

Gas ‘spaghetti’ past prompts Australia cost-cut teamwork



The energy industry in Australia, looking back on an era of waste and profligacy, is now preaching the gospel of thrift and collaboration as it tries to attract more investment in an age of fiscal discipline.

Firms like Royal Dutch Shell Plc are bemoaning the erosion of shareholder value from the go-it-alone mentality during the \$200bn splurge on Australian LNG projects over the past decade. Rivals Chevron Corp and Woodside Petroleum Ltd have proposed a massive offshore pipeline in Western Australia, which could be shared by several companies.

That approach contrasts with the “spaghetti junction” of crisscrossing pipelines built in the past decade as ventures approached projects independently, according to energy analyst Martin Wilkes. The hand-wringing and newfound spirit of collaboration come as Australia, on the cusp of becoming the world’s biggest LNG exporter, tries to convince purse-holders

in faraway headquarters to green-light more projects while investors call for more restrained spending.

"Everyone in the industry is feeling the scars from the lack of cooperation," Graeme Bethune, a consultant with EnergyQuest, said in Adelaide. "They were quite extraordinary circumstances with \$100 oil prices driving a slew of greenfield projects. I would hope that egos have been suppressed now. Boards are going to be much more critical on any bullish, go-it-alone proposals."

Chevron proposed building a massive pipeline that would connect the Scarborough, Thebe and Exmouth fields, which lie hundreds of kilometres off the coast of northwest Australia, to the existing Wheatstone, Pluto and North West Shelf LNG plants, which sit along a 200-kilometer stretch of the coast. The plan would minimize duplication and would have superior economics over individual point-to-point concepts, Nigel Hearne, Chevron's managing director for the country, said in a speech on Tuesday at the annual conference of the Australian Petroleum Production & Exploration Association.

Woodside, which owns stakes in all three of those LNG plants and in two of the fields, supports the plan for shared infrastructure, chief executive officer Peter Coleman said at the same event in Adelaide.

Collaboration along those lines was missing last decade when energy companies were planning the slate of LNG plants that have been coming online in recent years.

In Queensland, three separate LNG plants built adjacent to each other shared virtually no infrastructure such as jetties and storage tanks. In northern Australia, two gas fields that are connected to each other are being developed in two separate projects, one using a floating liquefaction plant and one using a 900-kilometer (560-mile) pipeline to the shore.

And in Western Australia, gas pipelines splay out west and east from offshore fields, crisscrossing each other as they connect to four different liquefaction plants located on the

mainland and an island. The developments in Western Australia and Queensland cost about \$36bn more than they would have if companies had collaborated from the beginning, according to a 2016 study by Wilkes, a Perth-based principal adviser at RISC Advisory.

“Real collaboration happens at the start of projects,” Wilkes said in an interview on Wednesday in Adelaide. “And had real collaboration occurred, you wouldn’t have the spaghetti junction on the West Coast.”

Failure to collaborate eroded shareholder value in the projects, Shell Australia chairwoman Zoe Yujnovich said in a speech at the conference. Australian companies will have to overcome that history to convince investors to fund drilling projects needed to keep LNG plants full.

“Unless we can improve the attractiveness of our projects to investors, the spectre of growing ‘ullage’ in LNG trains may fast become an unmanaged reality,” she said, using an industry term for unused space in a storage tank. “And that is not a situation that will be easily recovered.”

Shale’s Public Enemy No. 1 Says Short the Permian and Eagle Ford

(Bloomberg) – The geologist who earned the wrath of shale drillers a decade ago with forecasts that natural gas was about to run out is now warning that the Permian Basin has just seven years of proven oil reserves left.

Arthur Berman, a former Amoco scientist who now works as an industry consultant near Houston, said the Permian region of

Texas and New Mexico that currently pumps more oil than any other North American field won't last for long. And the Eagle Ford shale about 350 miles (560 kilometers) away in South Texas isn't looking good either.

Berman's grim outlook, based on analyses of reserves and production data from more than a dozen prominent shale drillers, flies in the face predictions from the U.S. Energy Department, Chevron Corp. and others that the Permian is becoming one of the dominant forces in global crude markets.

Permian output already exceeds that of three-fourths of OPEC members.

"The best years are behind us," Berman told a gathering of engineers, geologists, lawyers and financiers at the Texas Energy Council's annual gathering in Dallas on Thursday. "The growth is done."

Berman came to prominence as a shale skeptic and peak-oil advocate during the first decade of the new century, when intensive fracking and sideways drilling techniques were just beginning to unlock vast reserves of gas from shale fields in Texas and Louisiana. At the time, his dire warnings that shale gas was mostly hype drew the ire of fracking pioneers including Devon Energy Corp. and Chesapeake Energy Corp.

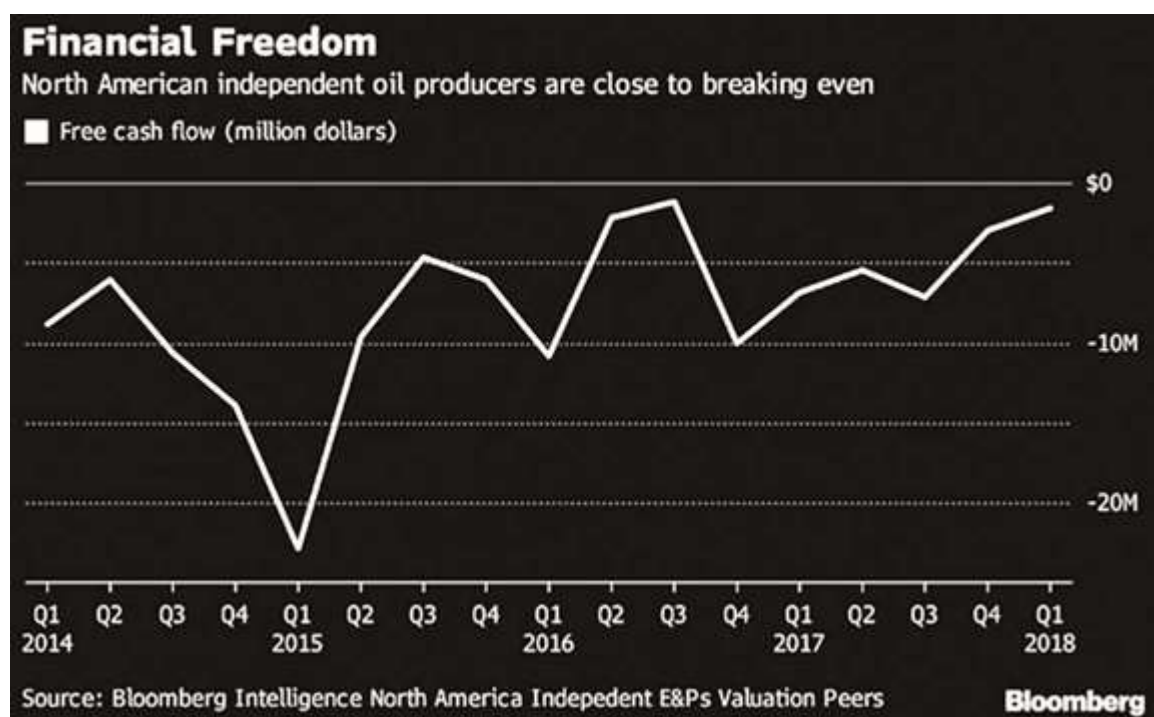
In 2009, Devon's exploration chief Dave Hager – who has since risen to CEO – published an op-ed piece in an Oklahoma City newspaper to refute Berman's thesis. In it, Hager likened shale to a World Series-winning home run and said Berman "is in the stands speculating on whether the slugger is on steroids."

Berman on Thursday said investors banking on shale fields to make major contributions to future global crude supplies will be disappointed: "The reserves are respectable but they ain't great and ain't going to save the world."

Still, he hasn't sold the stock of shale driller EOG Resources Inc. that he inherited from his deceased father "because they're a pretty good company."

His parting advice to the assembled was, "Conserve what you've got, learn to live with less, open your eyes and enjoy the rest of your day." No one participated in the Q and A session.

Shale's big boost comes with newfound thrift as oil hits \$70



The shale boom's back in full swing, with fracking crews the busiest since 2014. The novelty this time around: Oil executives stressing their prudence, along with their production.

The combination of surging output, oil prices at three-year

high spending under control means that the shale patch – which has notoriously burnt more cash than it makes as investors bankroll their expansion – got closer to a milestone in the first-quarter: Positive free cash flow. As oil rises above \$70 a barrel, the outlook for the coming quarters looks even brighter.

It's a shift that came with the help of new high-tech well systems, and at the insistence of investors pushing payback over growth. Here are five key takeaways from the first quarter to track moving forward: Production is thriving EOG Resources Inc and Pioneer Natural Resources Co are among producers that posted record output, while keeping capital expenditures in check.

But how can they keep growing without overspending?

Producers have sought to cut costs since prices crashed more than three years ago, but those efforts can only go so far. It's mainly better technology that's allowing them to get more from each well without blowing their budgets.

Pioneer, in a recent presentation, offered insight into how its high-tech wells are delivering at a faster rate, a theme repeated over and over again in earnings calls. Devon Energy Corp said it completed the two highest-rate wells in the Delaware section of the Permian in its 100-year history, helping it to a 20% production boost.

Almost living within their means

Buybacks, dividend increases and a cap on capital expenditures. Oil executives couldn't keep from crowing about their thriftiness while producing record amounts of product, and how their efforts can be a benefit to both their shareholders, and to continued growth.

The numbers back them up, showing a pretty good rise in free cash flow, starting from the end of 2016.

The oil rally's flip side: Hedging A big risk facing some producers now is the amount of wrong-way bets on oil prices

that they hold. When crude markets slumped, explorers used hedging contracts to lock in payments for future barrels that could now turn sour as futures trade above \$70 a barrel.

Wood Mackenzie Ltd's Andrew McConn estimates top producers will lose \$7bn on their hedging contracts in 2018.

The reality on the ground

To make record production a reality, oil-service providers are sending a growing number of fracking crews to shale fields to blast the oil-rich layers of rock with water, sand and chemicals.

But for the service providers, that hasn't translated into better profits yet.

The rush to respond to heightened demand has inflated costs for materials like sand and has triggered transportation bottlenecks and labour shortages. All that has weighed down on their first-quarter results. Schlumberger Ltd, the world's biggest oilfield service provider, and Halliburton Ltd, the top fracker, have both promised investors things will improve. If that means increasing prices for their services, costs will rise for producers.

Russian Oil Giants Get Record Prices, But Not Profits to Match



The price of crude in rubles has surged to an all-time high, but Russian oil producers will miss out on record first-quarter profit because of a rising tax burden.

Investors in Lukoil PJSC or Rosneft PJSC – which is due to publish earnings on May 14 – will probably have to wait until later in the year to see the full benefit of the surge in crude. So far, Russia's government has done a better job of translating record prices into revenues, said Denis Borisov, a director at the Ernst & Young Oil and Gas Center in Moscow.

"The golden rain will likely fall on the companies in the second quarter if key conditions – the oil price and ruble exchange rate – remain in place," Borisov said on Thursday.

The price of international benchmark Brent crude averaged 3,823 rubles a barrel (\$67.23) in the first quarter, just a hair away from the previous quarterly record in 2014. It's risen further to as high as 4,881 rubles this month. Yet the price of Urals crude in Russia's currency, net of taxes, was 3

percent lower from January to March compared with the fourth quarter due to higher oil-extraction levies, according to Deutsche Bank AG.

Tighter Burden

Tax costs of Russia's producers have been rising since last year

The industry also faced a jump in petroleum-product excise tax – an additional support to the state budget to fund road construction that may reach 40 billion rubles this year, according to Finance Ministry's estimates made last year. However, Russia's domestic gasoline price increases lagged crude in the first quarter, possibly showing that companies were holding back from shifting part of this burden onto consumers ahead of presidential elections in March, said Ildar Davletshin, an energy analyst at Wood & Co.

The revenue of state-run Rosneft, which pumps more than 40 percent of Russia's oil, could have hit a record of 1.73 trillion rubles in the first quarter, according to Renaissance Capital. However, it expects net income to drop 19 percent from the fourth quarter to 81 billion rubles.

Rosneft plans to start its first-ever share buyback program this quarter, spending \$2 billion over three years. That means investors will also be closely watching cash flow. Renaissance Capital expects the company to generate 75 billion rubles in the first quarter, almost 16 percent lower than a year ago, Bloomberg calculations show.

Several of Rosneft's peers are planning or implementing buybacks as a way to share the rewards from rising crude prices with investors. Lukoil announced a five-year repurchase scheme worth as much as \$3 billion back in January – four months before Rosneft. The move boosted the stock's appeal to investors and helped close the gap in the market value of the

rivals.

For 2018 as a whole, Lukoil and Gazprom Neft PJSC are expected to post big gains in net income, according to analysts surveyed by Bloomberg. Rosneft's cash flow should more than double to some 550 billion rubles, which is enough to cover interest payments, dividends and as much as half of the planned share purchases, Davletshin said. Another Rosneft plan – to cut its debt by 500 billion rubles this year – may need proceeds from selling non-core assets, he said, a move the company is already considering.

Still, the size of the tax burden remains a risk, particularly as Russia forms a new government. President Vladimir Putin's administration will soon lay out targets for the economy and budget for his fourth term. While the state has promised to avoid significant changes in oil taxes this year, Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev said this week that Russia will need at least 8 trillion rubles in additional spending to fulfill its plans

For Big Oil, reserve size matters less than ever



LONDON (Reuters) – A decade ago, the news that the world’s top oil and gas companies had less than 12 years of production left in their reserves might have caused a panicked sell-off in their shares.

But as consumers try to move away from fossil fuels to cleaner and cheaper energy sources, investors and executives say reserve size is no longer the gold standard for measuring the value and health of a company.

The cost of developing existing reserves and the amount of carbon those reserves produce has now become more important, they say. This is leading to a profound shift in company strategies.

“The quality of reserves and the commercial viability of reserves has eclipsed the quantity of reserves by far in recent years,” said Adi Karev, Global Leader for Oil and Gas at EY.

The sector is emerging from one of its longest and deepest downturns after an oil price slump that started in 2014.

The largest publicly-traded oil companies – Exxon Mobil, Royal Dutch Shell, Chevron, ConocoPhillips, France's Total, BP, Equinor (formerly Statoil) and Italy's Eni – have adapted. They saved money by cutting jobs and increasing technology spending and now make more money with oil at \$60 a barrel than they did at \$100.

But they also cut spending on exploration for new resources and development of new fields. This led to a decline in reserves.

An analysis by Reuters and Guinness Asset Management of the annual reports of those eight companies shows that the size of their oil and gas reserves, when added together, fell to 91 billion barrels in 2017. That was the lowest since the same amount in 2005.

The reserves of Exxon Mobil, the largest company, shrank by 16 percent since the slump began in 2014. Shell's reserves fell 6.5 percent since then despite the \$54 billion acquisition of BG Group in 2016.

BP and Chevron's oil and gas reserves increased by a small 5 percent since 2014. Eni was the only one to significantly boost its reserves by over 20 percent thanks to the discovery of the giant Zohr gas field off the coast of Egypt.

The cumulative reserve life – the number of years a company can sustain its current production levels with existing reserves – of the eight companies fell to 11.7 years in 2017. That was the lowest level in at least 20 years although that drop is also the result of a sharp increase in production. Reuters does have access to data going back beyond 1998.

Exxon's reserves life shrank from 17 years in 2014 to 15 in 2017. Eni's from 10.6 to 10.1 years despite its discoveries. Shell slipped from 12 to 9 years over the period.

“There is clear deterioration (in reserves) and this will be a problem in time,” according to Jonathan Waghorn, manager of the energy fund at Guinness Asset Management.

But for now, “10-12 year’s reserve life should be fine, so it is not a materially important component between the Majors.”

“THE BEST BARRELS”

With electric vehicles on the ascent and a peak for fuel demand on the horizon, the focus on the reserves is shifting to the quality of the reserves rather than the quantity

“Some reserves are more efficient than others,” Eldar Saetre, chief executive officer of Norwegian oil giant Equinor told Reuters.

“At some point we see a shrinking oil and gas industry, when that will be I do not know, but then it is really important that the best barrels come in and that will be increasingly a competitive factor.”

Some companies are already changing strategies to adapt to the new focus.

Oil prices are not expected to rise sharply in the long-term and governments are seeking to reduce pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. This means firms are adjusting by setting ceilings for the cost of projects, often below \$35 a barrel. Oil reached a \$80 a barrel this month, the highest since late 2014.

Crude oil and natural gas have different grades and the cost of pumping them can vary hugely. Saudi Arabia’s oil is easier and therefore cheaper to extract than Angola’s complex deepwater wells.

Canada’s oil sands have become less attractive due to their high cost of extraction and high carbon intensity. Exxon wrote down a large part of its Canadian oil reserves in 2017. Its

largest rival, Shell, has sold most of its Canadian assets in recent years.

North American shale which has emerged over the past decade can be developed relatively quickly and at low cost, in contrast to multi-billion dollar deepwater projects that take years to develop.

The Permian basin in Texas, the heartland of the shale oil boom in recent years, saw production costs drop sharply to as low as \$30 a barrel.

Exxon and U.S. rival Chevron have both acquired large acreage in the Permian in recent years. Shell is also expanding in U.S. shale.

The Gulf of Mexico also has low extraction costs because it has large reservoirs of oil and some infrastructure is already located there such as services companies and onshore bases.

Statoil and Total have bought exploration acreage in the U.S. Gulf of Mexico in recent months.

Brazil's pre-salt reserves also have low costs as there are huge reservoirs and also some existing infrastructure. All eight companies are there and several have recently sharply increased their production in the basin.

"We are now getting to the point that the focus on efficiencies and producing reserves at a low level is what investors expect," Karev said.

Higher oil prices offer 'temporary relief' to Mena exporters: IIF

Higher oil prices offer "temporary" relief to the oil exporters of the Middle East and North Africa (Mena) whose economic prospects are improving, according to the Institute of International Finance (IIF), the Washington-based economic think tank.

Oil prices rose rapidly in the past six months on unanticipated sharp output fall in Venezuela, the extension of the producers' pact on production cuts to the 2018- end, the escalation of tensions in the Mena, which enhanced risks of oil supply disruption; and higher global oil demand. We have revised upward our average Brent oil price assumption to \$72 per barrel for 2018 (33% increase from 2017)," IIF said.

With the projected \$18 increase in average oil prices in 2018 against last year, it expects the cumulative current account surplus for the nine Mena oil exporters (Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, Bahrain, Algeria, Iraq and Iran) to increase from \$56bn in 2017 to \$233bn (9.5% of gross domestic product) in 2018. "The fiscal situation for Mena oil exporters (except Bahrain and Oman) is now on firmer footing. The respective authorities in the region have implemented serious fiscal adjustment in recent years," it said.

Higher oil prices, combined with additional non-hydrocarbon revenue, should more than offset the 7% average increase in public spending, leading to narrower deficits (excluding investment income), according to the IIF. "We expect the consolidated fiscal deficit for the nine Mena oil exporters to decrease from 7.5% of GDP in 2017 to 3% in 2018," it said, adding when included investment incomes, which are very large

in Kuwait, the UAE and Qatar, the cumulative deficit will be much smaller.

Highlighting that gross public foreign assets will resume its rise to \$2.9trn by end-2018; it said about 70% of these assets are in the form of sovereign wealth funds. With relatively little public external debt, the region's net public external assets position of \$2.6bn (108% of GDP) is substantial, the report added. Expecting non hydrocarbon growth to accelerate from 2.3% in 2017 to 2.8% in 2018 (still well below the average growth of 6.2% in 2001-2014); IIF said the growth pickup will be supported by the shift to fiscal expansion following three years of consolidation. A tighter monetary stance in the six GCC countries and Iraq, whose currencies are pegged to the US dollar, could offset some of the gains from expansionary fiscal stances. "We expect a cumulative increase of 100 bps in key policy rates, in line with the four Fed hikes of 25 bps each," it said.

UK could face court action over air pollution after EU warning: 'We can delay no more'



Proposals made on Tuesday are 'not substantial enough to change the big picture'

Nine European countries including the UK could face legal action if they fail to make progress on reducing air pollution, the EU's top environment official has warned.

The intervention came as legal air pollution limits for the whole year were reached within a month in London.

Brixton Road, Lambeth, has seen levels of pollutant nitrogen dioxide exceed average hourly limits 18 times so far this year, the maximum allowed under European Union air quality rules.

Inaction by national governments over the issue prompted the European Commission's environment commissioner, Karmenu Vella, to warn of legal action after talks with ministers from nine EU countries including Britain, France, Germany, Spain

and Italy – all of which regularly flout the bloc's air quality standards.

"Every year, an astonishing number of citizens' lives are cut short because of air pollution," Mr Vella said.

"We have known this for decades, and the air quality limit values have been in place for almost as long.

"And yet, still today, in 2018, 400 000 people are still dying prematurely every year because of a massive, widespread failure to address the problem."

He continued: "The deadlines for meeting the legal obligations have long elapsed... we can delay no more."

Poor air quality caused by vehicle emissions, industry, power plants and agriculture is known to cause or exacerbate asthma and other respiratory problems.

Air pollution also has significant economic impacts, increasing healthcare costs, reducing employees' productivity and damaging crops, soil, forests and rivers, according to the European Environment Agency's latest annual report.

It has taken the London longer to reach the air pollution limit this year than last year when legal levels were breached less than a week into the new year.

But while campaigners welcomed action by London Mayor Sadiq Khan to tackle pollution, they warned the relative delay in reaching the limit this year could be down to weather conditions dispersing the dirty air.

Environmental groups called for the Government to take urgent steps, including creating and funding clean air zones in pollution hotspots across the UK where 85% of areas still break air quality rules which should have been achieved in 2010.

Government estimates suggest compliance for levels of nitrogen dioxide, much of which comes from road transport, particularly diesel, will not be met until 2026.

The most recent data shows that around 7 per cent of the urban population within the EU was exposed to fine particulate levels higher than the EU-stipulated limit in 2015.

If the stricter World Health Organisation limits are applied, that rises sharply to 82 per cent.

The countries represented at Tuesday's summit have been given ten days to submit new proposals for meeting EU air quality standards regarding particle levels.

In Mr Vella's opinion, the proposals offered by the nine offending countries were "not substantial enough to change the big picture".

He insisted that the only way to avoid court action was to take "all possible measures without delay".

Reacting to the outcome of the summit, ClientEarth lawyer Ugo Taddei said: "Commissioner Vella was evidently unimpressed.

"The European Commission should now follow this blatant inaction through to its legal consequences and trigger court actions without further delay.

"The people of Europe have waited long enough to breathe clean air."

Qatar welcomes Maronite Patriarch with open arms





Maronite Patriarch Bechara Rahi has wrapped up a visit to Qatar aimed at serving the spiritual needs of Christian expatriates working in the country, addressing temporal issues relating to the Lebanese community there, and increasing the number of Qatari visitors to Lebanon.



One of the highlights came when Rahi laid the foundation stone for what will be Mar Charbel Church, the first Maronite church in a Gulf Cooperation Council country. The new facility will be built within the Religious Complex in Doha's Abu Hamour district, which houses places of worship for several Christian denominations, including Roman Catholics, Anglicans, and Greek Orthodox.



Rahi, who serves as a Cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church

and whose official title is Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, led a delegation that included Archbishop Francisco Montecillo Padilla, Apostolic Nuncio to Qatar and four other Gulf countries; Bishop Camillo Ballin, Apostolic Vicar of Northern Arabia; and Archbishop Samir Mazloun, and Archbishops Mazloun and Sayyah, Emeritus Curial Bishop of Antioch and Fr. Charbel Mhanna, Patriarchal Envoy for the Maronites in Qatar.



The patriarch was warmly received by numerous senior officials, chief among them the Emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani; the Prime Minister, Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa al-Thani; the Foreign Minister, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdel-Rahman al-Thani; and the Minister of Environment and Municipalities, Mohammed bin Abdullah al-Rumaihi. The delegation was accompanied to these meetings by businessman Roudi Baroudi, a prominent member of the Lebanese business community in Doha.



At each stop, Qatari leaders expressed their gratitude and their respect for Lebanese expatriates, who have been instrumental in diluting the impact of efforts by Saudi Arabia and certain other countries to strangle Qatar's economy since mid-2017. Many Lebanese of all faiths have even put off plans to return to their homeland, standing shoulder to shoulder with their hosts to help Qatar maintain strong growth despite the resulting pressures.

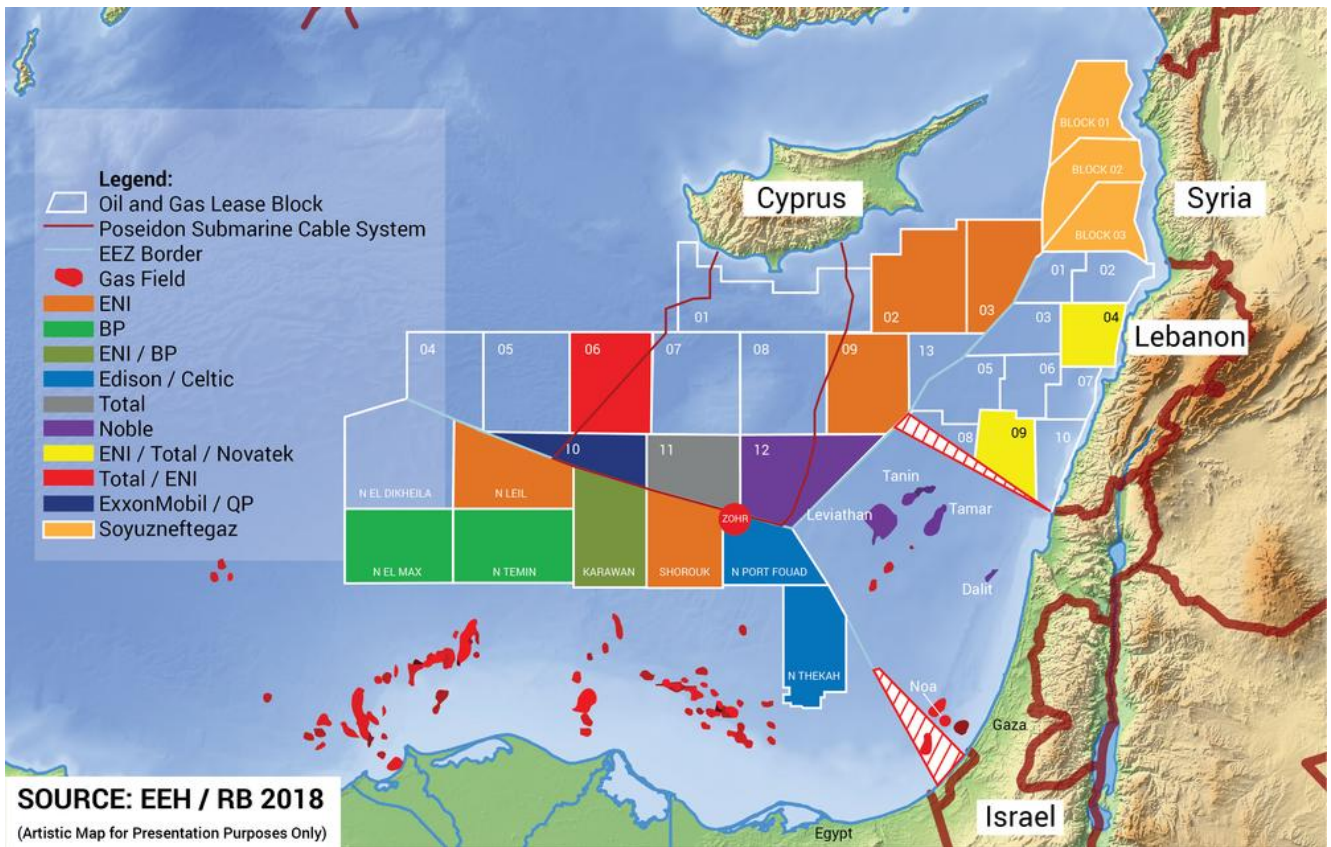


Rahi, who was making his third visit to Doha since becoming Patriarch in 2011, also addressed practical considerations in order to strengthen the Qatari-Lebanese relationship, including a streamlining of the processes by which Lebanese

expatriates obtain residency and other status documents in Qatar. He also called for a lifting of the travel advisory that Doha has had in place for Lebanon since November 2017, when Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri resigned under highly suspicious circumstances while visiting Saudi Arabia in November 2017.

بارودي: اتفاق تفاوضي حول البلوك 9 أو التحكيم نصر أكبر للبنان





المركزية- اعتبر الخبير النفطي الدولي رودي بارودي أن "التوصل إلى اتفاق تفاوضي جيد من خلال وساطة أو تحكيم طرف ثالث، قد يعني نصراً أكبر بكثير للبنان في النزاع الحاصل مع إسرائيل حول النفط

والغاز في البحر".

وأكد بارودي الذي شارك في مؤتمرات دولية عدة آخرها في قبرص، أن هناك "عوامل أخرى تبشّر بالخير بالنسبة إلى الآفاق القانونية اللبنانية القصيرة والطويلة الأمد، بما في ذلك حقيقة أن الجزء من البلوك 9 الذي يهتم به تحالف "توتال" و"آني" و"نوفاتيك"، يكمن بوضوح في المياه اللبنانية، ما يترك مجالاّ واسعاً لحل وسط وقصير الأجل، على الأقل يسمح بالاستكشاف في المناطق غير الخاضعة للنزاع مع ترك أسئلة أكثر صعوبة في وقت لاحق".

ولفت إلى أن "نوعية المعلومات التي قدّمها لبنان إلى الأمم المتحدة والأطراف الأخرى المهمة، تعطي أهمية كبيرة لموقفها وبأكثر من طريقة".

وأضاف: الجانب اللبناني استخدم الرسوم البيانية للهندسة البحرية البريطانية الأصلية كنقطة انطلاق للحدود الجنوبية لمنطقتها الاقتصادية الخالصة، ما يضفي صدقيةً أكبر على معارضتها.

وأوضح أن "لبنان وقّع وصادق على الاتفاقية الدولية الأساسية في شأن ترسيم الحدود البحرية عام 82، إلا أن إسرائيل لم تفعل، وبناءً على ذلك لا توجد آلية ملزمة يمكن بموجبها لأيّ من لبنان وإسرائيل أن تحيل مسألة الحدود البحرية إليها لحلّها، من دون موافقة صريحة من الجانب الآخر".

وتابع: بما أن إسرائيل وقعت اتفاقية منطقة اقتصادية حصرية مع قبرص، فلدى لبنان خيارات على هذا المستوى.

وتحدث بارودي عن "الجهود الدبلوماسية المعقدة بسبب العديد من العوامل التي تعوق طرق حل النزاع، خصوصاً أن لا علاقات دبلوماسية بين لبنان وإسرائيل".

وشرح بارودي تحفظات لبنان حول ما يتعلق بتعيين محكمة العدل الدولية أو أي طرف ثالث لحل النزاع الحدودي البحري، مشيراً إلى شقين:

- أولاً: المخاوف من أن تسعى إسرائيل إلى تشريع أي اتفاق لإحالة النزاع البحري إلى محكمة العدل الدولية أو أي محكمة أخرى بعد موافقة لبنان على إخضاع كل القضايا الحدودية لحل هذه الهيئة.

- ثانياً: القلق من أن أي اتفاق مباشر مع إسرائيل على طلب مشاركة

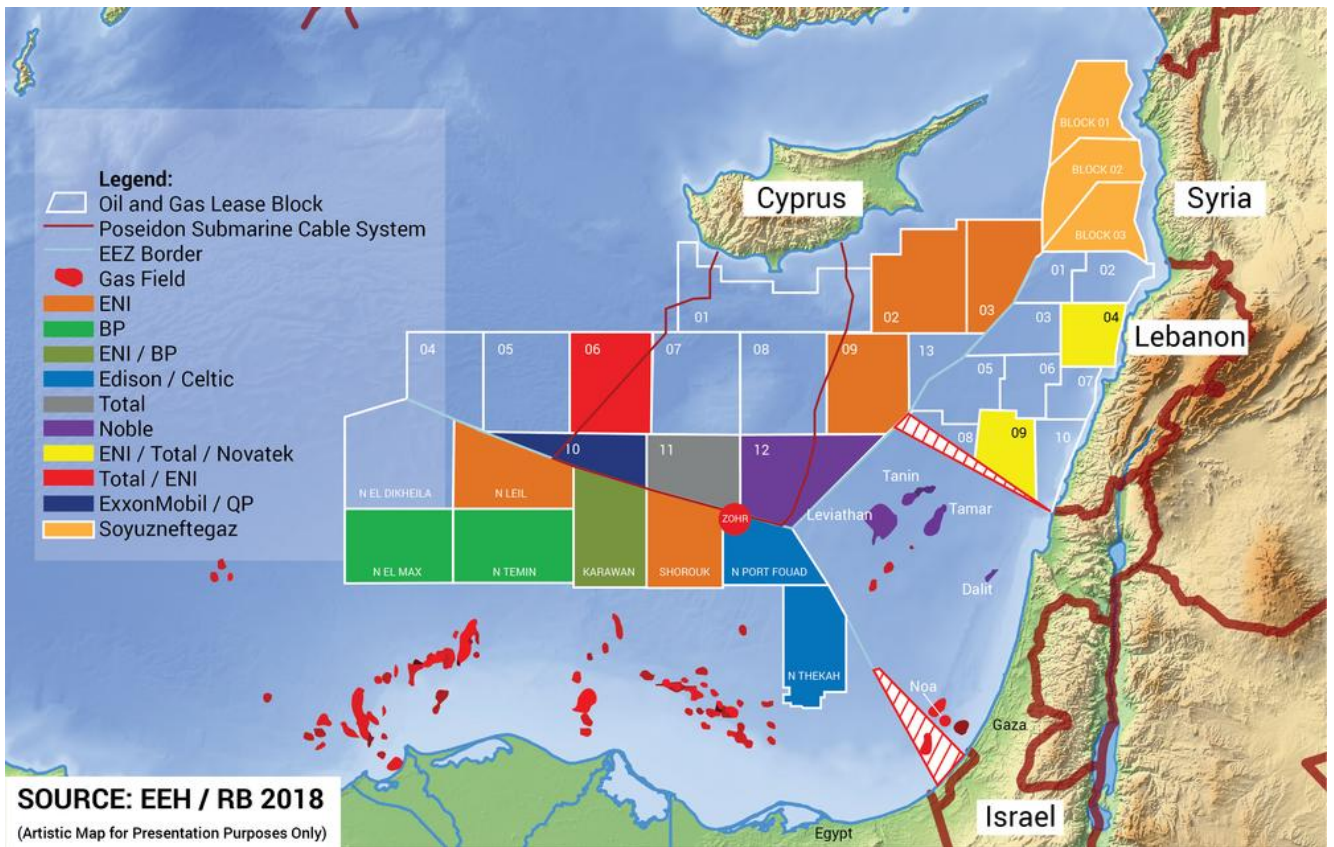
طرف ثالث على النزاع، يمكن اعتباره اعترافاً بحكم الواقع وبحكم القانون لإسرائيل.

وأضاف "هناك عناصر معيَّنة تجعل النزاع اللبناني - الإسرائيلي مزيداً من بعض النواحي، لكن الظروف العامة في هذه الحالة ليست عادية"، شارحاً أن "كل ولاية ساحلية في العالم لديها منطقة بحرية واحدة على الأقل تتداخل مع منطقة أخرى، ولا يزال العديد من هذه النزاعات من دون حل".

وأشار إلى أن "العديد من المعاهدات البحرية الثنائية التي تم التوصل إليها، تعارضها البلدان المجاورة ذات المناطق المتداخلة، كما هو الحال في معارضة لبنان للاتفاق الإسرائيلي- القبرصي".

**النزاع البحري - النفطي بين
لبنان وإسرائيل مستمر... فهل يتم
اللجوء إلى محكمة العدل
الدولية؟**

النضار



تعقّدت الجهود الدبلوماسية على صعيد الازمة النفطية اللبنانية - الاسرائيلية نتيجة عوامل عدة تعيق السبل المعتادة لتسوية أي نزاع، خصوصاً من جهة لبنان الذي عليه درس خطواته جيّداً إذا أراد حماية

حقوقه وتجذّب التصعيد.

يؤدي غياب العلاقات الدبلوماسية إلى تفاقم النزاعات حول الموارد البحرية، والخلاف ليس حول درجة امتداد الحدود الجنوبية للمنطقة الاقتصادية الخالصة للبنان على طول الساحل فقط، بل حول مكان هذه الحدود الساحلية تماماً، في الوقت الذي صادق فيه لبنان على الاتفاق الدولي الأولي حول ترسيم الحدود البحرية واتفاق الأمم المتحدة لقانون البحار 1982، فإن إسرائيل لم توقّع. لذلك، لا توجد آلية ملزمة، يمكن لأيّ من الطرفين حلّ النزاع البحري تحت سقفها، من دون موافقة الطرف الآخر. ولكن وبحسب الرئيس التنفيذي لشركة Energy and Environment Holding والخبير في شؤون النفط والغاز رودي بارودي، بما أن إسرائيل وقّعت اتفاق المنطقة الاقتصادية الخالصة مع قبرص، فللبنان خيارات عديدة على هذا الصعيد. بالتالي يمكنه الاحتجاج ضدّ قبرص على أساس أن هذا الاتفاق بينها وبين إسرائيل يحكم مسبقاً ترسيم حدود لبنان. ولكن يبدو هذا الخيار مستبعداً بسبب زعزعة العلاقات بين البلدين، من هنا، يمكن لبنان أن يدعو قبرص للانضمام إليه في سعيه للتسوية وفق المادة 284 من اتفاق الأمم المتحدة لقانون البحار، بهدف حلّ النزاع اللبناني-الإسرائيلي الناتج من اتفاق ترسيم الحدود الاقتصادية الخالصة الإسرائيلية - القبرصية. وبحسب بارودي، قد ترفض قبرص هذه المقاربة، لكن معرفة الموقف القبرصي يستحقّ البحث بها، وفي حال لم تعترض، فقد يبرهن هذا النوع من المقاربات التزام لبنان تجاه واجبه الذي يملي عليه حلّ النزاعات تحت ميثاق الأمم المتحدة.

من غير المرجّح أن يحيل لبنان أو إسرائيل نزاعهما حول الحدود البحرية على محكمة العدل الدولية تخوّفاً من أن تتحوّل هذه الخطوة إلى سابقة قانونية أو سياسية أوديبلوماسية. وإذا كان النزاع اللبناني - الإسرائيلي سيحال على المحكمة الدولية لقانون البحار، أو محكمة العدل الدولية أو أي هيئة قانونية أخرى، فيجب على هذه الهيئة أن تبني قرارها على مجموعة قوانين تتضمن حكماً ما يُعرف بالقانون الدولي العرفي، الذي لم يوافق على مجمله لبنان وإسرائيل. فلطالما اتّبعت إسرائيل سياسة الابتعاد من الاتفاقات المتعدّدة الأطراف التي تفترض قبولها بأيّ قانون والذي قد يعرّض احتلالها وسياساتها الإستيطانية للخطر. أما بيروت، فلا تمنع في إبرام الاتفاقات متعددة الأطراف التي تلزمها تطبيق معايير محدّدة، طالما لا تملي عليها الاعتراف بإسرائيل أو تخضع حدود لبنان للتحقيق من محكمة العدل الدولية، التي تُصدر أحكاماً نهائية لا

يمكن الطعن بها. ويؤكد بارودي ضرورة ضبط النفس والحوار غير المباشر، وإضافةً إلى جهود الأمم المتحدة والولايات المتحدة، إن تدخل شركة "توتال" Total الفرنسية و"إيني" ENI الإيطالية و"نوفاتيك" Novatek الروسية، في المنطقة يعني أن كلاً من هذه الدول، إلى جانب الإتحاد الأوروبي ككل، له مصلحة مكتسبة في استخدام مكاتبه للوساطة والوصول إلى تفاهم قد يضع البلوك رقم 9، الذي يُعتبر حتى الآن من أكثر المناطق الواعدة، قيد التنقيب، على أقل تقدير. وبهدف الاستمرار في إظهار حسن موقفه على الصعيد الدولي، يمكن لبنان أن يستعين بقرار مجلس الأمن 1701، حيث تعطي الفقرة 10 من القرار، الحق في الطلب من الأمين العام للأمم المتحدة اقتراح ترسيم الحدود اللبنانية - الإسرائيلية. وبالفعل، طالبت بيروت بتدخل الأمين العام، ما قد يخدم قضيتها وحتى ولو لم تُثمر هذه الجهود، فإنها ستساهم في التأثير إيجابياً على التوترات وتسليط الضوء على دور لبنان في السعي نحو حل النزاع سلمياً.