

America's Vulnerable Energy Security

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In 1992 Dick Cheney, the US Secretary of Defense, issued a document which outlined that the main political and military aim of Washington is to prevent any rival power emerging in Europe, the former Soviet Union, and Asia. The ambition was to ensure America's status as the global superpower.

The original paper, drafted in 1990 with the assistance of neo-conservatives like Paul Wolfowitz and Lewis "Scooter" Libby, stressed that the strategic goal of the US as the world's "permanent unilateral superpower" consisted of assuming control over all of Eurasia (Europe and Asia), and to find a way "to integrate the 'new democracies' of the former Soviet bloc into the U.S.-led system".

The powers-that-be in Washington believe the country holds "overwhelming conventional military superiority", and that other states cannot directly threaten it (1). There is some truth to the latter claim. America is positioned between the world's two biggest oceans - the Pacific and Atlantic - which over the past 200 years has given the Americans complete security from conventional armed attack by outside powers, unlike nations in mainland Europe and Asia. In addition the US has faced no threat of invasion during that time from its weaker neighbours, Mexico and Canada.

America's vast coastlines, allowing entry to the Pacific and Atlantic, guaranteed the country access to some of the planet's most lucrative trading areas. This assisted in American elites gaining their great wealth and power. Because of its location and large size, the US has moreover been free from the menace of naval blockades.

Germany, once a rival of the US, had no such luxury and throughout the First World War suffered a severe naval embargo enacted against her by the British Royal Navy, which contributed to the weakening of Germany and its failure to secure victory in the war. Russia's location in the centre of Eurasia, a powerful position in itself, has at the same time made the country vulnerable to invasion by hostile, expansionist states such as Napoleon's

France and Nazi Germany, though thankfully the Russians managed to beat back and defeat the invaders.

The US had become in 1871 the world's largest economy, surpassing Britain (2). By the 1890s America was the globe's number 1 industrial power. From the latter end of the 19th century, Washington expanded its navy and was projecting its influence over the East and West, advancing across the seas the Royal Navy traditionally controlled.

The British empire was probably in decline since around 1870 (3). London's difficulties, such as in maintaining her colonies, quickly began to be noticed by the other major powers, Russia and Germany, who were rightly convinced that Britain was in steep decline by the late 19th century. British regression was made worse by her unnecessary involvement in World War I, and subsequent struggles in World War II with the Axis states. By 1945 England was a virtually spent and exhausted nation, dominated thereafter by its American ally.

From the early 1990s, president Bill Clinton (1993–2001) believed America's "national security" primarily meant economic security; and that this depended on the Americans extending their influence globally, opening up markets to neoliberal exploitation. Clinton stated that "our 'foreign' policies are not really foreign at all anymore". He blurred the difference between the United States' domestic and international actions, merging them together.

America's energy security had since become vulnerable. The US has depended on imports for 50% or more of its oil (4), having largely burnt up the petroleum reserves on American soil. Today the US contains less oil than Libya, a country with a modest 7 million people.

The Americans have long been more dependent on oil than any other nation. Per capita, the US still produces much more carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions through fossil fuel consumption than China, its biggest industrial rival. By September 2022, there were 290 million vehicles in America for a population of 334 million (5). In China by late 2022, there were 319 million vehicles in the country for a population of 1.4 billion. (6)

The number of automobiles in the US is rising each year, and out of the present day 290 million US-owned vehicles, only 1.9 million of them (less than 1%) are electric vehicles. The US military, as has been documented, is heavily reliant on oil to run its many large vehicles such as the tanks, trucks, four-wheel drives, etc.

Dwight Eisenhower, who would later be the US president (1953–61), said in 1951 that the Middle East is the "strategically most important area of the world". The Middle East together with Central Asia contains about 64.5% of known global oil reserves (7). The conviction which Eisenhower had then strengthened in Washington following the 1980s: supremacy over the Middle East, and also Central Asia, were viewed as critical to maintaining US hegemony. According to Brazilian scholar Moniz Bandeira, "This became one of the most important guiding principles of American foreign policy after 1990".

America's "national security" related to control over both the natural resources and their transport routes. A well-known US diplomat, George Kennan, observed that ascendancy over the Middle East's oil would bolster America's influence and increase its "veto power". The George W. Bush administration (2001–09) knew this clearly. Bush's vice-president, Cheney, warned that if rivals captured pipelines they would use it as "tools of intimidation and blackmail" (8). The suggestion being only the Americans had the right.

After Bush's controversial election victory in late 2000, his cabinet, dominated by neo-conservatives, proceeded to shape foreign policy through neo-con entities like the Project for the New American Century (PNAC). Bush's White House increased military spending, further expanded the US-led NATO, and challenged "regimes hostile to the interests and values" of the US, while preserving "an international order friendly to our security, our prosperity, and our principles".

Bandeira noted,

"After his inauguration in early 2001, increasing the flow of oil from abroad became President Bush's top priority because of the reduction of American oil and natural gas stocks. This fact was made more salient by the blackouts in California arising from market manipulation, while oil imports were poised to exceed 50% of internal consumption". (9)

Russia, Iran and Central Asia combined contain 50% of the world's gas sources, and more than 15% of global oil reserves (10). Already in the 1990s, the US under president Clinton sought to penetrate the heart of Eurasia by advancing into Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan. They had been among the least developed of the Soviet republics and are also resource-plentiful.

In the Central Asian state of Uzbekistan, there is estimated to be 1.58 trillion cubic metres of gas, and at least 594 million barrels of oil (11). Uzbekistan's neighbour, Kazakhstan, possesses the 12th largest oil reserves in the world, and in that regard is 2nd among the states of the former USSR. Kazakhstan's oil and gas deposits have been valued by the Kazakh government at \$8.7 trillion (12). Not far from Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan contains the 6th biggest gas reserves globally.

The Energy Task Force headed by vice-president Cheney calculated that the proven reserves, of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, along with sectors of the Caspian Sea, contain 20 billion barrels of oil, more than there is in the North Sea (13). The US Department of Energy, under the Clinton administration, had previously identified the Caspian Sea as holding huge potential oil reserves. Clinton's government outlined that there are 160 billion barrels of oil in the basin of the Caspian Sea, a body of water which shares coastlines with Azerbaijan, Russia, Iran, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan.

Near the end of Clinton's presidency, the US Congress in 1999 sanctioned the Silk Road Strategy (SRS), in order to promote American interests in the Central Asian and southern Caucasus regions, and to oppose the influence of Russia, Iran and China. The Silk Road Strategy was concerned with exploring alternatives to the Middle East, a region which though indeed recognised as very important in Washington was regarded also as unstable.

Bandeira wrote, "*Some calculations indicated that 'landlocked' Central Asia could supply more than 80% of the oil imported by the United States by around 2050, which explains the urgent need to control the oil reserves of the region and the pipelines through Afghanistan and Turkey*" (14). Washington has sought to advance its "export of democracy", that is subordination to US interests, not only with military means, but through US-government linked organisations like the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), USAID, Freedom House, and the Open Society Institute of billionaire George Soros, later renamed Open Society Foundations.

These groups encourage regime change in countries outside of Washington's influence. The method is not that different from the Western-backed coup in Iran in August 1953, when the CIA and MI6 funded the opposition in Tehran with the aim of toppling prime minister Mohammad Mosaddegh, who had nationalised the British oil companies in Iran.

The name of Soros appears on a frequent basis and he is quite clearly a dangerous meddler. He was inciting anti-government activities in Yugoslavia from 1991, where he spent over \$100 million in following years to help in overthrowing Slobodan Milosevic, the Yugoslav president (15). The US and EU likewise spent tens of millions of dollars to oust Milosevic, who had been defying Western power. Soros has poured vast sums of cash into promoting unrest in eastern European states, under the pretext of helping them to be "open" and "democratic". In the West, Soros also provides funding to the "LGBT movement", transgender and gay rights, and other such activities of Western liberalism.

Elsewhere, Africa became important to Washington, as the continent has provided the US with 20% of its oil imports (16). The International Energy Agency, headquartered in Paris, estimated that by 2035 more than 20% of world oil production will come from Africa. The Western oil firms, however, expect African governments to create the right conditions to allow the exploitation of the continent's oil.

This may explain why president Bush, on 1 October 2008, activated the US Special Operations Command Africa (SOCAFRICA), whose goal was to subordinate the energy-rich African states, while eliminating competition such as from the Chinese. Beijing has offered African governments better prices, along with infrastructure and development projects.

About 90% of Africa's oil has been concentrated in just 6 of its countries - in Libya, Nigeria, Angola, Algeria, Sudan and Egypt. From 1989 to 2012, Africa's proven oil sources increased by 116%, amounting to 13% of the world's petroleum reserves (17). Significant oil discoveries were made in other African nations like Ghana, Uganda and Mozambique, with exploration having taken place in Kenya, Sierra Leone and Mali. Surely it is no coincidence that many of Africa's resource-rich states are hindered by civil wars and other conflicts.

After the 2011 NATO-led toppling of Colonel Muammar Gaddafi, Libya's wealth, most of it generated from oil production, was exploited by Wall Street and European banks who benefited from the war. The US investment bank, Goldman Sachs, had managed a Libyan sovereign wealth fund and amassed profits of \$350 million. (18)

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Notes

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