

Turkey, Greece brace for standoff over Cyprus gas drilling plans



OPEC sees growing supply threat from rivals beyond U.S. shale



LONDON (Bloomberg) – OPEC's latest forecasts suggested a weaker outlook for global oil markets this year as surging supplies from competitors from Norway to Guyana threaten the group's efforts to defend crude prices.

The organization and its allies – which together account for about half the world's oil output – are embarking on a fresh round of production cuts as another year of booming rival supplies threatens to unleash a new glut. OPEC's latest monthly report shows their challenge extends far beyond the shale patch of Texas and North Dakota.

The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries boosted forecasts for growth in output from non-members in 2020 by 180,000 barrels a day to 2.35 million a day, as offshore projects once seen unfeasible in an era of lower oil prices take off. While the outlook for the U.S. was lowered, America will still account for almost two thirds of the new output.

Although the group raised estimates for world demand, rival supplies will grow about twice as fast, potentially derailing the coalition's strategy to maintain oil revenues for its members. Crude futures are trading near \$64 a barrel in London, close to the lowest in a month, even after flaring

tensions between the U.S. and Iran rekindled fears of a major supply disruption.

OPEC and allies including Russia and Kazakhstan are deepening production cutbacks made last year in order to remove excess global inventories, pledging overall curbs of about 2.1 million barrels a day. This month's report suggests those measures should be sufficient to deplete stockpiles during the first quarter, but that a surplus will probably return in the second.

Saudi Arabia, the group's biggest member and de facto leader, rushed to implement almost all of the additional reductions pledged before the new agreement even took effect, the report showed. The kingdom reduced output by 111,000 barrels a day in December to 9.762 million a day.

As a result, the organization's total production fell to 29.44 million a day last month. If other nations implement just part of their pledged reductions, output should be near the average of 29.19 million a day needed in the first quarter. However, even full compliance won't prevent stocks building up in the second quarter, when the requirement for OPEC's crude drops to 28.56 million a day.

The full alliance is due to meet in early March, when the agreement is due to expire, to decide whether to continue with the strategy.

Oil prices likely to stay

around \$65-\$70 through 2024



LONDON (Reuters) – Long-term expectations about oil prices remain firmly anchored around \$65-70 per barrel, according to the latest annual survey of energy professionals conducted by Reuters.

Plentiful supplies from U.S. shale plays and other sources outside the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries are expected to keep prices close to their recent range for the indefinite future.

Fears about peaking oil supplies, common ten years ago, have disappeared; now there are some indications that expectations about peaking oil demand are taking hold.

Brent is forecast to average \$65 per barrel in each of the next five years based on the median, or \$67 this year rising slightly to \$69 by 2024 based on the mean.

Most forecasters expect average prices to remain between \$60

and \$75 per barrel in each of the next five years, with only a very small number expecting them to dip below \$50 or rise above \$90.

The results are based on a questionnaire sent to over 9,000 energy market professionals, with responses received from 950 between Jan. 8 and Jan. 11 (tmsnrt.rs/2FNjC5J).

Price forecasts are very close to last year's survey and previous years, though in most cases the average has fallen by \$1 or \$2.

In earlier surveys, there was some slight upward drift in price expectations for the out years, but there is no sign of that this year.

Most respondents seem convinced there will be enough oil to meet conceivable demand at around \$65 per barrel in the medium term.

Fewer than 5% thought oil prices would average \$100 or more in 2024, prices that would signal pressure on production, which were once common between 2011 and 2014.

In contrast, nearly 16% of respondents thought prices would average less than \$50, a possible a sign of softening consumption and market saturation as part of the transition away from an oil-based transportation system.

OIL INDUSTRY INSIDERS

Among survey respondents, 26% are involved directly in oil and gas production (exploration, drilling, production, refining, marketing and field services).

Most of the rest are involved in banking and finance (19%), research (11%), professional services (7%), hedge funds (7%), other energy industries (5%) and physical commodity trading (5%).

The results from respondents involved directly in the oil and gas industry were very similar to those in other sectors.

Oil and gas insiders and those outside the industry have more or less the same views about prices in 2020.

Insiders are marginally more bullish than outsiders for later years, perhaps predicting higher prices will be needed to ensure production growth, but the difference is just \$2 per barrel in 2022, rising to less than \$4 in 2024.

EXPECTATIONS ANCHOR

Last year's survey predicted Brent prices would average \$63 per barrel in 2019, which proved remarkably close to the actual outturn of \$64, based on daily closing prices.

In fact, the survey has been highly accurate since its inception in 2016, with the possible exception of 2018, when prices climbed a bit more than expected.

The main reason for the miss was probably the unexpected severity of U.S. sanctions on Iran, coupled with Saudi Arabia's restrictive output policy and an acceleration in global growth.

In this year's survey, as with previous versions, respondents exhibit more certainty about prices this year and next compared with the out-years, which is natural given that uncertainty tends to increase over longer time horizons.

Responses for 2020-2021 are tightly clustered, while expectations for 2023-24 exhibit more variation. Even so, very few respondents expect average prices to fall below \$50 or rise above \$90 at any point in the next five years.

Response clustering has been increasing in recent surveys, suggesting the anchoring of long-term expectations around the \$65-70 per barrel level is becoming stronger.

The longer prices trade around the \$65-70 level, with production and consumption roughly in balance, the more expectations are becoming cemented around this level.

Over the last 27 months, since the start of November 2017, Brent prices have closed between \$60 and \$75 per barrel on 74% of all trading days, with just 10% of closes below this level and 16% above it.

Overall, most respondents expect the oil market to remain comfortably supplied in the foreseeable future, with prices oscillating around the current level and relatively moderate volatility.

New era of offshore gushers portends flood of oil amid glut



The world's most-ambitious oil drillers are opening a new exploration frontier at perhaps the worst possible time.

With a slew of large discoveries off South America's northeast coast, Exxon Mobil Corp, Hess Corp, Apache Corp and their partners are set to unleash new supplies onto global markets increasingly awash in crude.

Apache is the latest American driller to surprise investors with a significant discovery in coastal waters near the Suriname-Guyana border. The Houston-based explorer may have tipped its hand that something big was coming when it brought France's Total SA on board as a partner in the endeavour just weeks before Tuesday's announcement. Nonetheless, Apache's stock surged 27% for the biggest one-day advance in at least 40 years.

"It's pretty remarkable when you think about the larger landscape in which these new supplies will come online," said Gianna Bern, a former BP Plc oil trader who teaches finance at the University of Notre Dame. "At the same time, Apache and companies like that tend to assume very low prices before development so that the economics will be favorable" regardless of market fluctuations.

Although it could be years before the Suriname find comes online, the discovery comes at a time when traders already are bracing for the biggest influx from non-Opec producers in at least 15 years, according to JBC Energy.

The rally in Apache shares is a vote of confidence from holders that chief executive officer John Christmann's management team can pump that oil so cheaply that it will turn a profit even if crude collapses to \$30 or \$25 a barrel, said Bern, author of *Investing in Energy: A Primer on the Economics of the Energy Industry*.

Hess enjoyed just such a boom last year when investors boosted the shares 65% because of the oil producer's role as a junior partner in Exxon Mobil Corp's staggering discoveries off Guyana.

Guyana and Suriname are not alone. New supplies are flowing, or will be shortly, from new wells in Norway, Canada, Mexico,

Brazil and Colombia, Bern said. Brazil alone is forecast to add 200,000 to 300,000 barrels of daily supply this year, and only US shale is expected to expand at a faster rate, said Fernando Valle, an analyst at Bloomberg Intelligence.

Outside the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, output of crude and byproducts known as gas liquids will increase by 2mn barrels a day this year, swamping the 1.2mn-barrel growth forecast, according to IHS Markit.

Brazil and Guyana alone are set to add more than 400,000 barrels of combined daily supplies to the market this year, a volume that would offset most of the auxiliary cuts agreed to by Opec and its allies in late 2019, said Stephen Beck, the Houston-based senior director of upstream at Stratas Advisors.

"We've been in a situation where too much supply is chasing too little demand since 2013," said Jim Burkhard, vice president and head of oil market at IHS. "2020 is shaping up to be the same way."

The wild card, though, is what transpires with Iraqi production in the aftermath of the US assassination of a top Iranian general, Burkhard said.

As Opec's second-largest producer, any disruption to Iraqi output could upend markets. Crude futures surged above \$70 a barrel in London on Monday on concern the attack would spark a wider conflict. Still, they remain almost 10% off the 2019 high touched in April.

In past decades, new discoveries weren't viewed as an imminent threat to the supply-demand balance because they took upwards of a decade to bring into production. But technological advances now allow explorers to turn discoveries into producing assets in half that span, upsetting old maxims about the time horizons for new supplies.

Relative to shale fields or conventional onshore wells, offshore projects tend to be more resilient to volatile price movements because once the initial construction is finished, operational costs are so slim that "oil would have to get under \$10 a barrel before they'd shut them in," said Jim Krane, a fellow at Rice University's Center for Energy Studies

in Houston.

"Once the ball is rolling, you plow full steam ahead. Damn the oil price," Krane said. "Clearly that's what's happening in Guyana."

Top quality oil sold near \$100 a barrel on new ship fuel rules



Just shy of \$100 a barrel – that's the cost of a type of crude that's become prized thanks to the scramble for cleaner-burning fuels.

Australia's Santos Ltd. this week sold a cargo of March-

loading Pyrenees, a dense and low-sulfur oil, at a premium of about \$31 a barrel over Dated Brent, according to traders who took part in the tender. That's the equivalent to just under \$100 a barrel given that the global benchmark is trading at about \$65.

Demand for so-called heavy-sweet oil like Pyrenees has surged in recent months due to cleaner global ship-fuel standards, known as IMO 2020, which took effect Jan. 1. The new rules have boosted the value of these crudes that are low in sulfur and also viscous, which makes them better for marine engines. Low-sulfur marine fuel, another IMO compliant type of oil, cost about \$640 a ton this week in Singapore, the equivalent of about \$95 a barrel.

Santos had sought a target price of \$32 a barrel or more over Dated Brent, according to traders. The company has a minority stake in the Pyrenees project, which it acquired through its 2018 purchase of Quadrant Energy.

"New IMO 2020 environmental regulations for shipping bunker fuel are driving the low-sulfur fuel oil market," a Santos spokeswoman said in an emailed statement. "Heavy sweet crudes like those from our Van Gogh and Pyrenees fields are well suited for fuel oil blending to meet the new environmental requirements and are currently in very high demand."

Pyrenees is also particularly valued because of its relative scarcity, with production of about 15,000 barrels a day pumped from fields off Western Australia, according to BHP Group, the majority owner and operator. A cargo to load this month was sold in November at more than \$17 a barrel over Dated Brent. Another Australian heavy-sweet crude, Van Gogh, sold at a premium of as high as \$19 to Dated Brent in December.

ANALYSIS – TurkStream to strengthen Turkey's energy hub position



With Hungary, Bulgaria and Serbia to depend on TurkStream, Turkey's importance to increase in terms of energy security

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ISTANBUL

The inauguration of the TurkStream natural gas pipeline project, which will begin carrying natural gas from Russia to Europe via Turkey on Jan. 8, 2020, is considered a further step in Turkish and Russian relations in terms of energy.

The project, which has two lines, each of which has a carrying capacity of 15.75 billion cubic meters of natural gas, is particularly important for southern European countries. It will mark the first time that Russian natural gas will reach Europe via Turkey. The TurkStream project transfers natural gas directly to Turkey, which the country takes from the West Line, and it means a new route for European countries. Thus, Turkey has strengthened its position as a country that contributes to the energy security of Europe.

Turkey's energy security increasing

Turkey's claim of being an energy hub has been strengthened by the TurkStream project, which enables the country to directly take the natural gas coming from the West Line. TurkStream, which will be operated by a company established by BOTAS and Gazprom, is an important route for meeting the natural gas needs of Europe. The project, which increases the mutual dependency between Ankara and Moscow, positively contributes to the advancement of cooperation for future relations between the countries. Thus, TurkStream is significant for revealing that energy sources strengthen cooperation and ensure economic benefits rather than causing conflicts.

The West Line, one of the routes coming from Russia, reaches Turkey by passing through Ukraine and Bulgaria. Political and economic tensions between Russia and Ukraine sometimes lead to an interruption of natural gas transmission from the West Line to Turkey.

This situation poses a great risk for the Turkish economy. Transmitting the annual 14 billion cubic meters of gas from the West Line to Turkey over the first line of TurkStream, without changing terms and conditions of the existing agreements, means reducing this risk. Thus, gas will be directly transmitted from Russia to Turkey without the need for intermediate countries, and the problem of being exposed to potential interruptions caused by third parties will be

eliminated. As a result, Turkey's energy security has increased with this project.

Since the pipelines in Ukraine have reached the end of their service life, they must be repaired and replaced. Some 20,000 kilometers of a total 33,000 kilometers of transmission pipelines are more than 33 years old. A major resource is needed to further operate the pipelines which span approximately 13,000 kilometers and are 11 to 33 years old. Under these conditions, the fact that Russia acts reluctant and is willing to invest in other directions except for maintenance and repair poses another great risk to the countries that benefit from those pipelines.

Even if the TurkStream project is not carried out, it is understood that the West Line will fail to perform its former function in the future. Therefore, the problem of a lack of infrastructure that would arise in the future has been eliminated with TurkStream.

Impacts on dependency

It is understood that Turkey bought an average of 26.4 billion cubic meters of natural gas per year from Russia between 2011-2018. The lowest amount was 24 billion cubic meters in 2018. It is seen that the EU countries import an average of 40% natural gas from Russia. This rate increases to 100% in some EU countries. Turkey continues to take significant steps to decrease its dependency on Russia. Benefitting more from renewable energy sources in Turkey has led to a decrease of the gas rate coming from Russia from around 60% to around 48% in 2018. Moreover, in case of full usage of the capacity of natural gas coming from TANAP allocated for Turkey in 2020, this rate is expected to fall to around 40%.

Turkey consumes an annual average of 50 billion cubic meters of natural gas and procures 99% of this amount from abroad. Not depending on one resource, it puts forward strategies

prioritizing diversifying source countries with new pipelines such as TANAP as well as routes.

Likewise, Turkey, which aims to reach a storage capacity for around 10 billion cubic meters of natural gas in 2023, has the technical capacity to procure half of the natural gas it consumes as LNG (liquefied natural gas). Turkey, which follows the policy of reducing natural gas usage rates in electricity generation, increases its standing as a regional actor by participating in international energy projects. While all these developments decrease Turkey's dependency on Russia, it increases Russia's dependency on Turkey compared to the past with the TurkStream project.

It is understood that the natural gas structure in the Balkans will change to a certain extent with the arrival of TurkStream to the region. It is stated that the West Natural Gas Pipeline will become dysfunctional due to TurkStream. As Hungary, Bulgaria and Serbia will meet their increasing natural gas demand with TurkStream, Turkey's importance will increase in terms of those countries' energy security. Also, the BOTAS and GAZPROM partnership, which will operate the second line that will reach Europe, means that Turkey will economically benefit from TurkStream.

US sanctions and possible results

It is claimed that TurkStream does not align with the strategic goals of the U.S. and the EU's Third Energy Package legislation. On the other hand, the U.S. shows that it is against TurkStream with its CAATSA (Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act) sanctions. The U.S. Congress increased its pressure on TurkStream and Nord Stream 2 with the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020 it passed in December 2019 and by supporting some sanctions. The implementation of items targeting ships involved in laying pipes on the seabed in these projects may be on the agenda in 2020. However, as Turkish firms do not

carry out the sea part of the project, it is not possible to directly implement U.S. sanctions on Turkey. On the other hand, since the TurkStream project was initiated earlier than CAATSA's enactment, it should not be involved in these sanctions.

While TurkStream brings Ankara and Moscow closer, it also presents gains for Turkey concerning Syria and Libya, which are important issues of foreign policy. The progress and increase in this cooperation will provide significant flexibility to Turkey in foreign policy.

On the other hand, transmission of natural gas, which the EU demands, through Turkey to the EU and the increase of the amount that is carried by time are seen as a result of this cooperation. The EU will have to import more natural gas if Norway's reserves, which are seen as an insurance due to its closeness to the EU, expire in a short time. While the U.S.' external natural gas dependence rate was 47% in 2000, this rate increased to 55% in 2017.

It is foreseen that this rate will increase to around 70% in 2030. For this reason, Turkey stands out as one of the most reliable routes at the point for meeting the EU's energy needs.

Projects such as TurkStream and TANAP have emerged to meet Europe's natural gas needs. Increasing the number of these projects contributes positively especially to security and economic issues at regional and global levels. New cooperation with countries close to this geography, such as Turkmenistan, which has the largest proven natural gas reserve in Central Asia, may be established. Turkey, which is one of the key countries that will play an active role in transmitting Turkmen gas to Europe, can display its playmaker role easier with the experience it gained through TANAP and TurkStream. Therefore, it can be said that Turkey's leadership role in energy is being strengthened in terms of the realization of

international projects.

*Opinions expressed in this article are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect the editorial policy of Anadolu Agency.

Gazprom and Ukraine agree on gas transit, settle legal issues



Bloomberg/ Moscow

Gazprom PJSC and Ukraine reached an agreement that will allow Russian gas to flow to Europe via its neighbour through the end of 2024 and settle all of the related legal disputes.

Ukraine's gas company, Naftogaz PJSC, will organise the transit of Russian gas through the country, with a booked pipeline capacity of 65bn cubic meters for 2020 shipments,

Gazprom chief executive officer Alexey Miller said in a statement yesterday.

In 2021-2024, the booked capacities will reach 40bn cubic meters a year, he said. The companies also agreed to mull the possibility of gas transit through 2034, according to a protocol, signed late Friday evening in Minsk. An extension for the following 10 years may be on the same terms as the five-year deal, according to Ukraine's Energy Ministry.

"The transit via Ukraine will continue and the strategic nature of the transit was understood by everyone and I believe it would help us open a new chapter in this relationship," EU Commission Vice President Maros Sefcovic told Bloomberg yesterday.

The bilateral agreement paves the way for the continuation of Russian gas flows to Europe via Ukraine, which has been the key transit route for Gazprom even amid the legal spats and political tensions between the two nations.

It also supports Europe's energy security as Russia has been the European Union's dominant and often cheapest energy supplier, providing some 37% of the fuel to the region last year. The current 10-year transit deal between Russia and Ukraine expires January 1. "There are very precise deadlines until when everything should happen," Sefcovic said. "I have no doubt that everything will go smoothly as of January 1 because there was full understanding of what needs to be done."

Russia and Ukraine reached the deal as the US administration imposed sanctions on Russia's future subsea gas-export pipeline, Nord Stream 2. The \$11bn pipeline is just weeks away from completion, but it has faced criticism from the US, and it wasn't immediately clear if the pipeline work can be completed without the input of AllSeas Group SA, which said it would halt operations.

Talks to find a deal between Russia and Ukraine intensified in recent days as the deadline loomed. "To be honest we have done almost the impossible in three months," Ukraine's Energy Minister Oleksiy Orzhel told reporters in Kiev yesterday.

Under the deal, Gazprom and Ukraine have agreed not to start any new gas lawsuits against each other and to cancel all their current legal claims that haven't been subject to court rulings, according to Miller. The Russian gas giant will also pay to Naftogaz \$2.9bn awarded by the Stockholm arbitration in 2018.

The sum includes a \$2.6bn debt and fines accumulated thereafter, a spokesman for Gazprom said in a separate statement. "It is very important that these \$3bn in line with Stockholm arbitration will be paid in cash if we implement all the package of proposals before year-end," Orzhel said. At the same time Ukraine will withdraw its legal claims against the Russian company.

Last month, Naftogaz filed a lawsuit against Gazprom with a court of arbitration in Stockholm, asking to revise transit fees totalling more than \$12bn.

Gazprom and the Ukrainian government are also set to sign an "amicable agreement" on cancelling an antitrust claim that has reached about \$7.4bn, including fines. All the legal issues should be resolved by December 29, according to the protocol.

A major shipping fuel change is coming, and so are higher prices



Bloomberg/ London

A defining moment in the history of the oil-refining and shipping industries is at hand.

In fewer than two weeks, thousands of ships the world over will be forced to use fuel containing less sulphur in order to comply with global rules set out by the International Maritime Organization. Those who don't could face penalties and even imprisonment. Ports are deploying drones to – literally – sniff out wrongdoers. The regulations are having a profound effect on oil refineries and the cost of seaborne trade looks set to rise.

What's the big deal?

For decades, shipping has been the oil market's dumping ground for a pollutant blamed on aggravating human health conditions including asthma and causing acid rain. That's because refineries have struggled to eradicate it when turning crude into fuels. Even so, when the regulations were mandated back in October 2016, they came as a shock to many observers who had expected a later start date. While a panic about getting ready has subsided, there's clearly still work to do – as a slump in the price of non-compliant fuel demonstrates.

"IMO 2020 is the most fundamental and dramatic product

specification change the oil industry has experienced, with an impact on both shipping and refining," said Torbjorn Tornqvist, the chief executive officer of Gunvor Group, one of the world's largest oil and gas traders. "It has the potential to change every product and crude differential out there."

The cost of shipping a twenty-foot box-load of goods from Latin America to Europe could rise by \$26, according to IHS Markit, a consultancy. A week-long ship cruise could go up by \$130 per cabin, the firm estimates. Add 5 cents onto a crate of bananas.

It's still too early to say exactly who the biggest winners and losers will be among refineries because there are thousands of variables that shape their profit – more than 600 grades of crude, and many ways of setting up the plants.

Safety concerns

The shipping industry has been consistent in flagging a safety concern about the rules. As yet, there's no single global standard. The new fuel must simply have certain properties – including sulphur and other important metrics – that don't exceed specified levels.

But the lack of a single global product means refineries can make a compliant fuel in different ways. It's thought that some will essentially be low-sulphur crudes that are carefully mixed with other oils, for example. Another way of making the product is to mix the residues from crude that have gone through what's known as vacuum processing in a refinery with other material. These different approaches mean the ships' chief engineers will need to be vigilant so as to avoid mixing incompatible fuels.

Proof of the greater risks have emerged in northwest Europe, where supplies of the new fuel have been found to contain too much sediment. If such fuel found its way onto ships, it could potentially clog filters and lead to engine problems.

"We still have concerns over safety and availability of compliant fuels," said Guy Platten, secretary general of the International Chamber of Shipping, an umbrella group for

maritime trade associations. "This is a pressing issue."

Trade impact

There are already signs that the changeover is having an impact on maritime logistics.

In Singapore, the world's biggest refuelling centre, vessels have had to wait longer than normal to collect bunker fuel. Likewise, the government of Gibraltar said that a lack of refuelling barges has emerged.

"When you consider that 90% of global trade is carried out by seas, it is very important," said Robert Hvide Macleod, the chief executive officer for the management unit of Frontline Ltd, one of the world's biggest supertanker owners. "It will surely be disruptive and create some supply chain bottlenecks in the early goings and logistics constraints when it comes to sourcing marine fuels."

In broad terms, fuel represents shipping's single biggest expense and the new types are trading at several hundred dollars per tonne more than the old variety. So the cost of seaborne trade could creep up if owners manage to pass on the higher prices.

"I think we will see its impact on global trade in terms of waiting days and increased costs," said Sadan Kaptanoglu, president of BIMCO, the world's largest shipping association. "There could even be chaos in extreme situations, where fuel shortages could delay cargo deliveries and non-compliance by ships ending in port state punishments and court cases."

Compliance complications

It's important to remember that oil refineries and shipping companies have spent billions getting ready.

Some ship owners installed scrubbers, units that can cost several million dollars each and allow carriers to remove sulphur from fuel as it's burnt. This enables them to keep using today's cheaper product. Likewise, refineries have invested in technology to convert sulphur-rich crude into higher-quality fuels.

For compliant companies, cheating by others is a problem. Yet there could be non-compliance, at least initially. Industry estimates are that something like 10%-15% of the fleet won't comply with the rules at the start.

Not every country in the world signed up to the regulations, including some large coastal states with significant refining capacity. Even among those that did, not all look likely to start with strict enforcement. There's also a disparity between what penalties will be imposed from one nation to the next.

South Africa, which sits on a shipping lane connecting eastern and western hemispheres, doesn't yet have the domestic laws in place to punish non-compliant vessels.

Bottom line

Nevertheless, these rules should work.

Full enforcement may happen more slowly than the IMO and some in the shipping and refining industries would like. There's a big financial incentive to cheat, and an opportunity to do so on selected trades.

Barring any obvious safety concerns though, the overriding view of analysts is that there should nonetheless be substantial compliance.

That means less airborne pollution and be a positive for those companies that invested in conforming.

"There's almost certainly never been a simultaneous global specification change in the oil industry," said Spencer Welch, oil markets and downstream director at IHS Markit. "For the whole world to change specification of a product on the same day is almost unheard of."

هيل إلى بيروت... القديم على قدمه؟



منذ ولاية جورج دبليو بوش، إقترنت السياسة الاميركية بالنفط. تهتم أميركا أوّلاً بأسعار النفط الذي تستخدمنه لبسط سيطرتها على الأسواق حاميةً بذلك اقتصادها الوطني، وفي الوقت عينه، تصطف من خاله على قوى منافسة تعتمد بشكل أساسي عليه وعلى رأسها الصين. يتّكئ الاقتصاد الأميركي إذاً على "التمويل النفطي" الذي يؤمّن بدوره استقراراً في السوق، كما يؤمّن نوعاً من "التسيسد" يزخر به الدولار على حساب العملات الأخرى.

من هنا، يتخذ موضوع الغاز اللبناني - بكل ما يحمله من تفاصيل تقنية - منحى استراتيجياً بامتياز، علماً أن أبعاده السياسية في شقيها الداخلي والخارجي مرتبطة بشكل عضوي. فخارجياً يتّخذ النفط اللبناني أهمية مصاعفة نظراً "للكميات الهائلة" التي بات من شبه المؤكد انه يخترنها براً وبحراً. وان كانت هذه الكميات نظرياً لا تغير الميزان الاستراتيجي المتعلق بانتاج الطاقة في الشرق الاوسط والمطلوبة بغالبيتها للانتاج الصناعي، إلا أنّ "الحقول اللبنانية متصلة جرافياً 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 وتركيز الغاز بالإضافة الى المنشآت والبني التحتية الضرورية لتسويقه. وعليه، لا يمكن التنبؤ بهوية الدولة التي ستتحكم بما قد يستجدّ 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 الأقليم والمرشح للتفاهم بسبب التناقض الشرس على الثروة الجديدة . في شرق المتوسط

اما بعد الثالث الذي يكتسبه غاز لبنان فـ"مالي" بحث والمقصود هنا ليس مالية الدولة بل الميل الى الالتفاف حول القانون لاستفادة الفريق السياسي المهيمن، وذلك من خلال السمسارات 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 مقومن للهيمنة على ما تبقى من موارد في البلاد، لا سيما وأن التعويل على العائدات النفطية "الاليوم"، أي في ظل عدم وجود قانون واضح ينظم وجهة استخدام هذه الاموال من خلال الصندوق السياسي، يعني حكماً 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، فالجذوى الاقتصادية، بحسب الخبراء، للنفط والغاز في المنطقة ككل لم تُثبت بعد لا سيما وأن كلفة استخراج هذه المواد من قعر البحر تفوق بكثير الكلفة التي تتکبدها روسيا لاستخراج غازها . وبرأي الخبراء، فإن امكان تصدیر 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 شرق المتوسط. أما كل 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 الالزامه له.

لا تعني كل هذه الفرضيات أن دولة من دول العالم الثالث كلبنان "عاجزة عن الاستفادة من ثرواتها النفطية بل يمكن استغلالها، وإن لم يكن للتصدير، فذلك في إصلاح الكهرباء وتحويل الانتاج ليرتکز على الغاز، وهكذا يتم تخفيف العجز وتالياً تقليل الخصوص لهيمنة صندوق النقد الدولي كلما وجدنا أنفسنا مضطرين الى الاقتراض بنسب وشروط تعجيزية" ، 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 ظل التواجد الصيني والروسي في المنطقة. ولا شك أن مساعد وزير الخارجية الأميركي للشؤون السياسية ديفيد هيل سيطرّق إلى هذا الملف خلال زيارته إلى بيروت في الأيام 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 فيتمثل باعتبارها منطقةً أنشطة مشتركة، وهو ما يرفضه الجانب اللبناني حتى الساعة متسلّحاً بالقوانين التي ترعى حقوقه في المياه الإقليمية إضافة إلى الطلب الذي كان تقدّم به إلى الأمم المتحدة لحل النزاع في هذه القضية" يقول الخبير في قوانين وسياسات الطاقة المحامي علي برو.

ويضيف برو في اتصال مع "نداء الوطن" أن "قبرص تحمل مسؤولية مخالفة أحكام الاتفاقية مع لبنان سندًاً لاتفاقية 2007 حيث لم يكن ينبغي عليها ترسيم الحدود مع الكيان الإسرائيلي من دون موافقة الدولة اللبنانية. من جهتها، أودعت الدولة اللبنانية الأمم المتحدة احداثيات منطقتها الاقتصادية الخالصة، إلا أنها قصرت في مطالبتها قبرص لخرقها أحكام الاتفاقية معه. من الناحية القانونية، لبنان جاهز لعمليّة إعادة الترسيم وفقاً للوسائل العلمية التابعة لقانون البحار. ومن خلال لجؤنا إلى القانون الدولي، سنتمكن من ".استعادة حقوقنا السيادية في المياه البحرية

في الإطار عينه، يوضح الخبير النفطي روبي بارودي أنه "من المتوقع أن يأتي ديفيد هيل وفي جعبته ملف ترسيم الحدود البحرية. هذا الموضوع بحاجة إلى حلٍّ جذريٍّ لا سيّما مع بدء لبنان بحفر أول بئر استكشاً في مطلع العام المقبل. وبحسب قانون الأمم المتحدة للبحار لا شك أن لبنان سيحظى بالحصة الأكبر من المنطقة (UNCLOS) الاقتصادية الخالصة المتنازع عليها، ف الصحيح أن الكيان الإسرائيلي ليس طرفاً في المعاهدة مع الأمم المتحدة، إلا أنه طبق قواعدها من خلال تقييده ببنود الاتفاقية بينه وبين قبرص. وبالتالي أصبح من الممكن اللجوء إلى إتفاقية تنمية مشتركة تماماً كما هي الحال بين الكويت وال السعودية في ما يُعرف بالمنطقة المحايدة. بهذه الطريقة، تقوم شركة محايدة بعمليات الاستخراج وتوزّع لكل دولة حصتها وفق ".المعايير الدولية

كثيرة تصبح التأويلاًات 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 بدلًا من اقتصاد ريعيّ وترك هذا الملف يأخذ مساره الطبيعي لئلا تصبح عوائده..."أموالاً منهوبة".

Russia says new crude-only Opec+ target isn't a loophole



Bloomberg/ Vienna

The exclusion of a light oil called condensate from Russia's output target under the Opec+ deal is not a loophole, but a way to bring the country in line with the rest of group, said Energy Minister Alexander Novak.

At Friday's meeting of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting

Countries and its allies in Vienna, Russia was given permission to exclude the liquid hydrocarbon that condenses out of natural gas from its production target. The change brings Russia's November oil output in line with its pledged cut, where previously it had fallen short.

Novak denied the decision was a loophole that would give Russia an opportunity to pump more oil and still claim compliance with the Opec+ deal because the oil nation's statistics don't publish separate crude and condensate volumes.

"We have a very precise way to calculate our crude oil and condensate output field by field, crude variety by crude variety," Novak said in an interview with Bloomberg TV in the Austrian capital. "It is impossible to create a loophole."

Russia has every means to reflect the breakdown in its data and will be transparent about the oil production levels with Opec, analysts and media, Novak said. The country reached an agreement with Opec on feeding data from its computerised oil-tracking system to the agencies monitoring the group's output, he said.

Russia, one of the architects of the Opec+ deal, has consistently failed to comply with its pledged output cut this year. Last month, Novak said one of the key hindrances was rising production of condensate from new natural gas fields. The nation includes condensate in the total oil production volumes, while its Opec partners do not.

At the Vienna meeting, Opec+ agreed to reduce its output target by 500,000 barrels a day in the first quarter.

Russia's cuts target will be deepened by about 70,000 barrels a day, bringing its total obligation for crude-only supply curbs to some 300,000 barrels a day.

The new rules on condensate will help Russia achieve full compliance with its pledges, Novak said. Already in November, if condensate had been excluded, Russia's crude-only daily cuts reached some 232,000 barrels, more than required under the Opec+ deal, Novak said.

The nation is determined to deliver the pledged cuts in full

in the first quarter, even as low winter temperatures in Siberia, Russia's main oil region, make supply reductions difficult, Novak said.