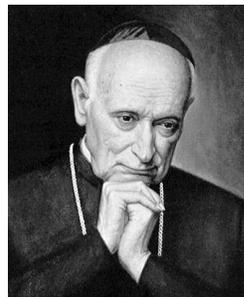


Mindszenty Report



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21st Century Pillars of Fire: Oil and the Geopolitics of the Middle East

In the 13th century Venetian explorer Marco Polo reported a bubbling black substance in Asia Minor that burned easily. The locals talked of the *Eternal Pillars of Fire*, a reference to the oil-fed pyres the Zoroastrians worshiped. In the 19th and early 20th century, the Middle East was where the Nobel brothers, Robert and Ludwig, revolutionized oil-drilling techniques and transportation methods.

THE NEW LAND

The use of petroleum dates back to the ancient Chinese and Egyptians, who burned oil for lighting. Before the 1850s, Americans used whale oil to light their homes and shops. When whales became scarce, people sought alternate energy sources. In some places, oil seeped naturally to the surface of ponds and streams. People skimmed the oil and made it into kerosene, which they used to light America's homes before the electric light bulb. With a growing demand for kerosene, a group of businessmen hired Edwin Drake to drill for oil in Titusville, Pennsylvania. He struck the mother lode in 1859.

In 1892, the *horseless carriage* revolutionized transportation. The importance of oil to modern industrial society grew rapidly with the proliferation of automobiles in the early 1900s. The major event for oil was World War I. By switching the British Navy from coal to oil, British Secretary of the Navy Winston Churchill gave Britain and its allies a crucial advantage over the Axis Powers.

From Napoleon to Hitler, the importance of land and geographic location, or *Lebensraum* was a driving force in world politics. The importance of land gave rise to a new term, *geopolitics*. The 19th century German natural scientist and geographer Friedrich Ratzel is often considered the *father of geopolitics*. His seminal work *Politische Geographic*, published in 1897, formulated many of the fundamental principles and concepts of geopolitical theory, which evolved into the concept that the power of a state is largely dependent on the location and physical features it controls.

By the early 20th century oil became an integral part of the geopolitical equation. With an industrial revolution, emphasizing free trade and globalization, and the abundance of oil, geopolitical importance rested on changes in transport and

weapons technologies. A nation weighed its power, not on its capacity to conquer territory, but on its ability to expand its financial markets around the globe. To do this it needed unrestricted supplies of oil. Where geopolitics once revolved around land, the *new land* is the earth's limited supply of natural resources, especially oil.

By 1950 nations on most every continent were competing for a place at the Middle East table as they once had done for colonization of the emerging countries of Asia and Africa in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The importance of the petroleum banquet table has been enhanced by the fact that oil prices have risen dramatically over the past year. At a \$145 a barrel and above, oil's impact can be devastating to those nations who are dependent upon its supply. The increasing demand for oil has created an energy-driven dynamic that is upsetting any sort of geopolitical balance in the Middle East.

A GEOPOLITICAL TINDERBOX

Since the end of World War II, United States foreign policy in the Middle East has been based on its relations with three nations, namely Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Israel. Washington's relationship with the Saudis has been bittersweet. To secure American access to Saudi oil, a dying Franklin Roosevelt met with Ibn Saud right after his disastrous meeting with Churchill and Stalin at Yalta February 14, 1945. Roosevelt promised to protect Saud's kingdom in return for easy access to Saudi oil. This eventually led to billions of dollars of military aid, the deployment of U. S. troops on Saudi soil and arguably the rise of Osama bin-Laden and 9/11.

Historically, Iran has acted as the *policeman of the Gulf*. It had the population, state structure, and infrastructure that Saudi Arabia lacked, and the Shah of Iran, using Iran's oil income, built a formidable military with one of the world's most up-to-date air forces. Between 1970 and 1978, the U.S. exported over \$20 billion worth of arms to Iran, amounting to what U.S. Representative Gerry Stud of Massachusetts called, *the most rapid buildup of military power under peacetime conditions in the history of the world*. Washington had a symbiotic relationship with the Shah of Iran that unraveled under the Carter administration. Without American support,

the Shah quickly fell victim to Shiite extremists, who still control Iran. His overthrow in 1979 unleashed a wave of hatred against the United States that still reverberates.

Israel has also benefited greatly from American largesse. Its long history of confrontations with most Arab nations in the region has put the United States in the precarious position of having to *protect* Israel, or suffer a possible widespread outbreak of hostilities that would jeopardize American access to Arab oil. Israel's threat of a preemptive strike on Iran's nuclear power plant before the next United States elections has only intensified the tensions already existing in this geopolitical tinderbox.

AGGRESSIVE DOCTRINES

Henry Kissinger's famous declaration that, *Oil is too important to be left to the Arabs* best expressed the tone and direction of American foreign policy in this region for the last 60 years. With that as a backdrop, the geopolitics of oil is fast becoming the dominant issue in 21st century American foreign policy. This toxic mixture of war and oil has influenced American policy in the Middle East since World War II. With two-thirds of the world's oil reserves and a third of its gas reserves, it is impossible to overestimate the importance of the Middle East, particularly the Arabian Gulf. According to Michael Klare's new book *Rising Powers, Shrinking Planet: The New Geopolitics of Energy*, finding substitutes for petroleum *will be essential if the U. S. and China are to avert a potentially violent struggle over dwindling reserves*.

The first installment of U. S. strategy was the Nixon Doctrine. It relied on building American surrogate states, which would execute U.S. policy as the guardians of the Middle East oil. President Jimmy Carter provided the next step. In 1977 Carter issued the order to start a Rapid Deployment Force, which gave the country the ability to quickly send troops to hotspots around the globe. With the fall of the Shah, Washington relied heavily on the Carter Doctrine, which warned the world that the United States would regard any attempt to gain control of the Persian Gulf as *an assault on the vital interests of the United States* and would be met with *any means necessary*.

In the 1990s former ally Saddam Hussein fell into American crosshairs. The first Persian Gulf War in 1991 was the enforcement of the Carter Doctrine, the ultimate source of U. S. policy in the Gulf since 1980.

In early 1997, many of the neoconservatives from the Bush administration had organized themselves into the Project for the New American Century, which began to lobby vigorously for aggressive action against Iraq and the reconfiguration of the Middle East. They blamed the first President Bush for not having finished the job in the Gulf. The Joint Chiefs of Staff's Strategic Assessment 1999, specifically said that an oil war in the Persian Gulf was a *serious contingency and that U.S. forces might be used to ensure adequate supplies*.

The Chiefs reasoned that such a war could eliminate

Hussein once and for all, gain control of his oil fields and extend American influence into the geopolitical vacuum created by the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. The Bush Doctrine in 2003 has effectively amended the doctrines of Nixon and Carter to demonstrate that the United States can act unilaterally and preemptively to protect its interests in the Gulf.

AN AMERICAN LAKE

Another area of contention has been the Caspian Sea basin. James Baker, the former U. S. Secretary of State, said in an interview with the New York Times, *Caspian oil may eventually be as important to the industrialized world as Middle East oil is today*. Though the figure is under dispute, the United States Department of Energy believes that the total amount of the ultimately recoverable reserves is 200 billion barrels. Three of the new states from the former Soviet Bloc, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan are littoral states, which means they are near a coastal shoreline that would enable easy foreign transport.

The major element of this struggle for power and influence in the Caspian Sea basin is the competition over the routes of the oil and gas pipelines from the region. The 1,091-mile pipeline that began in Baku in Azerbaijan through Kazakhstan has been a project of the United States government since the first Gulf War. Its ability to link countries together underscores the importance of the pipeline infrastructure for the geopolitical configuration of the area. The pipelines are the *steel umbilical cords* that link economic and political interests. Pipeline control is essential for the hegemony of the region.

A PETROLEUM TRIANGLE

To further complicate the geopolitics of oil, a 2007 article in the Asia Times heralded the emergence of a strategic *new triangle comprised of China, Iran, and Russia*. Like the Phoenix rising from its own communist ashes, Russia is already an energy superpower in the region. President Vladimir Putin has attempted to forge an energy-based alliance that will eventually give Russia control of this vital region. Putin has been very effective in ensuring state control over the most promising new sources of oil and gas in Russia's Far East. He has completely recast the relationship between Moscow and foreign energy firms, turning them into junior partners in his oil and gas enterprises.

Gazprom has become the flagship of the Kremlin's drive to build an energy behemoth that can compete with such international titans as Exxon Mobil and Royal Dutch Shell. Now as the world's largest natural gas producer, Gazprom has increased production from 9 billion to nearly 300 billion barrels since 2000. With Gazprom leading the way, a successful cornering of the energy market would greatly enhance Russia's ability to regain some of its prestige and power since the fall of Communism in 1991.

Both Putin and Chinese President Hu Jintao have made energy the centerpiece of Russian-Chinese relations. Russia's Rosneft Oil Company and China National Petroleum Company,

two state-owned conglomerates, have negotiated plans for Russia to supply about 10 percent of China's oil, and the Russian gas giant Gazprom is talking to China about building two new gas pipelines with a total capacity of 80 billion cubic meters a year.

The Chinese are also becoming increasingly more dependent on Iranian oil. China has signed a series of lucrative agreements, including a 25-year contract reported to be worth \$100 billion between Iran and the Chinese state-owned energy company Sinopec. While Iran might be the weak link in this *petroleum triangle*, its location and its natural resources give it a preeminent position in the geopolitics of oil.

A SALVIFIC PROMISE

In the November 5, 2007 issue of *The American Conservative* magazine economics professor David Henderson criticized the toxic mixture of weapons and oil that has characterized American foreign policy in the Middle East. A true contrarian, Henderson contended that wars were not necessary to maintain the free flow of oil from the Middle East. Taking a leaf from Adam Smith, he believes that American oil supply is secure, not because of military threats but because *the world's oil suppliers want to make money*. The country should just let the natural laws of economics work out the problems.

Henderson's sage advice does not resonate well in a nation whose leaders have gradually grown accustomed to an activist government in times of crisis. No politician can idly watch the economic hardships that dominate the headline news every night. The current fallout from the oil crisis, when coupled with the virtual collapse of the mortgage industry and the banking structure, has created a situation of *Sturm and Drang*, a perfect storm of distress that must run its painful course through the economy.

To his credit President Bush has bravely tried to overcome the opposition of the radical environmentalists that has blocked the increase in U. S. oil supplies for decades. His lifting of the

moratorium on off-shore drilling after nearly two decades of executive orders prohibiting such an addition to the American oil supply is a much-needed first step in combating the nation's economic woes. But to alleviate the crisis he will need the Democratic Congress to lift its 1982 ban.

This is a Herculean task because the Democrats have obstructed every attempt to add to oil supplies because of their political dependence on the country's *Green lobby*. Democratic opposition has also thwarted the opening to the rich supply of oil in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (Anwar), as well as in our own territorial waters. There is a good chance the major obstacles to this drilling can be removed before the November elections. However while most Democrats say that it will take years before any Republican plan can have any effect, they offer no viable solution of their own. To placate their green supporters, they only stress that people must cut back on their driving and industry must stop using fossil fuels.

The importance of oil to the economy and to American foreign policy may all be a moot question if the movement for alternate sources of energy lives up to its salvific promise. New technologies that promise hybrid cars that run on electricity, ethanol or hydrogen fuel cells have to date proven more costly than their petroleum predecessors. Hope still rests in alternate fuels, such as *clean* coal, solar, windmills and especially nuclear that may eventually reduce American dependency on petroleum and alleviate the geopolitical pressures that have increased global tensions. It heralds the entrepreneurial spirit that is pouring billions of dollars into research and development. Americans can only hope that this will be the case.



William A. Borst, Ph.D., is the author of *Liberalism: Fatal Consequences* and *The Scorpion and the Frog: A Natural Conspiracy* which are available from the author at P.O. Box 16271, St. Louis, MO 63105 or write BBPROF@sbcglobal.net.

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Louisville, KY Forum 2008

My name is Andrew Schlafly, and I have been blessed with the opportunity of interning for my great-aunt Eleanor Schlafly at the Cardinal Mindszenty Foundation this summer. Recently, I attended The Church Teaches Forum, in Louisville, KY from July 18-19, where I distributed literature and sold books to attendees. Dozens of people offered me their thanks for the great work that the Foundation has done, and all had highest praise for Eleanor. On several occasions, speakers took time to express gratitude to CMF for its help in co-sponsoring the Forum. It was great to see the respect that CMF has earned in America's Catholic community.

The Forum opened Friday afternoon with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and following dinner, the crowd of 350 attendees heard from His Eminence Francis Cardinal Arinze on "Obligation, Readiness, and Freedom to Evangelize." The Cardinal spoke about the most pressing moral issues of our time, including the right to life and the necessity to preserve the sanctity of marriage. One memorable moment came when he remarked, "[Some say,] 'Personally, I am not for the killing of unborn children, but I will not impose my belief on others'...Suppose I said, '*Personally*, I am not in favor of shooting the whole lot of you in the Senate...but, since some people like to do it...I am not going to impose my own beliefs on them...[See, I am] pro-choice.'" This illustration of the universality of the Church's moral teachings was met with enthusiastic applause.

On Saturday, we heard from Father Roger Arnsparger on how religious art and architecture complement the doctrinal aspects of one's faith, especially in the Sacred Liturgy. Bishop Thomas Doran discussed the Virtue of Hope, the topic of Pope Benedict's recent encyclical, *Spe Salvi*. Next, Father Edmund McCaffrey spoke of the Blessed Virgin's role in evangelization, using the miracle of Fatima as an example. The day concluded with a spirited address from Father Wade Menezes on "Living Our Faith Abundantly in Today's Culture." Regardless of prevailing cultural attitudes, Catholics must remain true to the teachings of the Church. On contraception, abortion, and the definition of marriage, there is absolutely no room to waver.

To purchase the Forum CD's, contact The Church Teaches Forum, 902 W. Stephen Foster Ave, Bardstown, KY, 40004, (800)-842-2871, www.lifeeternal.org.

See you in 2009!



Andrew Schlafly
CMF Representative
Harvard College, 2010

Most Rev. Raymond L. Burke



It was a great privilege to have had the Most Reverend Raymond L. Burke serve as the Archbishop of Saint Louis from January 2004 until June 27, 2008 when Pope Benedict XVI appointed him as the Prefect of the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura in Rome.

Within the few years of Archbishop Burke's presence in St. Louis he showed strong spiritual leadership, such as a major increase in vocations to the priesthood: nine men ordained for St. Louis, five for other dioceses in June 2008. Also, he carefully planned the installation at the Saint Louis Cathedral Basilica of a stunning Shrine in honor of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and he consecrated the Archdiocese to the Sacred Heart of Jesus as it was first initiated by St. Margaret Mary Alacoque.

Msgr. John B. Shamleffer, the judicial vicar of the Saint Louis Archdiocese, is quoted: "Archbishop Burke was chosen because of his experiences in canon law, his experiences working in the Vatican and his pastoral experiences as the leader of two U.S. dioceses." [St. Louis Review](#) 7/11/08.

It is impressive that Archbishop Raymond L. Burke is the first American bishop to be named Prefect of the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura which is considered the highest judicial authority of the Catholic Church.

As head of the Supreme Tribunal the Archbishop hears final appeals of decisions by Vatican administrators and offices known as congregations, including marriage tribunals, ensuring that justice is administered correctly, according to "Pastor Bonus", a 1988 document by Pope John Paul II.

We believe that Pope Benedict XVI and the entire Catholic Church will benefit from Archbishop Burke's humble, charitable and brilliant leadership as Prefect.

Please join us in prayers for Archbishop Burke!



Eleanor Schlafly