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Russian oil will continue to reach markets.

If there is demand, a solution will always be found for oil to flow to countries like India and China. The big question is how demand holds up. But if that Russian oil was to disappear, we would see a significant hike in prices from the \$80 we have today but I don't think that's going to happen into the first quarter.

US oil production trajectory into 2023?

The interesting story that's emerged this year is that the US companies committed to a hydrocarbon-based strategy as opposed to an energy transition one - and principally that falls into a US IOC supermajor versus European supermajor argument - have won out in terms of share price. Exxon Mobil are buying back their shares at about 65% on the year. Compare that to the BPs or Shells of this world at about half of that figure. So, clearly there's a very strong feeling in the US that conventional production is going to be a big part of the energy mix going forward.

Outlook for the UK economy?

We are in for a major 'winter of discontent' and that's a direct response to the UK government's failure to address public sector needs against a high inflationary environment. There is an urging of caution over a slowing down of that inflationary impact on the economy now and I think we are seeing some early settlement in some of these strikes. Elsewhere, China is in for a very harsh first quarter in terms of the impact of the virus as it sweeps through the population, particularly where they have such a tight family unit through the generations. Still, I end the year with a degree of optimism because a lot of the moving parts are settling down. As far as oil markets go, OPEC+ has maintained its position in terms of being able to address the price where it needs to be, and Saudi Arabia and UAE in particular, will maintain a leadership position going into the first quarter. ■

**Paraphrased Comments*

