In this Energy Insight, we analyse how the oil price path could evolve in 2018 by evaluating the aforementioned risks underlying the world oil market using a structural model of the oil market and considering various forecast scenarios. Forecast scenarios are not predictions of what will happen, but rather, they reflect the range of views about how the oil price path could evolve in 2018, with some revising upwards their forecasts to support a price above $70/b, expecting a lower path in the mid $60/b. The key uncertainties behind these divergent views mainly pertain to different views about:

- The extent of supply disruptions amid a fragile geopolitical environment.
- The potential impact of higher oil prices on global oil demand.
- The OPEC/NOPEC exit strategy from the output cut agreement reached in November 2016.
- US shale supply response to the recent oil price rise.
- The importance for the strong oil demand momentum experienced in 2017 to carry on into 2018 for prices well above our baseline or reference forecasts. The results also show the paramount price, with a sharp fall in Venezuelan output constituting the biggest geopolitical risk that could push for Brent to trade within a narrow price range, with a price floor at above $60/b and a ceiling of below $75/b, with a 2018 average price of $67/b. The baseline forecast suggests that the momentum of the oil market will continue to be stronger than expected oil demand and the OPEC/NOPEC output cuts have tightened the oil market.

2018 started on a positive note for oil markets with Brent prices breaking through $70 a barrel for a few days and all the key international crude oil benchmarks flipping into backwardation. Yet, there is still a wide uncertainty engulfing the oil market, with very divergent views among market observers about how the oil price path could evolve in 2018.
The elusive goal of diversification
Economic diversification has been a key developmental goal

- Achieving this objective is seen as essential for economic security and sustainability.
- Although some Arab oil exporters have made progress over the last few decades in diversifying their economic base and sources of income, economic diversification remains generally low in Arab economies than in many emerging market economies, including commodity exporters.

Economic complexity index (avg.) = 0.34 (low complexity)
Arab economies lack high-quality products or services not made elsewhere.

Export diversity index (avg.) = 0.25 (low diversity)
Export revenues are driven by only a few sectors and trading partners.

Export quality index (avg.) = 0.43 (fair quality)
Average quality within any product category based on trade price, exporter income per capita and distance between importer and exporters is fair.

Manufacturing value-added Gini (avg.) = 0.80 (great inequality)
The energy sector still dominates in the Arab oil-exporting economies.

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Diversification outcomes in Arab countries lags other regions

Measures of economic diversity
The challenges of heavy reliance on oil revenues

From the developmental perspective, multiple challenges arise

1. The oil industry does not generate a stable source of income as oil prices fluctuate widely; in some countries oil rents are not big enough to provide sufficient income for growing populations and an extensive welfare system.

2. The oil industry is capital intensive in nature and does not generate enough jobs for the hundreds of thousands entering the labour market each year.

3. There has been a paradigm shift about the future prospects of global oil demand; the concept of peak oil demand is now more widely accepted, albeit no one really knows when or whether demand will peak.

But regardless of when oil demand may peak, the debate places the topic of diversification into a new context.
Peak oil demand and the shift in perceptions

Shifts in perception impact the behavior of market players

1. A shift of perceptions from oil scarcity to oil abundance; in a carbon-constrained world, there are growing concerns that countries with vast amount of oil reserves are now faced with the possibility of stranded assets.

2. The concepts of scarcity premiums, the effectiveness of rationing oil supplies in an inter-temporal framework, and the idea that oil kept underground today will command a higher price in the future need to be critically assessed.

3. Global oil markets will become increasingly competitive and margins in the oil industry will decline.

These shifts in perception are already changing the behaviour of the market participants; in oil exporting countries the urgency of reform and diversification has intensified.

Source: Google Trends, OIES
Key questions to be addressed

These issues throw up three important questions

1. How soon can we expect ‘peak oil demand’ to occur, or to be more precise, how fast is the current energy transition?

2. What kind of economic future should the Arab oil exporters be planning for?

3. How does the emergence of renewable energy, as a competitive source, impacts economic diversification strategies in these countries?
Peak demand and the speed of the energy transition
Peak oil demand (?)

Some general observations

- **Range of uncertainty is very high:**
  Projections are highly sensitive to underlying assumptions such as GDP, population, efficiency gains, carbon pricing, the interactions of various technologies.

- **Possibility of multiple peaks due to rebound effects:**
  A peak in oil demand could cause oil prices to fall, triggering higher demand from consumers.

- **No sharp fall in oil demand:**
  Oil will continue to be an important part of the energy mix for the foreseeable future.

Fast transitions rarely happen, but the possibility of a fast transition cannot be entirely discounted.

Source: Dale and Fattouh (2018), OIES

Global oil demand projections, 1965 – 2040E
**Slow versus fast transition**

**Slow transition**
- Historical data (coal over centuries, oil for decades).
- Opportunity-driven; interfuel substitution.
- Massive infrastructure built around the fuel.
- Lock-in and path dependency.
- Huge sunk costs create inertia and economic incentives to utilise infrastructure until it is written-off.
- Incumbents “fight back” and delay the transition.

**Fast transition**
- Some previous “fast” historical transitions (country- and industry-specific, seen in end-use technologies).
- Problem-driven, managed or incentivised: **policy play a key role.**
- Speed likely to differ across sectors and regions.
- Not just influenced by changes in the energy sector; draws on synergistic advances (e.g. blockchain, computing, materials science etc.).

Difficult to draw firm conclusions about the speed of the current energy transition.
How should Arab oil exporters adapt to the current energy transition the speed of which is highly uncertain?
Investment in the oil sector needed

Consolidation of three key trends

1. Global oil liquids demand is unlikely to increase strongly over the next few decades.

2. Large investments will still be needed in the oil sectors of the Arab world to fill the gap in supply.

3. Renewables are at an inflection point and there is virtual consensus among forecasts that the share of renewables in the energy mix will rise.

The Arab oil exporters must feed these trends into their strategic thinking and economic diversification agendas; but how?

Global supply-demand prospects under no upstream investments scenario, 1965 – 2040E

Source: Dale and Fattouh (2018), OIES
The strategic role of the energy sector in the transition
Energy sector to play a more active role in the diversification process

Integration, optimization, adaptation

1. The oil sector will continue to dominate the Arab oil-exporting economies but it needs to play a much more active role in the diversification process.

2. Governments should pursue measures to optimise the resource base, especially in a carbon-constrained world.

3. The Arab countries should not miss out on the renewable ‘revolution’ and renewable energy should complement the economic diversification strategies.

In the long-term, diversification of the Arab oil-exporting economies, which requires deep structural reforms, remains the main adaptation strategy that these countries need to pursue.

Source: IEA, OIES

Total primary energy supply by total of renewable energy sources, 1990 – 2016

- OECD
- n-OECD
- Arab World (RHS)

In the long-term, diversification of the Arab oil-exporting economies, which requires deep structural reforms, remains the main adaptation strategy that these countries need to pursue.

Source: IEA, OIES
Oil policy matters
Maximizing revenue during the transition

Oil policy and monetization strategies will remain key

- Is it rational for Arab producers/exporters to monetise reserves as quickly as possible and squeeze out high-cost producers to gain market share?

  If all low-cost producers adopt this strategy in the face of slowing demand growth it could lead to a massive fall in oil prices and revenues, derailing social and economic stability and the diversification agenda.

- Heavy reliance on oil revenues places a constraint on how fast Arab oil exporters can shift to a more competitive world where prices converge to marginal cost of production.

  Cooperation has to take a different shape to the past.

  Producers should not only be concerned with low oil prices, but also be proactive when prices are too high, as high oil prices include strong supply and demand responses.

As long as the Arab oil-exporting economies are not diversified, the alternative of non-cooperation is not sustainable.

Direct impact of the Declaration of Cooperation on gross oil revenues, y/y change

Source: OIES
Conclusion:
The co-dependence between economic diversification and the global energy transition
Oil Price Paths in 2018: The Interplay between OPEC, US Shale and Supply Interruptions

Abstract
2018 started on a positive note for oil markets with Brent prices breaking through $70 a barrel for a few days and all the key international crude oil benchmarks flipping into backwardation. Yet, there is still a wide uncertainty engulfing the oil market, with very divergent views among market observers about how the oil price path could evolve in 2018, with some revising upwards their forecasts to higher than $80/b while others are less convinced that the market fundamentals can sustainably support a price above $70/b, expecting a lower path in the mid $60/b. The key uncertainties behind these divergent views mainly pertain to different views about:

- The OPEC/NOPEC exit strategy from the output cut agreement reached in November 2016;
- US shale supply response to the recent oil price rise;
- The potential impact of higher oil prices on global oil demand;
- The extent of supply disruptions amid a fragile geopolitical environment.

In this Energy Insight, we analyse how the oil price path could evolve in 2018 by evaluating the aforementioned risks underlying the world oil market using a structural model of the oil market and considering various forecast scenarios. Forecast scenarios are not predictions of what will happen, but rather modelled projections of various oil price risks conditional on certain events that are known at the time of the forecast or some other hypothetical events. Our reference forecast scenario projects for Brent to trade within a narrow price range, with a price floor at above $60/b and a ceiling of below $75/b, with a 2018 average price of $67/b. The baseline forecast suggests that the momentum of stronger than expected oil demand and the OPEC/NOPEC output cuts have tightened the oil market even with no change in current market dynamics, the oil price will continue to be supported at around $65/b. Our results show that for 2018, US shale output growth will be the key factor putting a ceiling on the oil price, while supply disruptions could provide some support to the oil price, with a sharp fall in Venezuelan output constituting the biggest geopolitical risk that could push prices well above our baseline or reference forecasts. The results also show the paramount importance for the strong oil demand momentum experienced in 2017 to carry on into 2018 for rebalancing the market and supporting the oil price. Finally, our results show that for OPEC/NOPEC to maintain the recent price gains, they have to extend their output cut until the end of 2018; releasing the withheld barrels under the current agreement would result in a sharp fall in oil prices, suggesting that OPEC/NOPEC should be very wary about unwinding the output cut agreement when they next meet in June 2018.