

The majors will have “to decide whether or not to bulk up their inventory over the next two to three years and decide whether or not to acquire any independents,” he said.

– *With assistance by Catherine Ngai*

اعتماد الاقتصاد “الازرق” للدول الاورومتوسطية



رأى الرئيس التنفيذي لشركة Energy and Environment Holding رودي بارودي والذي وصفته وسائل الاعلام اليونانية بأحد كبار خبراء النفط، ان حكم القانون هو الذي يجب ان يطبع التعاون العابر للحدود.

بارودي تحدث في الجلسة الافتتاحية للقمّة الاورو - عربية المنعقدة في اثينا الى جانب رئيس الوزراء اليوناني كيرياكوس ميتسوتاكيس والرئيس القبرصي نيكوس اناستاسياديس ورئيسي الوزراء السابقين الفرنسي فرنسوا فيون والايطالي ماسيمو داليمان.

جلسة الافتتاح للقمة ركزت على موضوعي ازمة اللجوء ومصالح الدول المتوسطية في فورة استخراج النفط والغاز، وتعمقت الجلسات في اليوم التالي في شرح العنوان الابرز الا وهو اقتصاد الغاز والنفط، اذ شدد نائب وزير الطاقة والبيئة في اليونان، جيراسيموس توماس على العلاقات (الجيوسياسية) بين موارد الغاز تحت البحر، وأنشطة غاز الماء الطبيعي ، وتصدير النفط والغاز من شرق إلى أوروبا، وما يرتبط بها من مخاوف بشأن الآثار البيئية المتوسطة .

ولفت بارودي على هامش القمة الى انه من أجل انجاز التنقيب بشكل آمن عن الثروات البحرية واستغلالها، لا يمكن أن يكون هناك بديل عن القواعد والمعايير المشتركة. "هذا الاقتصاد الأزرق يمكن أن يكون عامل تغيير بالنسبة للبلدان في جميع أنحاء البحر الأبيض المتوسط وحتى أبعد من ذلك، معتبرا ان أفضل وأرخص وأسهل طريقة لضمان التنمية المستدامة في الوقت المناسب لجميع اللاعبين هو الالتزام بموجبات القانون الدولي و ميثاق الأمم المتحدة ، لذا فإن السعي الى حل النزاعات بالطرق السلمية، هو بمثابة اجتياز نصف الطريق. واذا ما تم الارتكاز الى مبادئ الشراكة الأورو- متوسطة في "تقرير السياسات فسيربح الجميع".

واشار الى مصلحة الاتحاد الاوروبي في تعزيز الترسيم البحري الكامل ، وهذا من شأنه تبديد الشكوك لدى الدول الأعضاء في الجنوب، ويجاد فرص جديدة للشراكة الأورو-متوسطة من خلال مواصلة الحوار وتقليل التوترات وتعزيز العلاقات التجارية .

تستحق الازدهار الاقتصادي الذي ورأى ان شعوب البحر المتوسط ستوفره عائدات النفط والغاز الجديدة. إنهم يستحقون المدارس الحديثة والمستشفيات والطرق وغيرها من البنى التحتية الأساسية التي من شأنها تنشيط اقتصاداتها والقضاء على الفقر والحد من عدم المساواة ". وخلص بارودي إلى أنه من الأهمية بمكان زيادة الوعي العام لدى دول البحر المتوسط حول الاقتصاد الأزرق .

Blue Economy is Essential for All of the Euro-Mediterranean Nations



ATHENS: (Agencies) No single factor is more important to cross-border cooperation than the rule of law, a leading energy policy expert told this week's EU-Arab World Summit in Athens.



Greek Prime Minister H.E. Mr. Kyriakos Mitsotakis greeting Energy expert Mr. Roudi Baroudi at the 4th EU Arab-World Summit in Athens, October 2019

Several high-profile speakers addressed opening-day sessions on Tuesday, including Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, Cypriot President Nicos Anastasiades, former French Prime Minister Francois Fillon, and former Italian Prime Minister Massimo D'Alema. Most of these dealt in broad strokes with topics of mutual EU/Arab interest such as economic challenges, the immigration crisis, and shared interests in the Mediterranean's rapidly expanding oil and gas industry.

On Wednesday, speakers delved more deeply into specific issues, among them Greece's Deputy Minister for Energy and the Environment, Gerassimos Thomas, who focused on the geopolitical relationship(s) among undersea gas resources, liquified natural gas (LNG) activities, the delivery of East Med resources to Europe, and associated concerns about

environmental impacts.

This and other in-depth talks prompted Roudi Baroudi, CEO of Doha-based independent consultancy Emergy and Environment Holding, to remark that with such a complex web of factors at play among so many countries, the only logical approach was to ensure that any and all stakeholders willingly submit to the same rules.



Mr. Roudi Baroudi with H.E. Mr. Massimo D'Alema, former Prime Minister of Italy

“In order to fully appreciate and safely exploit all of the advantages offered by well-managed maritime resource, there can be no substitute for common rules and standards,” Baroudi told attendees and journalists on the sidelines of the summit. “This blue economy could be a game-changer for countries all around the Mediterranean and even further afield.”

Baroudi, a 40-year veteran of the energy business who has helped shape both public and private policies on several continents, said that “the best, the cheapest, and the easiest way” to ensure timely and sustainable development for all

players to honor their obligations under international law.

“If these countries just do their basic duty under the United Nations Charter, which is to seek the peaceful resolution of disputes, we’ll already be halfway there,” Baroudi said. “If they also make policy decisions based on the principles of Euro-Med partnership, then everyone wins.”

Baroudi also mentioned that the EU, for instance, has a clear interest in promoting full Maritime demarcation, not just because it would remove uncertainties affecting its southern members, but also because it would open up new opportunities for the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership by continuing dialogue, reducing frictions and strengthening business ties.



Former Prime Minister of France, Francois Fillon and Energy expert Roudi Baroudi in discussions during the 4th EU-Arab World Summit in Athens, October 2019

“The peoples of the Mediterranean deserve the chance at affluence that new oil and gas revenues would provide. They

deserve the modern schools, hospitals, roads, and other infrastructure that would reinvigorate their economies, eliminate poverty, and reduce inequality .”

Baroudi concluded that it is very important to increase public awareness of the Maritime domain for the blue economy to really take hold all of the Euro Mediterranean Nations enjoy and to integrate fair, diplomatic, political, legal and scientific dimensions/approaches.

France upholds law banning palm oil from biofuel scheme



France’s constitutional court yesterday upheld a law excluding palm oil from the country’s biofuel scheme, rejecting an appeal by energy company Total which says the measure puts at risk its production site in southern France.

The legislation will remove palm oil from a list of permitted biofuels from January 2020 and eliminate related tax

advantages.

Total invested €300mn to convert its La Mede site from a crude oil refinery into a biofuel plant, starting output in July. CEO Patrick Pouyanne has warned that if the law were upheld, it could mean losses of up to €80mn (\$88mn) for the refinery, forcing the company to rethink its plans.

The constitutional court said in a statement the law was in line with the public interest of environmental protection, “considering the strong growth of palm oil production and the major amount of land used for its production worldwide, and given the deforestation and drying out of peat bogs”.

A spokesman said Total had taken note of the court’s decision and reiterated Pouyanne’s previous comments that the company would not be able to meet an agreement with the government to source some feed stock locally if the law was upheld.

Pouyanne told lawmakers during a hearing in September that Total had no wish to shut down La Mede, which employs around 300 people.

However, he said that the company would not be able to meet commitments such as buying rapeseed oil from French farmers for the refinery.

“We would have to look for an export market, but the refinery will not be competitive,” he said last month.

The European Union also plans to restrict the use of palm oil in biofuel due to the environmental impact, something which has triggered diplomatic tensions with top producers Malaysia and Indonesia.

Under the French government’s 2019 budget, tax exemptions for palm oil will end on January 1, 2020.

The law specifies that palm oil cannot be considered a biofuel unless producers can guarantee it has been produced under conditions that prevent an indirect increase of greenhouse gas emissions.

Tax exemptions for other biofuels remain in place.

Total argues that adding palm oil to fuel is a way of using renewable energy and that the budget law introduced an unjustifiable difference between palm oil and other oilseed

crops.

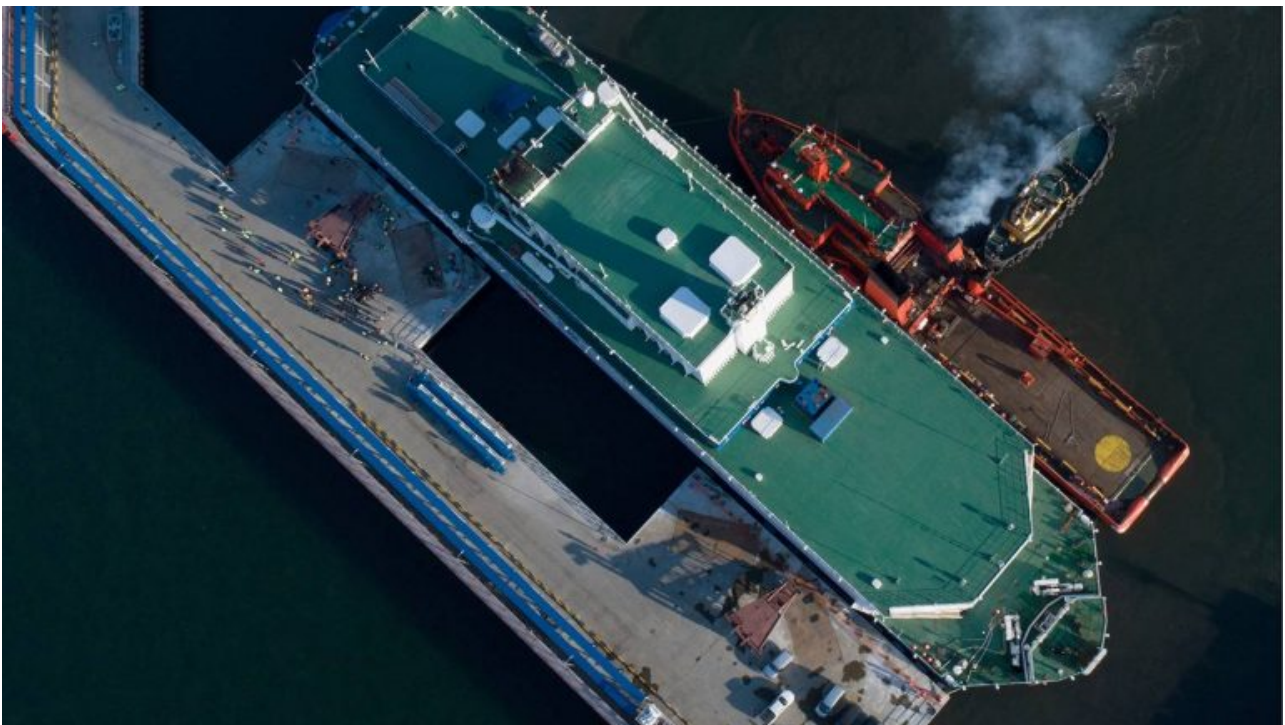
The company won government approval in 2018 to use palm oil to supply La Mede.

It pledged that palm oil would account for less than half of raw material used, with French rapeseed crops and recycled oil also being used.

However, the plans caused uproar among environmental activists and farmers.

Environmental protection group Greenpeace welcomed the court's decision as "good news for the fight against deforestation" and called in a statement for France to also remove soybeans from the list of crops approved for biofuel.

Europe needs a serious nuclear-energy debate



Last month, the Akademik Lomonosov, Russia's first floating nuclear power plant, arrived in the remote town of Pevek in

the country's Siberian Arctic region. Russian state-run nuclear energy company Rosatom sees this as a pilot project, and hopes eventually to deploy a fleet of such units in Russia and elsewhere – including in developing countries in Asia and Africa that urgently need affordable electricity.

The Lomonosov builds on a long tradition of nuclear-powered icebreakers in the Arctic Ocean. But, as I explain in my book on energy geopolitics, it also is a cutting-edge example of how small modular reactors can be deployed more easily, flexibly and cost-effectively than traditional nuclear facilities.

SMRs hold out the promise of clean energy production not only in remote areas, but also in developing countries that are not equipped to build bespoke nuclear power plants on land.

Floating SMR technologies also could potentially be used in commercial shipping in the thawing Arctic: nuclear-powered container ships would be far cleaner than those powered by heavy fuel oil, which produces emissions of sulfur and heavy metals. Furthermore, growing economic activity throughout the Arctic makes it increasingly important for remote areas like Pevek to have low-carbon energy sources.

Although the Lomonosov will be the world's smallest and most northerly nuclear plant when it comes online, it may soon have competition. Researchers in the United States, South Korea, Russia, France, China, Argentina, Japan and India are currently working on about 50 different SMR designs. Furthermore, the rapid changes in the Arctic, and the global push to replace fossil fuels with low-carbon energy sources, have led Chinese, French and American researchers to join their Russian counterparts in assessing the prospects for sea-based nuclear power.

Unfortunately, Western media have failed to recognize the importance of the Lomonosov. Instead, inflammatory and

misleading language from Greenpeace and several other environmental groups has led to breathless reporting on the launch of a “nuclear Titanic” and “Chernobyl on ice.”

Greenpeace, which has always opposed nuclear energy because of its supposed risks to the environment and humans, has highlighted the remote location of the Lomonosov and the unpredictable Arctic climate. As with many other nuclear projects in recent decades, the group has again succeeded in framing the terms of debate. But those with actual nuclear expertise have made it clear that Greenpeace’s scare tactics have “no basis in science.”

As industry experts have repeatedly pointed out, seaborne nuclear reactors are hardly a new concept.

The U.S. used an ex-World War II cargo ship equipped with a nuclear reactor to generate power for the Panama Canal from 1968 to 1976, and Russia’s fleet of nuclear-powered icebreakers uses the same type of reactor as the Lomonosov. These reactors already meet International Atomic Energy Agency requirements, with safety measures including double containment and passive reactor vessel cooldown systems.

In fact, offshore nuclear reactors could even be safer than those on land, because cold water facilitates the rapid cooling of the unit in case of emergencies.

Sadly, the primacy of anti-nuclear sentiment over empirical fact has been a consistent feature of Europe’s nuclear-power debate since the ’80s. In 1997, for example, France abandoned its own advanced Superphenix “breeder reactor” project because incoming Prime Minister Lionel Jospin required the support of the Green Party to form a government.

Two decades later, France still has not successfully developed the technology. And just last month, the country’s Alternative Energies and Atomic Energy Commission decided to abandon the fourth-generation advanced sodium technological reactor for

industrial demonstration (ASTRID) that had been launched in 2006 to replace Superphenix.

By succumbing to anti-nuclear pressure from groups such as Greenpeace, Western policymakers have failed to keep pace with Russia and China. Russia's Rosatom, for example, is already a global leader in marketing nuclear energy to emerging economies, and has over a hundred projects in countries including India, China and Belarus.

The alarmist rhetoric surrounding today's emerging nuclear technology is unfortunately par for the course. And it again highlights the contradictory and self-defeating approach of some Western policymakers to the world's largest and most reliable source of low-carbon energy.

According to the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, nuclear power generation is second only to onshore wind in terms of carbon neutrality, with median carbon dioxide emissions of just 12 grams per kilowatt hour of electricity generation. Those concerned about CO₂ emissions should therefore prefer nuclear energy to fossil fuels such as coal (820 grams/kWh) and natural gas (490 grams/kWh).

Nuclear also outperforms biomass (230 grams/kWh), solar energy (48 grams/kWh), and hydropower (24 grams/kWh). In addition, nuclear power has none of the intermittency problems that plague wind and solar energy, causing ongoing price increases for consumers.

These differences come into sharp focus when we consider the effect of German Chancellor Angela Merkel's Energiewende policy, which aims to increase the country's renewable energy capacity while phasing out nuclear power. The Energiewende is often lauded as one of Europe's leading sustainability initiatives. Yet, in Germany's rush to move away from nuclear power following the 2011 nuclear accident in Fukushima, Japan, the country's energy sector has had to rely on coal for

baseload power.

Pressure from German environmentalists helped drive this decision – but using nuclear energy instead of coal would have resulted in Germany releasing approximately 220 million fewer tons of CO₂ per year. In fact, since 1990, Germany has managed to achieve only a slow, uneven decline in CO₂ emissions, despite a manifold increase in renewable energy capacity.

While Germany continues to phase out its nuclear industry, the Akademik Lomonosov highlights the potential for nuclear-power generation in the Arctic. What Europe in particular needs now is a sensible nuclear-energy debate based on facts rather than fear.

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As Poland Exits Coal, a Billionaire Offers First Nuclear Plant



Poland's second-richest man may beat the government in building the nation's first nuclear power plant.

Michał Solowow's Synthos SA, the second-largest European maker of synthetic rubber, signed a memorandum with GE Hitachi Nuclear Energy to build a small 300-megawatt reactor next to the company's factory in southern Poland, which could be completed as early as 2027. That's six years earlier than the government expects to build its first plant in a plan to construct at least 6 gigawatts of nuclear and cut the nation's reliance on coal for electricity generation.

"Small modular reactors can play a significant role in addressing Poland's energy challenges," Solowow said Tuesday in a statement. They "will improve our chances to move away from coal and have a positive impact on our industry and nation."

Poland, which gets about 80% of its electricity from burning coal, is slowly coming to terms with the fact that it has no choice but to shed the dirty fuel to meet European Union climate goals. To do so, its energy policy is counting on gas, offshore wind, solar energy and nuclear, which it sees generating about 20% of its needs by 2040.

Solowow hopes that GE's small modular reactor will be licensed in North America in 2024, which would allow the company to build the unit in 2027, he said by telephone on Tuesday. Katherine Poseidon, a European policy analyst at BloombergNEF, said she doesn't expect the first SMR to be online before 2026.

Solowow, whose energy-intensive businesses also produce ceramic tiles and wood flooring, seeks to produce cheaper and cleaner electricity than coal, which is becoming more expensive in power generation as the EU's climate policy makes carbon-dioxide permits more expensive. The richest Pole, Zygmunt Solorz, earlier this year announced a push to promote green solutions.

The estimated costs of large nuclear projects in France, the U.K. and Finland have repeatedly been increased. Poland's Energy Ministry in the 2040 policy published last year doubted that small reactors could be used any time soon and said investing in them would be "irrational."

GE Hitachi says that small reactors are as much as 60% less expensive to build than regular ones and could compete with gas-fired plants and renewable energy.

"Small modular reactor technology is still a long way from commercialization," BNEF's Poseidon said. "It is definitely a big step for Poland – it shows they're serious about developing zero-carbon power generating capacity."