

Oil, conflict and the future of global energy supplies

By [Courtenay Barnett](#)

Global Research, January 22, 2006

globaljusticeonline.com 22 January 2006

Region: [Middle East & North Africa](#)

Theme: [Oil and Energy](#), [US NATO War](#)

[Agenda](#)

"...I knew that I could not ever again raise my voice against the violence of the oppressed in the ghettos without having first spoken clearly to the greater purveyor of violence in the world: my own government." Martin Luther King in his "Beyond Vietnam" April 4, 1967 speech.

The Bush administration has chosen the path of unending war (not so much against terrorism) but by pursuing a path of energy acquisition reliant on aggression that stirs global reactions that lead to terrorism.

Simple fact about oil:

Fossil-based fuel is the world's main source of energy, but an increasing source of global conflict.

This article posits two main assumptions: (i) that global "peak oil" is fast approaching its optimum level, and (ii) that the Bush administration's jingoism is directly correlated to US efforts at dominance over strategic oil supplies.

The foregoing observations, if they are to be credibly substantiated, require us taking into account the following considerations:

1. An understanding of the geographical locations of the world's largest oil and gas deposits, that is, knowledge of "the geography and politics of oil".
2. An analysis of the concept of "peak oil" and how this concept relates to the problem of global conflict
3. An awareness that the war in Iraq is part of a broader US policy of aggressively pursuing global oil and natural gas reserves to maintain the US economic and strategic dominance over the world.

Therefore, the Iraq war is only a part of an on-going oil war mechanism in order for the US to maintain its economic and other types of hegemonic controls

Whatever doubts or reservations the reader may have at the commencement of reading this article, after a careful grasp of the article's arguments, one should be left in no doubt that oil considerations dominate and guide US foreign policy decisions. Therefore, as a result of this realisation, if one were to entertain some lurking doubts about stated US public policy – democracy, freedom, etc – that could be understandable, after reconsidering US military actions in Afghanistan and Iraq. For in contrast and in contradiction to an apparent benign and enlightened Bush administration's foreign policy rhetoric, its militaristic adventures are simply neo-colonial wars. These wars are imbedded in considerations (1) (2) and (3) above.

This numerical phrase, 9/11 and the catch-all phrase “war on terror” have repeatedly been recited and relied on by the Bush administration to justify military action in Afghanistan and Iraq as well as the imposition of other draconian measures on some of its own citizens, e.g. the Patriot Act, and other homeland security measures. However, it has now been clearly demonstrated in all manner of ways, and even by Bush’s belated grudging acknowledgement – the euphemistic term faulty intelligence is used – that before the US invasion of Iraq there was no training of, or support for terrorists in Iraq; that Iraq was not intent on attacking the US. WMDs non-existence speaks volumes about a lying and deceptive US administration. The term “terrorism” has now become a fashionable tool or a tactic that some unscrupulous countries are now using, taking their cue from the US, to crush or suppress any legitimate dissent or opposition within or outside their borders. Viewed in this light, a reconsideration of the concept of “war on terror” is warranted.

In the absence of a symmetrically positioned or clearly identifiable enemy what is the precise target warranting billions of war dollars spent in war against countries that lack military power to pose a military threat to the United States? How does one defeat with tanks, missiles, bombs and guns an idea that may surface in any sufficiently disaffected person’s mind? Some terrorist attacks tend to be reactive and/or retaliatory. Thus 9/11 could be considered as horrific blowback from the CIA having funded, armed and encouraged Muslim fundamentalist militant actions cum Taliban regime. However, with about 15 Saudis directly involved in the 9/11 attack the nexus of the attack raises even more questions (visit www.911poof.com) beyond the assumption that one man stationed in remote Afghanistan, Osama bin Laden, almost unilaterally orchestrated an attack which US intelligence remained ineffective to stop. This article maintains that Afghanistan and Iraq are essentially oil related military operations pursued by the US in an on-going oil-war, (3) above.

The problem of globally diminishing supplies of fossil fuel supplies now brings us to examine (1) The geography and politics of oil

There is a massive triangle within which the world’s largest supplies of oil and natural gas are to be found. Within the area of this triangle are to be found regions and countries such as:

- The Caspian Sea (with surrounding countries Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Iran and Azerbaijan)
- Central Asia (including Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and into China and India)
- The Persian and Arabian Gulf states (Oman, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Iran)

These areas – this triangle of oil and natural gas – hold the world’s greatest reserves of oil and natural gas, which are mirrored, in the global politics of oil.

The US bombed, and has occupied Afghanistan pursuant to a declared policy of pursuing Osama bin Laden. This is an aspect of the US “war on terror(ism)”. There is a complementary logic of US military occupation of Afghanistan. If the US is to become less dependent on Arab oil, its focus will be the oil and natural gas resources of Central Asia and the Caspian Sea regions. However, access to these alternative supplies of oil requires pipeline routes. Afghanistan’s geographical position serves well, the oil and natural gas pipeline transit requirements for a route from Central Asia to the Arabian Sea. For the US to

establish and keep the pipeline functional, Afghanistan will have to be politically tamed. This political taming of Afghanistan, translates in military terms to having an occupational force in Afghanistan, effectively for the policing of the pipeline against sabotage and controlling the regime in Kabul to be within a sphere accommodative to US oil interests. Viewed in this light, one can more realistically understand sustained US military action in Afghanistan. If Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are to transit natural gas and oil independently of Russia, then stability in Afghanistan (read: protection of an oil pipeline) is vital from an oil geostrategic perspective. Although Afghanistan has very little oil, its strategic importance resides in being a country central for transit to port. US acceptance of Pakistan's dictatorship under Musharraf is better understood when one views Pakistan's location next to the Arabian Sea and Afghanistan's proximity next to Pakistan – how is the oil to reach port if not through Pakistan? In 2005 Russia briefly disrupted gas supplies via a pipeline transiting gas through Ukraine. This action demonstrates the kind of strategic calculations one would then encounter if significant supplies destined for the US had a reliance on lines that traversed geographical territory that was under Russian or other potentially threatening control.

There is a correlated US domestic politics of oil that operates quite personally and directly within the White House. For a moment we might cast aside the fact that the US uses 26% of the world's oil supplies vis-à-vis all other countries. The personal political oil components are in the personages of President George Bush and Vice-President Richard 'Dick' Cheney. Both persons are 'oil men'. Both men are also aware of the implications for oil supplies in an unstable Middle East. There is an occupied but resistant Iraq as well as an uncertain and non-submissive Iran. Bush's connections to the oil and gas industries appear to be manipulated by Cheney's more experienced guiding hand. It has to be noted that in the 2000 Bush/Cheney Presidential campaign Enron was the largest financial contributor.

An early post-inauguration act of Cheney's was to invite contributions for a national energy policy. Cheney, it might be recalled, had been the CEO of Halliburton, a substantially large oil and gas services company. Bush once owned an oil company. The input to a national energy policy for the US, would, one might believe, be a reflection of a wide spread of concerned and affected interests across the national spectrum – oil industry interests, community and environmental interests, independent academic and scientific interests, alternative energy supplier interests, the military and oversight Congressional interests. Not so – what has come to be known as the "Cheney Energy Policy" (because he orchestrated it) is a policy devised as US national energy policy subservient to oil industry interests [1].

The end result is the billions into military occupation of a country that the US wanted initially to punish when bin Laden had lived in that country and the US now earnestly and compassionately wants to make Afghanistan free for democracy – so the US remains as a truly concerned and militarily committed Uncle Sam. More realistically one might consider that Turkmenistan has the fourth largest natural gas reserves in the world estimated at 100 trillion cubic feet and an Afghan pipeline is a direct route for exporting oil and gas from the Caspian and Central Asian region. Again, there has been militarisation of America's energy policy. In its intentions as conceptually articulated (PNAC [2]) and its actions as perceived (Afghanistan and Iraq) American power projected into the world seeks dominance with "shock and awe" for dominance not least of all – over the world's oil supplies.

There are other global considerations at work in the politics of oil – US interests vis-a- vis Russia and China; the world community's concerns about human rights abuses in countries having large supplies of or being routes of access to such supplies of oil and natural gas; the

political intentions of the leaders within countries having large reserves of oil and natural gas; the currencies with which oil is traded are some of the factors at play in bringing countries into line for US access to the world's oil.

The Bush administration provided a rationale – the relentless pursuit of Osama bin Laden – for carpet bombing of an already devastated post-Soviet occupation Afghanistan. Terrorism is a reactive tactic which can be employed by anyone anywhere in any country. Rational, even if not humane people, are expected to accept that the US is pouring billions into the Afghan war for defence of “freedom”. Again, consider Turkmenistan with the fourth largest natural gas reserves in the world estimated at 100 trillion cubic feet and the need for an Afghan pipeline. Russia's temporary turning off in 2005 of the gas pipelines shipping gas through Ukraine (to Ukraine and some European countries) is an indication of the kinds of interplay between oil/gas pricing – supply routes and global political strategies. Political tolerance of or resistance to suppliers' domestic political circumstances works equally for Russia's strategic pressure on Ukraine as it does with US political responses of tolerance for human rights abuses in Kazakhstan or Uzbekistan.

If one is to be quite cold-blooded about the geo-politics of oil then the following appears to be the immediate probabilities. There will be an increase in American and Russian competition for oil. The fight will not necessarily be direct military confrontation, but proxy political wars will be fought intermittently. Russia is likely to cooperate with China on oil issues in Central Asia. Russia's reactions on oil issues vis-à-vis Europe's (read EU) strategy in satisfying its oil needs will be largely a preference for diplomacy over military action. With regard to the US its global focus on oil supplies signals a policy of aggressive military interventions as and when the circumstances permit or are deemed necessary in US interest. In response to US energy policy, the EU and Russia will find themselves afforded political and diplomatic maneuvering room with oil rich countries. The current issue of whether or not Iran can be permitted to become a nuclear power is indicative of this process of the US military stick behind the diplomatic carrots of the Russians and Europeans (see: footnote [9] for further considerations).

Common sense and common humanity would dictate reliance on multilateral solutions and peaceful cooperation for resolving the global energy crisis, but rationality is not always man's or for that matter the Bush administration's greatest strength.

(2) Concept of “Peak Oil” and its related problem

The Iraq conflict was accurately predicted by W.C. Clark (“The real reasons for the upcoming war with Iraq: a macroeconomic and geostrategic analysis of the unspoken truth”) [3] and the concept of “peak oil” serves well to explain central sources of coming global conflicts. In a simple economic form “peak oil” means that the world's demand for oil has outstripped supply.

More detail is required to grasp the concept of “peak oil” for it means the point when global ultimate recoverable reserves of oil begin to decline. Grasp of the concept as a dynamic process, requires thinking of the rate at which the world produces oil vis-à-vis the rate at which globally available oil is consumed. Next, consider the economic impact on oil prices once global reserves have passed the half way mark of all globally available reserves. The “peak oil” problem starts from the halfway point of declining global reserves, and when supply is not able to meet rising demand. This process pushes oil prices upwards.

Some people find it convenient to assume – e.g. Dick Cheney, that the global oil problem arises when the global supply has been exhausted. Cheney’s assumption implies that simply tapping into more oil from Alaska or wherever addresses the problem. However, if there is a glass half full and more is being taken from a fixed non-renewable supply – where does that leave the contents of the glass? Again, the difficulty is, the ensuing decline from the peak. That is to say at the point where half of all oil discoverable has been discovered, and half of the recoverable amount is recovered. At this point ‘peak oil’, the economic consequences of the absence of abundant and cheap fossil fuels, impacts countries in the form of rising oil prices. With rising oil prices, poor non-oil producing countries are severely impacted because balance of payments debts worsen for them in their attempts at maintaining domestic energy supplies.

Prescient analysts such as Hubbert (his 1956 work that predicted the peak for US domestic oil production and the 1970s oil crisis) [4], Clarke (his analysis of the then approaching Iraq oil war) [3] and Campbell (his prediction that 2007 is the global “peak oil” year) [5] are important intellectual assessments worthy of consideration if one wants to understand how the problem of short energy supplies operates.

We need only remind ourselves that fossil fuel is the primary source of energy for the world, is a depleting non-renewable resource, and will rise in price as supplies decline. As William Clark has quite cogently explained, there are correlations between available reserves, currencies, higher oil prices, economic downturns and war [3].

Why diminishing world supplies of oil give cause for increased global conflagrations over accessibility and/or control of oil and gas supplies is easily discernible.

By 2004 the annual compounded rate of global demand for oil was running at just in excess of 2%. Global demand rates for oil, not surprisingly, are highest in the industrialised world. However both China and India, with populations each of over 1 billion are countries rapidly industrialising and their economic development implies increasing demands for energy – oil. Africa has 0.8 billion people and will ultimately advance along the path of industrialisation (South Africa is but one African country launched on the path some 54 others hope to follow). In South America the population is 0.35 billion people and Brazil’s expanding industrialisation process is a further assurance of the world’s increasing demand for oil. While the industrialised North via the WTO is stubbornly refusing easy access for African agricultural produce, this does not imply that the global demand for oil will be stabilised or placed in decline by reason of slowed advance towards industrialisation on one continent. Increasing use of the internal combustion engine in all countries will ensure that in both industrialised and non-industrialised countries the demand for oil will continue. Global oil supply is predicted to peak within this decade (i.e. by 2010). Colin Campbell has pinpointed 2007 as the global “peak oil” year [8]. Without changes in how the world’s energy is provided we can therefore expect increased conflicts over oil supplies, of which Iraq is the start of a more aggressive process by the US for control of the world’s large deposits.

(3) Iraq is part of an on-going oil war

“Freedom” and “democracy” are proffered as credible secondary or even tertiary reasons after the primary reason provided by George Bush for the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. The primary reason given: to rid Saddam of WMDs. The US invasion was belatedly presented as a principled rescue mission to remove the yoke of Saddamist oppression from around the necks of the long-suffering Iraqis. There are however some considerable credibility factors of

fabrication, inconsistency and lies plaguing the 'principled' rescue mission [6]. And be assured that one can readily discern consistency and credibility in this declared US foreign policy – or can we? (cf. Uzbekistan – natural gas and oil – terror dictatorship – freedom? – democracy? – US ally). In 1997 the US State Department issued a report that acknowledged Uzbek government “torture”, “repression” and widespread human rights abuses [7]. In 1995 the US had started joint military training of Uzbek forces and the US continues to give grants to Uzbekistan to buy military equipment. Human rights abuses – natural oil and gas – US friendship and military training – Washington’s certification for continued assistance – work well together in Uzbekistan. It is to this country’s prisons that captured foreigners are secretly taken under the US government’s ‘Rendition’ programme to a country where the State Department has documented that torture is widely practised [7]. To be fair, US/Uzbek relations have also been strained. In May 2005, the Uzbek government bloodily suppressed a rebellion in the eastern town of Andizhan and this drew US criticism. Uzbekistan did evict the US base about July 2005. However, when oil and US oil companies come into play, one is left with the impression of abiding tolerance of the human rights abuses that without resolute international pressure are unlikely to abate in the near future [8]. When NATO demanded in 2005 an international investigation into Islam Karimov’s abuses, the US vetoed that call.

With North Korea having openly stated its continued development of nuclear capabilities and at a time when Iraq under UN sanctions had been known to have disarmed, it is the country no longer possessing WMDs that the US decides to invade – makes sense – but only if the underlying reason for invading Iraq is clearly understood. The single clearest and most logical reason for the US invasion of Iraq remains an effort by the US to dominate Iraqi oil sales. The word “dominate” is chosen for it is the commanding influence over the currency in which Iraqi oil is sold that is primarily important. Opponents to this idea would observe that the US is capable of buying all the oil it needs as oil is traded globally in dollars.

This brings us to the point of understanding the real reason for US invasion of Iraq. Saddam’s selling of Iraq’s oil in the Euro (as of 2000) was more of an explosive threat to US interests than any WMDs so far found in Iraq by George Bush. If not by political persuasion for continued Iraqi oil sales in the US dollar, then by invasion to finally fix the problem. Consider the precipitous impact on the US economy when petrodollars rapidly cease to subsidise US living standards. The Bush administration perceived this threat as requiring the alternative to political resolution – military action – as Saddam was resolved and not playing according to US rules. There are subsidiary other reasons as well: (1) muscle flexing of the sole superpower (2) placating and enhancing regional cooperation with Israel (3) reshaping the Middle East into a sphere of US hegemony under the guise of promoting “democracy” (4) pursuing a personal agenda of revenge against Saddam’s misdeed of trying to kill Daddy Bush (5) muscle flexing by Jr. by finishing what Daddy Bush had commenced in Gulf War 1 and going all the way to dominating Iraq (6) following Project for the New American Century (PNAC) recommendations and translating neo-conservative thoughts into action.

However, notwithstanding all of these other motivational factors oil remains the core factor for the US invasion of Iraq. There are several dictatorships in the world, and one does find it hard to visualise a US invasion into any non-oil producing country in Africa with the proclamations and degree of military commitment to establish “democracy” that George Bush has professed towards Iraq. In a certain ironic sense, one might consider that in 1954 it was the CIA that had effected the overthrow of Mossadeq, a democratically elected and Western leaning moderate Iranian nationalist. His was one of many in a series of CIA

engineered coups and US destabilisation endeavors that placed numerous dictators in power around the world (Iran, Indonesia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq to mention some CIA successes and US humanitarian missions). Friendly US assistance in Iran's case, with US support for the brutal and dictatorial Shah, directly correlated to the fact of Mossadeq having nationalised Iran's oil. Invasion and US military resolve in Iraq bears a similar direct proportionate correlation to the large reserves of oil in Iraq, as does the Afghanistan military mission relate to US strategic interests in establishing a pipeline.

The pretexts of defence of "freedom" and "democracy" in Iraq came only after the crucial justification of invading to remove the threat of WMDs had been widely discredited. However in US domestic politics it would appear somewhat crass, if not politically disastrous, for President Bush to be professing the truth to the American people that he really did invade Iraq to ensure sale of Iraqi oil in the dollar [9] and for assurance that the world's second largest supplies of oil in the world remains under US domination for petrodollars. In the corporate controlled media as well as in the political consciousness of the American people there is some measure of misplaced focus and significant measures of unawareness of the role that oil has played historically and continues to play in directing US foreign policy in the Middle East, Central Asia and counties bordering the Caspian Sea [10].

US foreign policy in the Middle East is best understood not so much in terms of spreading democracy in Iraq, or defending human rights, or any country's pursuit of nuclear capabilities. These are the political terms in which the hard sell of protecting "vital interests" (oil) has to be presented to the populace. The primary US focus and motivational factor in the Middle East is the oil.

There is a geography of oil related global conflicts and there are complementary policies that aggressively support US strategic steps for domination (if not direct control over) the world's oil reserves. The US has 5% of the world's population, consumes 26% of the world's oil, but has only 2% of the world's oil reserves within its boundaries. US foreign policy therefore focuses both politically and militarily on dominating sources of supply (e.g. invasion of Iraq) and controlling via petrodollars the world's trading of oil (e.g. opposition to the advancing Iranian oil bourse) [9]. There is an exhaustible global supply of fossil fuel and Iraq has the second largest supply of oil on the planet. It is with a focus on oil that consideration of primary US foreign policy motives in Iraq therefore has to begin and from there one can then better grasp the related problem of US aggression in pursuit of the world's oil supplies.

Solutions

The simple solution to the world's oil supply problem is the development of alternative sustainable and affordable sources of energy.

Some globally necessary steps for consideration are: -

1. Development of affordable and sustainable alternative sources of energy.
2. Viewing the 'peak oil' problem as essentially a global energy consumption problem requiring global multilateral action for fair resolution. In 1956 M. King Hubbert's prediction that domestic US oil supplies would peak in the 1970s now implies more serious and urgent attention as global peak approaches (i.e. there is no oil on the moon to be tapped - the world's supplies are declining on the bell-curve and will in consequence mean more expensive oil). Vice President Dick Cheney is fully aware of the peak oil problem as he expressed in

a 1999 speech: – “By some estimates, there will be an average of two-percent annual growth in global oil demand over the years ahead, along with, conservatively, a three-percent natural decline in production from existing reserves. That means by 2010 we will need on the order of an additional 50 million barrels a day.” The Cheney Energy Report [1] does not recommend either domestic conservationism on fossil fuel use or development of alternative energy supplies, but implies militarism to secure oil supplies and therein is the problem of the Bush administration’s unilateralist or isolationist approach to this global problem. Accessing more of a limited supply implies more costly oil, and the core problem of a sustainable energy supply remains unaddressed.

3. Utilising international protocols to shift global energy usage from fossil fuel to alternative energy sources.

4. Communicating from the global to national and community levels and implementing policies at those national and community levels for energy conservation supported by incentives for more responsible energy usage.

Hydrogen, solar, ethanol, geothermal heat and wind or wave generated sources of energy are probable solutions if appropriate investments in research and development are made. The industrialised world would have to make significant adjustments in its pattern of energy consumption and the US would have to be involved as the world’s largest consumer of fossil fuel. More efficient engines, vehicles that took account of weight to energy consumption ratios, development of household energy storage cells, and industries reliance on alternatives for fossil fuel energy are some of the adjustment considerations. However the industrialised world’s monetary and oil interests are interwoven. The further difficulty is that vested oil interests see a threat to profits in an industry upon which the world is wooed by the internal combustion engine (cars and planes propelled by oil) and energy supplies (electricity) that are dependent on oil supplies that make lucrative profits for globally powerful and influential companies.

The Cheney Report (National Energy Policy) perceives military solutions and the US energy problem as integrated. The problem is that the Cheney report assumes that short supply is the real problem with no honest response to the peak oil pricing problem and the fundamentals that cry out for responsible attention – clean energy supply – affordable energy – non-militaristic access to energy sources – development of alternative energy technologies are the issues to be addressed. There is no intention within the Bush administration of making rational adjustments about US domestic energy units consumed and a decisive shift towards alternative, sustainable and less costly sources of energy as a part of US national energy policy [1].

The development of alternative energy sources nevertheless remains a global imperative and not a mere hair-brained political desire. In present US domestic political terms the “Project for the New American Century” is an influential think-tank for the Bush Administration. While “freedom” and “democracy” are terms used by the PNAC, as in Paul Wolfowitz’s reference to Iraq in terms of “a love of life and democracy”, a love of oil and gas would be closer the mark. The harsh and brutal reality is that for all the talk about liberating Iraq, the US military effort is in actuality about US interests – oil – regional domination of the Middle East’s oil supplies by the US – and a global strategy of inflicting on the world the US’s unipolar objectives. In this sense, the PNAC is accurate when it speaks of unending war, because a retreat from multilateralism (e.g. US violation of UN efforts for peacefully resolving the Iraq WMD issue via continuation to final inspections by the IAEA) does actually imply war [9]. But imperial empires have overreached themselves in the past and history will bear out that the current US foreign policy trajectory will ultimately arrive at the same

end of over-extension and unsustainability.

Practical steps in the necessary rational and peaceful direction of alternative energy sources have been taken by Japan (hydrogen cell research), Brazil (ethanol for fuel power), Portugal (constructing the world's largest solar powered plant and spending \$307 million on the project), and Denmark (30% of its national energy supplies converted to wind generated supplies). The alternative technologies are not as developed, efficient or diverse in application as the ways in which oil has been used, however concerted effort through scientific research can change that fact.

Accepting that the oil companies will not willingly advance agendas of developing alternative supplies (why should they research their demise?), thoughts about effecting the necessary changes remain important for the quality of life of the world's ordinary citizens and need to be placed in international fora as an important global problem requiring timely solutions.

The United Nations is a global forum where the world's problems are deliberated. The consequences of the recent struggle over oil in Iraq remain current in global and therefore UN collective consciousness as evidence of the emerging intensified scramble for oil. The International Atomic Agency is an important energy related agency within the UN system that has specific mandates. Could the IAEA be a useful existing forum for expansion of a global agenda into addressing wider global energy issues?

If the interrelations between oil – nuclear power/political power – industrialised societies demand for global oil supplies – absence of sufficient technological innovations based on alternative energy supplies – and skewed global economic distributions between the industrialised nations and suppliers of oil vis-à-vis non-industrialised countries are noted – then the same anxieties that the IAEA has for non- nuclear proliferation could be merged into a comprehensive energy forum for finding globally sustainable energy alternatives.

I have suggested the UN comprehensively addressing the world's energy problems because neither oil companies themselves, nor powerful individual industrialised countries are likely to be catalysts for fairness (witness the unfairness within the WTO and Doha round – Professor Robert Hunter Wade of the London School of Economics in a November 4, 2005, letter to the London Financial Times observed: "Sixty per cent of the increase in world consumption over the 1990s accrued to people living in the upper half of the developed countries' income distribution, less than 10 per cent of the world's population; and most of the rest to the burgeoning middle class of China."). There is an International Atomic Energy Agency (IAE) that has a market analysis perspective, but there remains a need for a properly funded global organization to assist nations' transformation into alternative energy as the "peak oil" problem impacts all countries.

Notwithstanding, as the global energy crisis looms there is no more realistic response than recourse to a (the) globally empowered body – the UN. Levels of energy units consumed per country of a specific non-renewal resource have to be assessed by reference to more rational applications of substitute renewable energy sources. A shift towards globally affordable energy will also have to be assisted by some form of grass roots consciousness about the types of interrelationships between – oil – currency and exchange rates – global demand for energy – skewed global wealth distribution – war – poverty. The UN can function as an effective global intermediary between private greed and global public need, by attracting funding from governments as well as private corporations (a few billion more from Bill Gates maybe?) to advance along the path of stable supplies of affordable and

sustainable energy supplies. And in reflecting on recent related events in Iraq, we can appreciate the attractiveness of “democracy”, yet we can also reject its cynical invocation as a last minute clutch at a straw of credibility in a US led oil war.

A US cynical disdain for “freedom” extends beyond Iraq (for there can be no genuine “freedom” as in Hamid Khazi’s Afghanistan where a “puppet” is manipulated into power to advance US oil interests. The need remains for a popular, democratic and indigenously supported movement pursuing national development by utilising the country’s natural resources for the greater benefit of its people. Afghanistan remains a country devastated first by Soviet occupation and then by the ‘liberating’ cluster bombs of the US setting out militarily to embed for development of the pipeline). The predictable pattern, as in Saudi Arabia, will be US complicity with wrongdoing in oil rich regimes under a corrupt oligarchy – with or without the label of “democracy” – being manipulated by foreign interests. Uzbekistan is a friendly and acceptable country, albeit an oil and natural gas rich regime practising widespread torture, while the democratically elected leader of Venezuela is not acceptable to the US.

The US extends its tolerance of “freedom” and “democracy” to the point where policies of true independence not submissive to US dictates start to emerge – i.e. autonomous policies of development for the people’s welfare. Venezuela in this regard is thus to be labeled a pariah state, notwithstanding its democratically elected leader, and Uzbekistan, with the dictatorial Karimov and US State Department documentation of widely practised torture is a tolerable friend to which the US secretly sends “Rendition prisoners”. Under current US foreign policy “freedom” does appear to be submission to US economic interests [8]. US support for the overthrow of a democratically elected leader in Venezuela is itself a quite revealing example of cynicism in action as democracy is to be defeated wherever independent action advances. Hugo Chavez in Venezuela was the target of a 2002 US supported coup and Iraq remains a country illegally invaded and occupied by the US – both having significant supplies of oil. What one discerns is this manipulative process of domination under US imperial rule. As a country submits to the dictates of US economic policies so its people suffer, and as any truly democratic or popular force resists US domination in pursuit of a people’s struggle for independence and development the US opposes, subverts or invades. Venezuela and Uzbekistan are current recent representative examples of this foreign policy at work.

Future global demands for oil will increase and therefore US (and probably other countries) aggression over access to oil can realistically be anticipated. In the breach between the world’s demand for oil and the shortage of global supply one therefore sees roles for global political consciousness as well as for the UN as broker between old interests in the industrialised world and new technological opportunities, as well as for other forces. Bodies of concerned citizens, human rights activists, media commentators, alternative energy suppliers, elements within business and industry sufficiently concerned about their own need for affordable energy and even politicians are some potential forces for change. One is presently aware that a Mom at home in Idaho or a villager in Ghana will not in the least be interested in what is written here. If ever those individuals broach thoughts about “peak oil”, the concept will sound like the thoughts of a Martian visitor from outer space. Yet the concept is quite real and earthly as it impacts the cost of heating for the Idaho Mom’s home or putting fuel in her car, as much as it is relevant to the cost of kerosene for cooking in Ghana. Yet, there are still detractors who ignore the hard statistical evidence, and assume that the oil depletion problem is mythology [11].

Conclusion

Martin Luther King shortly before his death had opposed the Vietnam War. President Johnson had started the Vietnam War with a lie when he forgot the international dateline and announced a North Vietnamese attack on a US vessel the day before the incident actually occurred, the Bay of Tonkin incident launching the war. President Bush lied with Secretary of State Colin Powell's helpful address to the UN that Saddam Hussein had Weapons of Mass Destruction hidden in Iraq. Bush himself knowing the opposite to be true repeated the lie and sought to deceive Americans and the world that Saddam assisted with the 9/11 attack, [10]. It is for such reasons that thousands of people are bombed and American soldiers are sacrificing their lives.

Hungry interests constructed lies (the "dodgy dossier") to embark on a bloody strategy of control and domination of Middle Eastern oil. However, despite the deceptions and the more palatable proclamations about genuine interest in the pursuit of "freedom" and "democracy" (reminiscent of words used by Kennedy in a letter sent to the South Vietnamese installed leader) there is a juncture where honestly oil must be placed as central in the foreign policy calculus. Rather oil always has been central in US foreign policy assessments, but the American people themselves need to become more aware and enlightened about the depth and implications of their leaders' lies, deceptions and ruthless pursuits of interests inimical to both the American people and the world (30,000 to 100,000 people dead and hundreds others harmed and maimed is a very heavy price to pay – not for "freedom" and "democracy" as Bush lies about – but for oil and gas).

The Uranium Information Centre in Melbourne, Australia, confirms that there are 31 countries with nuclear power plants. There are a further 7 seeking to acquire nuclear capabilities. The US bellicose position on Iran, in attempting to justify another oil war against Iran would have to be seen in the light of what actually is the position in the world and not the world from George Bush's "nuclear bait" line to hook American public opinion. A 32nd country having nuclear capabilities will not be a threat to the US.

The anti-nuclear arguments presently being run are the equivalent of Bush's WMD ruse in his build up to attacking Iraq. Afghanistan's invasion is justified by 9/11; Iraq's invasion was predicated on WMDs; and, war is to be justified in Iran by resistance to Iran acquiring nuclear capabilities. Can the American people continue to be duped by the military service dodger – George Bush [10]? Are any of these oil wars being fought by Bush or Cheney or Rumsfeld or Powell's children? Is it credible for the American people to endorse the hypocrisy of the US policy of setting out to overthrow a democratically elected leader (Venezuela), ignoring a dictatorial and torturous ruler (Uzbekistan) and illegally invading where oil's petrodollars are sought (Iraq)?

For decades the US has supported an oligarchic and corrupt dictatorship in Saudi Arabia –why no concerned or timely effecting of change where the US has had direct influence and military bases [9]? One has to look at the real reasons of oil interests to make sense of the US policy postures of professed concerns over human rights or democracy or non-proliferation. In the mid-1980s the US had not only praised Saddam as progressive for educating Iraqi women and advancing the Iraqi people's welfare (vis-à-vis other Arab states), but rewarded him by selling significant amounts of dual-purpose arms exports. Was it not possible for the US to have supported a UN veto in the 1980s against Saddam's human rights abuses instead of having supported him? Maybe the CIA having installed Saddam would have then made it counterintuitive to overthrow him before he struck out on

an independent course of action (i.e. selling oil in the Euro in 2000).

The war in Iraq was started by deceit and little that Bush does conveys any credibility in management of this illegal war. Where is there principle, credibility or genuine interest in the welfare of the invaded Iraqis or for the welfare of unsuspecting and co-opted US soldiers fighting for what? – Oil! Having destroyed Iraq the US will insist on selling its produce to Iraq with Iraqi oil money spent as loosely as is convenient in the US interest. Proven deceits of those who started the oil war in Iraq urge reconsideration of US foreign policy as it relates to domination over Middle Eastern oil supplies. Every reader of this article is invited seriously to consider the implications of Bush nuking Iran. Bush is running the line of Iran being a “real threat” to the US and in real terms this signals that Chief Bush is on the warpath again. The US in fact has been the greatest force in militarising the Middle East and it has also resolutely and consistently rejected any linkage between a country’s human rights record and sales to that country of arms – where is there humanity or principle manifested in policy?

The Project for the New American Century has prescribed unending war, and war will be the result when warmongers embark on a policy of invasions and support of dictators to dominate desired sales of oil supplies in dollars. A more sober and peace focused world system’s theory is a rational alternative. The Bush administration has chosen the path of unending war (not so much against terrorism but by pursuing a path of energy acquisition reliant on aggression that stirs global reactions that lead to terrorism). The bellicose policies that the PNAC advocates most definitely stir reactions of resentment and retaliation. War is the PNAC mantra and peace converted into globally sustainable energy supplies for the world will have to be Bush’s and the PNAC’s nemesis. The problem, I suppose, is not that I understand why the US has invaded and occupied Afghanistan or Iraq, but that so many Americans have yet to comprehend what is being done in their name.

Analysis, consensus building, rational solutions for the energy problem affecting all energy users on the planet is a better path to follow than the presently designed path of exacerbating global conflict for dominance over oil resources.

Common sense dictates a need to recognise the ways in which oil as the world’s primary source of energy directs not only US foreign policy, but also impacts all citizens of the world. Some people are in countries where increasing oil prices have devastated their already oil dependent economies; some people in industrialised countries perceive their civilization and/or economic progress threatened by inadequate access to affordable oil supplies; and in all non oil producing countries there is greater strain placed on national budgets to pay for oil [12]. Decision makers in the US bombed, invaded, occupied and caused at lowest estimate over 30,000 innocent civilian deaths in Iraq’s oil war. These are the discernible human consequences of the way in which powerful interests pursue the ends of dominance over global oil supplies. Human beings do enter the calculations of “peak oil” and on the present trajectory of US foreign policy increasingly as corpses in coming oil wars. We ought to consider ways in which alternative energy supplies can be developed and utilised. Humankind made itself dependent on oil as a primary energy source and human beings can therefore find ways, as an imperative, of weaning ourselves on to alternative sustainable and more peacefully accessible sources of energy supplies.

Courtenay Barnett is a graduate of London University. His areas of study were economics, political science and international law. He has been a practising lawyer for over twenty years, has been arrested for defending his views, and has argued public interest and human

NOTES

[1] See: National Energy Policy at www.whitehouse.gov/energy Legal battles are advancing where disclosure is being sought of details within the report, to connect Cheney with wrongdoing in respect of Halliburton and his cronyism, but aspects of this energy policy report that affects the US and the world are being suppressed.

[2] See: <http://www.newamericancentury.org/> for the PNAC's statement of its goals for the US: -

" The Project for the New American Century is a non-profit educational organization dedicated to a few fundamental propositions; that

American leadership is good for America and for the world; and that such leadership requires military strength, diplomatic energy and commitment to moral principle."

This global objective is so reminiscent of the earlier domestic version expressed by a General Motors CEO that what was good for General Motors was good for America.

The US Department of Defense has a \$425b annual budget. It can realistically be anticipated that in consequence of the Bush administration's reliance on PNAC prescriptions, ever increasing sums will be required for establishment of permanent military bases in oil important countries and for the prosecution of oil wars.

[3] See: www.ratical.org/ratville/CAH/RRIraqWar.html — "The real reasons for the upcoming war with Iraq: a macroeconomic and geostrategic analysis of the unspoken truth" by W.C. Clark.

[4] See, inter alia: M. King Hubbert, "Energy from Fossil Fuels", Science, vol. 109, pp. 103-109, February 4, 1949. Hubbert also wrote about the handicap of two systems he termed "matter-energy" and "monetary culture".

[5] See: "The Coming Oil Crisis" by Colin Campbell (<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ISBN=0906522110>), Multi-Science Publishing Co. Ltd., 2004, ISBN 0906522110. His work can be viewed at www.peakoil.net. Also note the book by Kenneth Deffeyes, "Hubbert's Peak: The impending world oil shortage".

[6] Consider these statements: -

"Hussein has not developed any significant capability with respect to weapons of mass destruction. He is unable to project conventional power against his neighbors."

-Colin Powell on February 24, 2001

"Simply stated, there is no doubt that Saddam Hussein now has weapons of mass destruction,"

-Dick Cheney on August 26, 2002.

"Our conservative estimate is that Iraq today has a stockpile of between 100 and 500 tons of chemical weapons agent. That is enough agent to fill 16,000 battlefield rockets. Even the low end of 100 tons of agent would enable Saddam Hussein to cause mass casualties across more than 100 square miles of territory, an area nearly five times the size of Manhattan."

-Colin Powell at the UN on February 5, 2003

"Intelligence leaves no doubt that Iraq continues to possess and conceal lethal weapons."

-George W. Bush on March 18, 2003

"We are asked to accept Saddam decided to destroy those weapons. I say that such a claim is palpably absurd."

Tony Blair, Prime Minister 18 March 2003

"Saddam's removal is necessary to eradicate the threat from his weapons of mass destruction."

Jack Straw, British Foreign Secretary 2 April 2003

"Before people crow about the absence of weapons of mass destruction, I suggest they wait a bit."

Tony Blair 28 April, 2003

One need not crow but honestly ask whether French and Russian intelligence assessments belying the statements that came after Colin's Powell's February 24, 2001 statement, coupled with the calculated lies about yellow cake from Niger and the "dodgy dossier" fabricated by British Intelligence and handed to the US (assisting Powell's statement to the UN on February 5, 2003) can leave any sensible and rational person in doubt about the levels of dishonesty, collusion, fabrication and calculated deception that led the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

[7] See: Any recent US State Department annual report on Uzbekistan's human rights record. There is clear documentation of widespread abuses, known to the US government.

[8] The former British Ambassador to Uzbekistan, Craig Murray, resigned in principled protest at his government's willfully ignoring widespread torture practised by the Uzbek government. Details on his position can be found at www.craigmurray.co.uk. On May 13, 2005, over 700 people under the leadership of Islam Karimov were slaughtered in Uzbekistan for protesting for democracy. However, the calls for "democracy" in Uzbekistan are not an interest neutral movement. Such movements correlate to external geostrategic interests. As former US Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick astutely delineated, there were "totalitarian" and "authoritarian" regimes. The former being those tolerated as not being unduly harmful to US interests and the latter being those outside the ambit of acceptability. Karimov from present indications remains in the former grouping, being tolerated as of use to larger US interests.

[9] See: "The real reasons why Iran is the next target:" www.globalresearch.ca/articles/CLA410A.html. The Asian Energy Security Grid; Shanghai Cooperation Council; Iranian oil bourse are energy supply initiatives moving independently of the US and as such are therefore deemed threats to US energy resource dominance or control. Dollars as payment for oil compels countries to rely on the US dollar. These transactions of petrodollars provide a massive global subsidy for the US economy. The Iranian oil bourse will be an alternative of payment in the Euro afforded the world's oil purchasers (as Saddam had done under the UN "Oil for food programme". Post-invasion Iraq witnessed the US canceling all non-dollar Iraqi oil sales. Exclusive dollar trading is good for the US, but is unhelpful for a world holding depreciating dollars). Iran's threat in an economic sense is that it will offer the world an alternative to petrodollars and the US will therefore endeavour via military or sabotage or propaganda or whatever means to halt the process of a shift into Euro trading. The US response to the 1970s domestic "peak oil" problem was by way of special and secret arrangements with a corrupt Saudi oligarchy for recycling of petrodollars. A reason for such secrecy relates to the fact that such arrangements conflicted with US commitments to other industrialised nations to avoid pursuit of unilateral policies. Cf. the difficulty of the US facing global "peak-oil", and now on a global scale pursuing unilateralism a la PNAC recommendations. From a US perspective, the dilemma is one of finding comparative political and/or economic formulae that work to the overwhelming economic benefit of the US, as has been the case with Saudi Arabia. The American populace remains emotionally manipulated by appeals to nationalistic defence of the homeland - but their economic circumstances are not that simple and need in American collective consciousness correlation to broader global factors that are affecting the cost of America's supply of oil. The PNAC has quite clearly honed in on the fact of America's dependence on oil and has also opted for the military imperative. Interestingly the CIA head of Mossadeq's overthrow in 1953, Kermit Roosevelt (grandson of Theodore Roosevelt),

wrote then “ If we are ever going to try something like this again, we must be absolutely sure that (the) people and army want what we want”. Clearly in Venezuela they didn’t and in Iraq – well – maybe the mission is not yet accomplished.

[10] The Indian publication, “The Hindu” in its Sunday, April 13, 2003 edition had this to say about the US ‘coalition’ in Iraq: “That these fictions are believed nowhere in the planet except in the United States is a tribute to the capacity of U.S. corporate media to manipulate their public. So, even as their image takes a beating, don’t underestimate their ability to sell war and death. They’ve been doing it — with some success — for decades”

[11] See: “Thermodynamics and money” by Peter Huber at www.forbes.com

[12] See: <http://planetforlife.com/oilcrisis/oilreserves.html> for a credible overview of the world’s oil reserves.

The original source of this article is globaljusticeonline.com

Copyright © [Courtenay Barnett, globaljusticeonline.com](http://globaljusticeonline.com), 2006

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Courtenay Barnett](#)

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca

www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca