

“An occasional newsletter to share ideas and insights on information age topics.”

Special Issue on Energy Self-Reliance

The Unholy Trinity....

We argue the most crucial issue – head and shoulders above the others – facing America is developing and implementing a 10-year plan for Energy Self-Reliance. This is not what is being discussed, not by the media, the candidates, or the pundits.

America now debates crucial issues at a trivial, sound-bite level. Congress, having abolished [OTA](#), has lacked honest, non-partisan, competent science advice since 1995. Our leaders do poorly, and their approval ratings are at historic lows. We flail endlessly, but fail to address the roots of the big problems facing us as a society. What are the top three challenges facing America?

- Many would say, “**Terrorism.**” Indeed. Islamic fanaticism has been around for 1,000 years. What’s new is small groups with modern weapons pose a strategic threat to nation states.
- Many would say, “**Fuel prices.**” Absolutely, in today’s era of rampant speculation and ballistic prices. Not being able to get oil at affordable prices is a strategic threat to America.
- Many would say, “**The Economy.**” This might be the biggest threat. Successful terrorist attacks – 9-11 writ large! – or a lack of access to oil could collapse our economy.

There are other issues (health care, immigration, etc.), but surely those listed are the top three. And, consider: Are these not really all different faces of the same thing? Sure they are.

What is the stated goal of bin Laden’s terrorist attacks? It is to punish Western democracies, particularly America, by running oil prices up. In the [New York Times, on October 14, 2001](#) the managing director of an oil consulting firm warned: “If bin Laden takes over and becomes king of Saudi Arabia, he’d turn off the tap... he wants oil to be \$144 a barrel.” (Read the article: *Wow.*)

The tactics are terror, but the strategy is oil. What makes the Mid-East strategic to the West? **It’s oil.** High oil prices weaken the West. They strengthen and embolden our enemies, from al Qaeda to Iran, and beyond. What funds Islamic terrorism? Oil money. (Yes, drugs too, but mostly oil.)

We are, so far, winning the battles, but we’ll lose today’s “Clash of Civilizations” – a generational war, if we don’t take the initiative and regain our energy independence, our Energy Self-Reliance. We are spending trillions to defend ourselves, but we need a better strategy, and it keys on oil.

Societal collapse as a result of being cut off from the oil our advanced civilization needs would cause more damage to America, than, say, losing New York City to a nuclear weapon. This is bin Laden’s strategy. His target oil price has already been exceeded. Even if prices fall back, his point has been made. America can be destroyed by expensive oil, just as he predicted and planned.

How did he know...?

We showed him. The basis of 4th Generation Warfare is to use a powerful opponent's infrastructure against them, to turn strengths into weaknesses: Like flying modern airliners into buildings, and using our media and courts to protect illegal combatants.

David Brooks – also of the *New York Times* – recently observed on “The Newshour” that America's political reactions have been the same, and entirely predictable, for over 40 years. It's a well-practiced routine by now. Each side bashes the other, and little real progress is made.

The Democrats

The Democrats focus on Energy Alternatives. The Holy Grail is clean energy that avoids oil and nuclear, that doesn't pollute or use non-renewable resources. This is the high ground; the key to an advanced civilization. Unfortunately, Al Gore coupled the use of oil to apocalyptic visions of Global Warming causing planet-wide disasters. Gore warns “our very way of life is threatened,” if the U.S. doesn't end “the carbon age” (stop using oil) in ten years. In classic science fiction a tipping point is reached and the planet is destroyed. Gore's science fiction paid off better than his “inventing the Internet.” It spawned a book, a movie, a cult, and won him a Nobel Prize.

My friends in the energy industry now say privately that it no longer matters that there is no credible scientific basis for man-made Global Warming. If Gore can use the EPA as “carbon police” to impose fees and taxes – a 2007 Supreme Court ruling may allow this – there is no limit to how much it will cost Americans to use oil. (China, India, etc. are unlikely to participate.)

Energy Alternatives are needed, but the Democrats' plan has a huge flaw: **time**. For fundamental reasons it will take a long time for alternative energy to help the transportation sector, which uses only about 1/4 of America's energy, but consumes three fourths of our oil. America's main need for oil is transportation, and it will take many decades to transition vehicles from oil to anything else.

You won't put a windmill on the front of your Prius. We can buy time by increasing gas mileage, but a major transition to, say, hydrogen or electric power will take 50-100 years. It took ten years to get a man to the moon. It will take much longer to invent, develop, produce, and deploy post-petroleum-age technology for an entire society. **Alternate energy is a long term strategy.**

It takes time to invent and prototype a new technology. Scientists demonstrated Einstein's theory for atomic energy in 1933 and it took a World War and until 1945 to produce one primitive bomb, over ten years. Even if some genius has already invented a practical hydrogen (or electric) car, how long would it take to mass produce it in a practical form? At least 5-10 years.

America has about 226 million licensed vehicles. If these were replaced at the rate of 1,000 per day, it would take over 600 years to replace them. Also, you'd have to build new infrastructure to generate and distribute alternate energy. Developing and deploying an alternate energy for transportation is a very long term strategy. This is true for hydrogen, pure electric, or antigravity.

The Republicans

The Republicans want to develop America's oil resources. America has enough oil to last us for a Century or more. There are 100 billion barrels off shore, and another 26 billion in a tiny, worthless area of the ANWR that could be technically developed. And some 1.5 trillion barrels trapped in the oil shale deposits of Colorado, Wyoming, and Utah. Grassroots America has a more direct plan <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZPch2k63uj4> to reduce our dependence on Mideast oil.

The "existing leases" are a diversionary argument, but, sure, count them too, if you wish. There is a lot of oil, and we own it. And we have friends who owe us and can sell us more. How about, say, Iraq? We've invested trillions of dollars and thousands of lives saving them from a tyrant, and we're still there protecting them. Wouldn't it be reasonable for Iraq to repay what it has cost us as they get back on their feet? They should sell us oil at a discount below market until we're repaid.

Safety and pollution are problems. The oil companies have a horrible track record of pollution and unimaginable catastrophe – e.g. running supertankers onto reefs. An advanced civilization needs to be able to regulate and manage such things, and the big problem now is broken government.

The Exxon Valdez disaster was caused by a drunken Captain. Later, Exxon took preventative action by prohibiting employees with substance abuse histories from "safety-sensitive, little-supervised positions." For this they were *sued* by the Federal Government (Equal Opportunity Commission, citing the Americans with Disabilities Act) on the basis of discrimination against recovering substance abusers. (WSJ 7/06/08). Such politically correct lunacy must be overcome, no matter what we choose for energy. Even after we transition to alternate energy, do you want a drunk running the nuclear plant or hydrogen distribution center in your neighborhood? No.

Developing new oil resources is a low-risk medium-term strategy, though there would be an immediate price drop due to a reduction in oil speculation. A commitment to new oil sources would drop prices. ***The main road block in all areas of energy is our own regulations.*** It takes us over 10 years to build nuclear reactors; there is a Canadian company that reputedly can do it in 4.

What else...? A Real-World Systems Solution.

The rest is imposing common sense on Washington. **That's the short-term strategy.** The government needs to deal with facts and stop interfering with the free market. Subsidized biofuels distort the market, use more oil, and cause shortages. Badmouthing the oil industry and threatening it with taxes (when we urgently need investment) is about the worst policy one could imagine, next to, of course, suing OPEC, which has also been suggested.

Our 10-year plan for Energy Self-Reliance has three parts. For the long term, we need alternate energy sources. For the medium term, we need to find more oil and develop better sources of supply. For the short term, we need **real** science and to let the market run its course.

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"Mars, Jupiter and Pluto warmed at the same rate as earth. Since they are not known to have factories or SUVs, I conclude the most recent warming was caused by the sun, not Man."

Lord Moncton of Brenchley
Science adviser to
Margaret Thatcher

"Gore's circumstantial arguments are so weak that they are pathetic. It is simply incredible that they, and his film, are commanding public attention."

Professor Bob Carter
Marine Geophysical Laboratory
James Cook University, Australia

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