Oil had nothing to do with Washington’s motives for America’s March 2003 invasion of Iraq – or so we were told. ‘The only interest the United States has in the region is furthering the cause of peace and stability, not in [Iraq’s] ability to generate oil,’ said Ari Fleischer, the White House spokesperson, in late 2002. But a close look at the Administration’s planning for the war reveals a very different picture. In a January briefing by an unnamed ‘senior Defense official’ on US plans for protecting Iraqi oil fields in the event of war, the Pentagon leadership revealed that General Tommy Franks and his staff ‘have crafted strategies that will allow us to secure and protect those fields as rapidly as possible in order to preserve those prior to destruction, as opposed to having to go in and clean them up after.’ If these assumptions prove accurate, and if the new regime in Baghdad opens its territory to exploitation by outside firms, Iraq could become one of America’s leading oil suppliers in the decades ahead.

To fully appreciate America’s strategic interests in Iraq, it is useful to go back in time to the first few months of the Bush Administration. On first assuming office as President in early 2001, George W. Bush’s top foreign policy priority was not to prevent terrorism or to curb the spread of weapons of mass destruction (or any of the other foreign policy goals he espoused after 9/11); rather, it was to increase the flow of petroleum from foreign suppliers to markets in the United States. The preceding year had witnessed severe oil and natural gas shortages in many parts of the United States, along with periodic electric-power blackouts in California. In addition, US oil imports had just risen to over 50 per cent of total US consumption for the first time in American history, provoking great anxiety about the security of America’s long-term energy supply. For these and other reasons, Bush asserted at the time that
addressing the nation’s ‘energy crisis’ was to be his most important task as President.  

Addressing the energy crisis was seen by Bush and his advisers as a critical matter for several reasons. To begin with, energy abundance is essential to the health and profitability of many of America’s leading industries, including automobiles, airlines, construction, petrochemicals and agriculture, and so any shortages of energy can have severe and pervasive economic repercussions. Petroleum is especially critical to the US economy because it is the source of two-fifths of America’s total energy supply – more than any other source – and because it provides most of the nation’s transportation fuel. In addition to this, petroleum is absolutely essential to US national security, in that it powers the vast array of tanks, planes, helicopters, and ships that constitute the backbone of the American war machine.

Given these realities, it is hardly surprising that the incoming Bush Administration viewed the energy scarcities of 2000–2001 as a matter of great concern. ‘America faces a major energy supply crisis over the next two decades,’ Secretary of Energy Spencer Abraham told a National Energy Summit on March 19, 2001. ‘The failure to meet this challenge will threaten our nation’s economic prosperity, compromise our national security, and literally alter the way we lead our lives.’

To address this challenge, President Bush established a National Energy Policy Development Group (NEPDG) composed of senior government officials and charged it with the task of developing a long-range plan for meeting the nation’s energy requirements. ‘One thing is for certain,’ Bush told the group in March 2001. ‘There are no short-term fixes … the solution for our energy shortage requires long-term thinking and a plan that we’ll implement that will take time to bring to fruition.’ To head the NEPDG and to oversee this long-term process, Bush picked his closest political adviser, Vice President Dick Cheney. A Republican Party stalwart and a former Secretary of Defense, Cheney had served as Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the Halliburton Co., an oilfield services firm, before joining the Bush campaign in 2000. Cheney, in turn, relied on top officials of US energy firms, including the Enron Corporation, to provide advice and recommendations on major issues.

As the NEPDG began its review of US energy policy, it quickly became apparent that the United States faced a critical choice between two widely diverging energy paths: it could continue down the road it had long been travelling, consuming ever-increasing amounts of petroleum and, given the irreversible decline in domestic oil production, becoming ever more dependent on imported supplies; or it could choose an alternative route, entailing vastly increased reliance on renewable sources of energy and a gradual reduction in petroleum use. The existence of these two competing routes and the need for a decision on which to follow had long been known to experts in the field; it was only now, with the creation of the NEPDG, that this critical choice was being addressed at the very highest level.
Clearly, the outcome of this decision would have profound consequences for American society, the economy, and the nation’s security. A decision to continue down the existing path of rising petroleum consumption would bind the United States ever more tightly to the Persian Gulf suppliers and to other oil-producing countries, with a corresponding impact on American security policy; a decision to pursue an alternative strategy, on the other hand, would require a huge investment in new energy-generation and transportation technologies, resulting in the rise or fall of entire industries. Either way, Americans would experience the impact of this choice in their everyday life and in the dynamics of the economy as a whole. No one, in the United States or elsewhere, would be left entirely untouched by the decision on which energy path to follow.9

The National Energy Policy Development Group wrestled with these choices over the early months of 2001 and completed its report by early May. After careful vetting by the White House, the report was anointed as the National Energy Policy (NEP) and released to the public by President Bush on May 17, 2001.10 At first glance, the NEP – or the ‘Cheney Report’, as it is widely known – appeared to reject the path of increased reliance on imported oil and to embrace the path of conservation, renewable energy, and improved fuel efficiency. The new plan ‘reduces demand by promoting innovation and technology to make us the world leader in efficiency and conservation,’ the President declared on May 17. ‘It will underwrite research and development into energy-saving technology. It will require manufacturers to build more energy-efficient appliances.’11 But despite all of the rhetoric about conservation, the NEP does not propose a reduction in America’s overall consumption of oil. Instead, it proposes to slow the growth in US dependence on imported petroleum by increasing production at home through the use of more efficient drilling methods and by exploiting untapped reserves in protected wilderness areas.

As is widely known, the single most important step toward increased domestic oil production proposed by the NEP was the initiation of drilling on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR), a vast, untouched wilderness area in northeastern Alaska. This proposal has won great praise from many Republicans and from private interests that favour the increased use of federal lands for energy development, but has been roundly condemned by environmentalists who deplore the destruction of a pristine wilderness area. So sharp has the disagreement between these two camps become that debate over ANWR has wholly monopolized public discussion of the NEP. But while debate over ANWR has allowed the White House to suggest that the Administration is fully committed to a policy of energy independence, careful examination of the Cheney report leads to an entirely different conclusion. Aside from the ANWR proposal, there is virtually nothing in the NEP that would contribute to a significant decline in American dependence on imported petroleum. In fact, the very opposite is true: the basic goal of the Cheney plan is to increase the flow of oil from foreign suppliers to the United States.
In the end, therefore, President Bush did make a clear decision regarding America’s future energy behaviour. But the choice he made was not that of diminished dependence on imported oil – as suggested by White House rhetoric – but rather the opposite. Knowing that nothing can reverse the long-term decline in domestic oil production, and seeking to quench America’s ever-growing thirst for petroleum products, the Administration chose to continue down the existing path of increased dependence on foreign oil.

The fact that the Bush energy plan envisions increased rather than diminished reliance on imported petroleum is not immediately apparent from the President’s public comments on the NEP or from the first seven chapters of the Cheney report itself. It is only in the eighth and final chapter, ‘Strengthening Global Alliances’, that the true intent of the Administration’s policy – increased dependence on imported oil – becomes fully apparent. Here, the tone of the report changes markedly, from a professed concern with conservation and energy efficiency to an explicit emphasis on securing more oil from foreign sources. ‘US national energy security depends on sufficient energy supplies to support US and global economic growth,’ Chapter 8 begins. Because the United States cannot generate the required supplies of oil from domestic reserves, it must rely on foreign sources. ‘We can strengthen our own energy security and the shared prosperity of the global economy’ by working with other countries to increase the global production of energy. To this end, the President and his senior associates are enjoined by the Cheney report to ‘make energy security a priority of our trade and foreign policy.’

But while acknowledging the need for increased supplies of imported petroleum, the Cheney report is very circumspect about the amount of foreign oil that will be required. The only clue provided by the report is a chart of America’s net oil consumption and production over time. According to this chart, domestic US oil field production will decline from about 8.5 million barrels per day (mbd) in 2002 to 7.0 mbd in 2020 while consumption will jump from 19.5 mbd to 25.5 mbd, meaning that total imports will have to rise from 11 mbd to 18.5 mbd. It is to procure this increment in imported petroleum – approximately 7.5 mbd, or the equivalent of total current oil consumption by China and India combined – that most of the recommendations in Chapter 8 are aimed.

To facilitate American access to overseas sources of petroleum, the Cheney report makes 35 foreign policy recommendations – exactly one-third of all of the recommendations in the report. Although many of these proposals are region- or country-specific, the overall emphasis is on removing obstacles – political, economic, legal, and logistical – to the increased procurement of foreign oil by the United States. To give just one example, the NEP calls on the Secretaries of Energy, Commerce, and State ‘to deepen their commercial dialogue with Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, and other Caspian states to provide a strong, transparent, and stable business climate for energy and related infrastructure projects.’ Similar recommendations are applied to other regions of the world that are seen as major future sources of oil for the United States.
The Cheney report’s emphasis on procuring ever-increasing supplies of imported energy to satisfy America’s growing demand will have a profound impact on American foreign policy in the years ahead. Not only will American officials have to negotiate access to these overseas supplies and arrange for the sorts of investments that will make increased production and export possible, but they must also take steps to make certain that foreign deliveries of oil to the United States are not impeded by war, revolution, or civil disorder. These imperatives will govern US policy toward all significant energy-supplying regions, especially the Persian Gulf area, the Caspian Sea basin, Africa, and Latin America.

As will become evident from the discussion that follows, moreover, implementation of the Cheney energy plan was also bound to have significant implications for US security policy and for the actual deployment and utilization of American military forces. This is so because most of the countries that are expected to supply the United States with increased petroleum in the years ahead are riven by internal conflicts, harbour strong anti-American sentiments, are located in dangerous neighbourhoods, or exhibit some combination of all three of these characteristics. This means that American efforts to procure additional oil from foreign sources are almost certain to encounter violent disorder and resistance in key producing areas. And while American officials might prefer to avoid the use of force in such situations, they have every reason to conclude that the only way to ensure the continued flow of energy is to guard the oil fields and pipelines with American soldiers.

To add to Washington’s dilemma, the very deployment of American forces in the oil-producing areas is likely to stir up resentment from inhabitants of these areas who fear the revival of colonialism or who object to particular American policies (such as, for example, US support for Israel). As a result, American efforts to safeguard the flow of oil could well result in the intensification rather than the diminution of local disorder and violence. Clearly, this has something of a built-in escalatory character: the more that the United States relies on imported oil, the greater the likelihood that this will lead to American military involvement in key producing areas and the bigger the risk that this will lead to anti-American violence.15

To fully appreciate the manifold consequences of the Bush Administration’s energy plan for American foreign and military policy, it is useful to examine US interests and behaviour in each of the regions that are seen in Washington as a major source of imported petroleum in the years ahead. Our survey of these areas begins with the Persian Gulf – the world’s leading supplier of petroleum – and looks in succession at the Caspian Sea basin, the West coast of Africa, and Latin America.

THE PERSIAN GULF

The Persian Gulf area has long been and will remain a major focus of concern for American foreign and military policy because it sits atop the world’s largest reservoir of untapped petroleum. According to BP, the major Gulf oil producers
jointly possess some 680 billion barrels of petroleum, or about two-thirds of
known world reserves. The Gulf countries are also the world’s leading producers
on a day-to-day basis, jointly accounting for approximately 22 mbd in 2000,
about 30 per cent of worldwide production.\textsuperscript{16} Most analysts assume, moreover,
that the Gulf’s share of total world petroleum output will rise significantly in the
years ahead as production in other areas, including the United States, Mexico,
the North Sea, China, and Indonesia, experiences irreversible decline.\textsuperscript{17}

Although the United States currently obtains only about 18 per cent of its
imported petroleum from the Persian Gulf area, Washington perceives a signif-
icant strategic interest in the stability of Gulf energy production because its major
allies, including Japan and the Western European countries, rely on imports from
the region and because the Gulf’s high export volume has helped to keep world
oil prices relatively low, thus benefiting the petroleum-dependent US economy.
With domestic production in decline, moreover, the United States will become
ever more dependent on imports from the Gulf. For this reason, the NEP
observes, ‘this region will remain vital to U.S. interests.'\textsuperscript{18}

The United States has, of course, played a significant role in Persian Gulf affairs
for a very long time. During World War II, President Franklin D. Roosevelt met
with Abdul-Aziz ibn Saud, the founder of the modern Saudi dynasty, and
concluded an agreement with him under which the United States agreed to
protect the royal family against its internal and external enemies in return for
privileged access to Saudi oil. In subsequent years, the United States also agreed
to provide security assistance to the Shah of Iran and to the leaders of Kuwait,
Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). These agreements have led to the
delivery of vast quantities of US arms and ammunition to these countries and,
in some cases, to the deployment of American combat forces.\textsuperscript{19} (The US secu-
rity link with Iran, however, was severed in January 1980, when the Shah was
overthrown by militant Islamic forces.)

American policy with regard to the protection of Persian Gulf energy supplies
is unambiguous: when a threat arises, the United States will use whatever means
are necessary, including military force, to ensure the continued flow of oil. This
principle was first articulated by President Jimmy Carter in January 1980,
following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the fall of the Shah, and has
remained American policy ever since. In accordance with this principle – known
since 1980 as the ‘Carter Doctrine’ – the United States has used force on several
occasions: first, in 1987-88, to protect Kuwaiti oil tankers from Iranian missile
and gunboat attacks (Operation Earnest Will), and then in 1990-91, to drive Iraqi
forces out of Kuwait (Operation Desert Storm).\textsuperscript{20}

In explaining the need to use force on these occasions, US officials have
repeatedly stressed the importance of Persian Gulf oil to American economic
stability and prosperity. ‘Our strategic interests in the Persian Gulf region, I think,
are well known, but bear repeating,’ then Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney told
the Senate Armed Services Committee on September 11, 1990, five weeks after
the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. In addition to America’s security ties to Saudi
Arabia and other states in the area, he continued, ‘We obviously also have a
significant interest because of the energy that is at stake in the Gulf.’ Iraq already
possessed 10 per cent of the world’s oil reserves and, by seizing Kuwait, acquired
another 10 per cent; the occupation of Kuwait also placed Iraqi forces within a
few hundred miles of another 25 per cent, in the Eastern Province of Saudi
Arabia. ‘Once [Hussein] acquired Kuwait and deployed an army as large as the
one he possesses, he was clearly in a position to be able to dictate the future of
worldwide energy policy, and that gave him a stranglehold on our economy and
on that of most of the other nations of the world as well.’ It was for this reason,
Cheney insisted, that the United States had no choice but to employ military
force in the defence of Saudi Arabia and other friendly states in the area.\(^{21}\)

Once Iraqi forces were driven from Kuwait, the United States adopted a
policy of ‘containment’ of Iraq, employing severe economic sanctions and the
enforcement of a ‘no-fly zone’ over northern and Southern Iraq to weaken the
Hussein regime and to prevent any new attacks on Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. At
the same time, Washington substantially expanded its military presence and
basing structure in the Persian Gulf area in order to facilitate future US military
operations in the region. Most importantly, the Department of Defense ‘pre-
positioned’ vast quantities of arms and ammunition in Kuwait and Qatar so that
American troops could be sent to the region and rushed into combat without
having to wait weeks or months for the delivery of their heavy equipment from
the United States.\(^{22}\)

By the early spring of 2002, the Bush Administration had concluded that the
policy of containment was not sufficient to eliminate the threat posed to American
interests in the Gulf by Saddam Hussein, and that more aggressive action was
required. Although Iraq’s alleged possessed of weapons of mass destruction
(WMD) was cited as the main reason for acting in this manner, it is instructive to
note that Dick Cheney – now Vice President – employed virtually the same argu-
ments that he had in September 1990 to justify the use of force. ‘Should
[Hussein’s] ambitions [to acquire WMD] be realized, the implications would be
enormous for the Middle East and the United States,’ Cheney told the annual
convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars on August 26, 2002. ‘Armed with
an arsenal of these weapons of terror and a seat at the top of ten per cent of the
world’s oil reserves, Saddam Hussein could then be expected to seek domination
of the entire Middle East, take control of a great portion of world’s energy
supplies, [and] directly threaten America’s friends throughout the region.’\(^{23}\)

With the successful US invasion of Iraq, it now appears that the United States
is in firm control of the Persian Gulf area and its critical oil supplies. But a real-
istic assessment of the situation in the Gulf would suggest that long-term stability
cannot be assured. Looking into the future, it is evident that American policy-
makers face two critical challenges: first, to ensure that Saudi Arabia and other
Gulf producers increase oil production to the extent required by growing US
(and international) demand; and second, to protect the Saudi regime against
internal unrest and insurrection.
The need to increase Saudi production is particularly acute. Possessing one fourth of the world’s known oil reserves – an estimated 265 billion barrels – Saudi Arabia is the only country with the capacity to satisfy ever-increasing US and international demand for petroleum. According to the Department of Energy, Saudi Arabia’s net petroleum output must increase by 133 per cent over the next twenty-five years, from 10.2 mbd in 2001 to 23.8 mbd in 2025, in order to satisfy anticipated world requirements (estimated at 119 mbd) at the end of that period. But expanding capacity by 13.6 mbd – the equivalent of total current production by the United States and Mexico – will cost hundreds of billions of dollars and produce enormous technical and logistical challenges. The best way to achieve this increase, American analysts believe, is to persuade Saudi Arabia to open up its petroleum sector to substantial US oil-company investment. Indeed, this is exactly what the Cheney report calls for. However, any effort by Washington to apply pressure on Riyadh to allow greater American oil investment in the kingdom is likely to meet with significant resistance from the royal family, which nationalized US oil holdings in the 1970s and is fearful of being seen as overly subservient to American bidding.

The Administration faces yet another problem in Saudi Arabia: America’s long-term security relationship with the Saudi regime has become a major source of tension in the country, as growing numbers of young Saudis turn against the United States because of its close ties to Israel and what is seen as Washington’s anti-Islamic bias. It was from this anti-American milieu that Osama bin Laden recruited many of his followers in the late 1990s and obtained much of his financial support. After September 11, the Saudi government cracked down on some of these forces, but underground opposition to the regime’s military and economic cooperation with Washington persists. Just ten days after President Bush declared ‘victory’ in Iraq, a series of massive explosions rocked the north-eastern suburbs of Riyadh, destroying several compounds occupied by Western firms and residents. Finding a way to eradicate this opposition while at the same time persuading Riyadh to increase its oil deliveries to the United States will be one of the most difficult challenges facing American policymakers in the years ahead.

The United States also faces a continuing standoff with Iran. Although Iranian leaders expressed sympathy with the United States following 9/11 and provided modest assistance to US forces during the campaign in Afghanistan, relations between the two countries remain strained. Iran was, of course, included among the three members of the ‘axis of evil’ in President Bush’s January 2002 State of the Union address, leading many in Tehran to fear that the American victory in Iraq will be followed by a US invasion of Iran. Such fears are compounded by American charges that Iran is proceeding with the development of nuclear weapons. And while these concerns may not lead to the early outbreak of war between the two countries, it is likely that tensions between Iran and the United States will remain high for the foreseeable future.

Although the United States will remain dependent on oil from the Persian
Gulf area for a long time to come, American officials seek to minimize this dependency to the greatest degree possible by diversifying the nation’s sources of imported energy. ‘Diversity is important, not only for energy security but also for national security,’ President Bush declared on May 17, 2001. ‘Over-dependence on any one source of energy, especially a foreign source, leaves us vulnerable to price shocks, supply interruptions, and in the worst case, blackmail.’ To prevent this, the Administration’s energy plan calls for a substantial US effort to boost production in a number of non-Gulf areas, including the Caspian Sea basin, the West coast of Africa, and Latin America.

THE CASPIAN SEA BASIN

Among these areas, the one that is likely to receive greatest attention from American policy-makers is the Caspian Sea basin, consisting of Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, along with adjacent areas of Iran and Russia. According to the Department of Energy, this area houses proven reserves (defined as 90 per cent probable) of 17 to 33 billion barrels of oil, and possible reserves (defined as 50 per cent probable) of 233 billion barrels – an amount that, if confirmed, would make it the second largest site of untapped reserves after the Persian Gulf area. To ensure that much of this oil will eventually flow to consumers in the West, the US government has made a strenuous effort to develop the area’s petroleum infrastructure and distribution system. Because the Caspian Sea is land-locked, oil and natural gas from the region must travel by pipeline to other areas; any efforts to tap into the Caspian’s vast energy reserves must, therefore, entail the construction of long-distance export lines.

The United States first sought to gain access to the Caspian’s vast oil supplies during the Clinton Administration. Until that time, the Caspian states (except for Iran) had been part of the Soviet Union, and so outside access to their energy reserves was tightly constricted. Once these states became independent, however, Washington waged an intensive diplomatic campaign to open their fields to Western oil company investment and to allow the construction of new export pipelines. President Clinton himself played a key role in this effort, repeatedly telephoning leaders of the Caspian Sea countries and inviting them to the White House for periodic visits. These efforts were essential, Clinton told President Heydar Aliyev of Azerbaijan in 1997, to ‘diversify our energy supply and strengthen our nation’s security.’

The Clinton Administration’s principal objective during this period was to secure approval for new export routes from the Caspian to markets in the West. Because the Administration was reluctant to see Caspian oil flow through Russia on its way to Western Europe (thereby giving Moscow a degree of control over Western energy supplies), and because transport through Iran was prohibited by US law (because of its pursuit of weapons of mass destruction), President Clinton threw his support behind a plan to transport oil and gas from Baku in Azerbaijan to Ceyhan in Turkey via Tbilisi in the former Soviet republic of Georgia. Before
leaving office, Clinton flew to Turkey to preside at the signing ceremony for a regional agreement permitting construction of the $3 billion Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline.32

While concentrating on the legal and logistical aspects of procuring Caspian energy, the Clinton Administration also sought to address the threat to future oil deliveries posed by instability and conflict in the region. Many of the states on which the United States hoped to rely for increased oil supplies or for the transport of Caspian energy were wracked by ethnic and separatist conflicts. With this in mind, the Administration initiated a number of military assistance programs aimed at strengthening the internal security capabilities of friendly states in the region. This entailed, inter alia, the provision of arms and military training to their forces, along with the conduct of joint military exercises. In the most noteworthy of these exercises, Operation CENTRAZBAT '97, some 500 paratroopers from the Army’s 82nd Airborne Division were flown 7,700 miles from Fort Bragg in North Carolina to Shymkent in Kazakhstan to participate in joint military manoeuvres with troops from that country plus Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.33

Building on the efforts of President Clinton, the Bush Administration seeks to accelerate the expansion of Caspian production facilities and pipelines. ‘Foreign investors and technology are critical to rapid development of new commercially viable export routes,’ the Cheney report affirms. ‘Such development will ensure that rising Caspian oil production is effectively integrated into world oil trade.’ Particular emphasis is placed on completion of the BTC pipeline and on increasing the participation of US companies in Caspian energy projects. Looking further ahead, the Administration also seeks to build an oil and gas pipeline from Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan on the east shore of the Caspian to Baku on the west shore, thus permitting energy from Central Asia to flow to the West via the BTC pipeline system.34

Until September 11, US involvement in the Caspian Sea basin and Central Asia had largely been restricted to economic and diplomatic efforts, accompanied by a number of military aid agreements. To combat the Taliban and Al Qaeda in Afghanistan, however, the Department of Defense deployed tens of thousands of combat troops in the region and established military bases in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. Some of these troops have now been recalled to the United States, but it appears that the Department of Defense plans to retain its bases in Central Asia. Indeed, there is every indication that the United States plans to maintain a permanent military presence and to strengthen its ties with friendly regimes in the area.35 This presence is supposedly intended to assist in the war against terrorism, but it is clear that it is also intended to safeguard the flow of petroleum. Most noteworthy, in this regard, is the US decision to deploy US military instructors in Georgia in order to provide counter-insurgency training to the special units that will eventually guard the Georgian segment of the BTC pipeline.36

Although the Bush Administration has high hopes for the development of Caspian Sea energy supplies, it is evident that many obstacles stand in the way
of increased petroleum exports from this region. Some of these are logistical: until new pipelines can be built, it will be difficult to transport large quantities of Caspian oil to the West. Other obstacles are political and legal: the largely authoritarian regimes now in control of most of the former Soviet republics are riddled with corruption and reluctant to adopt the legal and tax reforms needed to attract large-scale Western investment. In effect, the major problem facing the United States in seeking to rely on the Caspian basin as an alternative to the Persian Gulf is the fact that the Caspian is no more stable than the Gulf, and so any effort to ensure the safety of energy deliveries will entail the same sort of military commitments that the United States has long made to its principal energy suppliers in the Gulf.37

WEST AFRICA

Another area that is viewed by the Bush Administration as a promising source of oil is West Africa. Although African states accounted for only about 10 per cent of global oil production in 2000, the Department of Energy predicts that their share will rise to 13 per cent by 2020 – adding, in the process, another 8.3 mbd to global supplies.38 This is welcome news in Washington. ‘West Africa is expected to be one of the fastest-growing sources of oil and gas for the American market,’ the Cheney report observes. Furthermore, ‘African oil tends to be of high quality and low in sulphur,’ making it especially attractive for American refiners.39

The Administration expects to concentrate its efforts in two countries: Nigeria and Angola. Nigeria now produces about 2.2 mbd, and is expected to double its capacity by 2020 – with much of this additional oil going to the United States. But Nigeria lacks the wherewithal to finance this expansion on its own, and its existing legal system – not to mention widespread corruption and ethnic unrest – tends to discourage investment by outside firms.40 The Cheney report thus calls upon the Secretaries of Energy, Commerce, and Energy to work with Nigerian officials ‘to improve the climate for U.S. oil and gas trade, investment, and operations.’ A similar outlook governs the Administration’s stance toward Angola. With sufficient external investment, the Cheney report notes, Angola ‘is thought to have the potential to double its exports over the next ten years.’41 But here, too, endemic corruption and an uninviting legal climate have discouraged substantial investment by foreign firms.42

Much as in the Caspian region, moreover, American efforts to obtain additional oil from Africa could be frustrated by political unrest and ethnic warfare. Indeed, much of Nigeria’s production was shut down during the spring of 2003 because of ethnic violence in the Delta region, the site of much of Nigeria’s onshore oil. In addition, local activists – many of them women – have occupied offshore oil facilities in an effort to obtain additional funds for community projects. Crime and vandalism have also hampered Nigeria’s efforts to increase oil production.43

The United States is not likely to respond to these challenges by deploying
American troops in the area — that undoubtedly would conjure up images of colonialism and so would provoke strong opposition at home and abroad. But Washington is willing to increase its military aid to friendly regimes in the region. Total US assistance to Angola and Nigeria — the two countries of greatest interest to Washington — amounted to some $300 million in Fiscal Years 2002–2004, a significant increase over the previous three-year period. Angola and Nigeria also become eligible in the US budget for fiscal year 2004 to receive surplus American arms under the Pentagon’s Excess Defense Articles (EDA) program.44 (Several other oil-producing countries in Africa, including Cameroon, Chad, Gabon, and Congo-Brazzaville, will also receive US arms under this program.) And while the deployment of American troops in the region is not a likely prospect in the short term, the Department of Defense has begun to look at potential basing sites there — most notably in the islands of São Tomé e Príncipe — in the expectation that such a deployment may someday be deemed necessary.45

LATIN AMERICA

Finally, the Cheney plan calls for a significant increase in US oil imports from Latin America. The United States already obtains a large share of its imported oil from these countries — Venezuela is now the third largest supplier of oil to the United States (after Canada and Saudi Arabia), Mexico is the fourth largest, and Columbia is the seventh — and Washington hopes to rely even more heavily on this region in the future. As indicated by Secretary of Energy Spencer Abraham, ‘President Bush recognizes not only the need for an increased supply of energy, but also the critical role the hemisphere will play in the Administration’s energy policy.’46

In presenting these aspirations to governments in the region, US officials stress their desire to establish a common, cooperative framework for energy development. ‘We intend to stress the enormous potential of greater regional energy cooperation as we look to the future,’ Abraham told the Fifth Hemispheric Energy Initiative Ministerial Conference in Mexico City on March 8, 2001. ‘Our goal [is] to build relationships among our neighbors that will contribute to our shared energy security; to an adequate, reliable, environmentally sound, and affordable access to energy.’47 But however sincere, these comments overlook the fundamental reality: all of this ‘cooperation’ is essentially aimed at channelling more and more of the region’s oil supplies to the United States.

The Bush energy plan places particular emphasis on the acquisition of additional oil from Mexico and Venezuela. ‘Mexico is a leading and reliable source of imported oil’, the Cheney report observes. ‘Its large reserve base, approximately 25 per cent larger than our own proven reserves, makes Mexico a likely source of increased oil production over the next decade.’48 Venezuela is considered vital to US energy plans because it possesses large reserves of conventional oil, and because it houses vast supplies of so-called heavy oil — a sludge-like material that can be converted to conventional oil through a costly refining process. According to the NEP, ‘Venezuelan success in making heavy oil deposits
commercially viable suggests that they will contribute substantially to the diversity of global energy supply, and to our own energy supply mix over the medium to long term.\textsuperscript{49}

But US efforts to tap into abundant Mexican and Venezuelan energy supplies will run into a major difficulty: because of a long history of colonial and imperial predation, these two countries have placed their energy reserves under state control and have established strong legal and constitutional barriers to foreign involvement in domestic oil production. Thus, while they may seek to capitalize from the economic benefits of increased oil exports to the United States, they are likely to resist both increased US participation in their energy industries and also any significant increase in oil extraction. Such resistance will no doubt prove frustrating to American officials, who seek exactly these outcomes. The NEP thus calls on the Secretaries of Commerce, Energy, and State to lobby their Latin American counterparts to eliminate or soften barriers to increased American oil investment.

These endeavours are likely to meet particularly strong resistance in Venezuela, where oil production has long been under state control. A new Constitution adopted in 1999 bans foreign investment in the oil sector, and President Hugo Chávez has taken other steps to impede such investment. Following a prolonged general strike organized by opponents of the President in late 2002 and early 2003, Chávez effectively seized control of the state-owned oil company, Petróleos de Venezuela, S.A. (PdVSA), and fired those managers considered most amenable to links with foreign firms.\textsuperscript{50} (Although the United States is not known to have played a direct role in the strike, many of its leaders had been received warmly in Washington and given signals of the Administration’s sympathy for their cause.) So long as Chávez remains in power, then, it is unlikely that Washington will make much headway in its efforts to increase US investment in Venezuela’s oil industry.

Energy considerations are also likely to figure prominently in US relations with Colombia. Although known primarily for its role as a supplier of illegal drugs, Colombia is also a major oil supplier to the United States. Efforts to increase Colombian oil production have been hampered, however, by frequent attacks on oil installations and pipelines mounted by anti-government guerrilla groups.\textsuperscript{51} Claiming that these groups also provide protection to the drug traffickers, the United States is assisting the Colombian military and police in their efforts to suppress the guerrillas. Furthermore, under a special $94 appropriation awarded by Congress in 2002, American military instructors are providing counter-insurgency training to the Colombian forces assigned to the protection of the 500-mile-long Caño Límon pipeline, connecting oilfields in the interior to refineries and export facilities on the Caribbean coast.\textsuperscript{52} In seeking additional supplies of energy, therefore, the United States is likely to become increasingly embroiled in the civil war in Colombia.
THE ENERGY-SECURITY NEXUS: LINKING THE BUSH ENERGY PLAN TO THE BUSH MILITARY PLAN

The implications of all of the above are unmistakable: in its pursuit of ever-growing supplies of imported petroleum, the United States is intruding ever more assertively into the internal affairs of the oil-supplying nations and, in the process, exposing itself to an ever-increasing risk of involvement in local and regional conflict situations. This reality has already influenced US relations with the major oil-producing nations and is sure to have an even greater impact in the future. And, as we have seen, growing American dependence on these countries is likely to be accompanied by the expanded presence of US military forces in their midst.

At no point, however, does the NEP acknowledge this fundamental reality. Instead, the Cheney plan focuses on the economic and diplomatic dimensions of US energy policy – suggesting thereby that America’s energy dilemmas can somehow be overcome in this fashion. But the architects of the Bush/Cheney policy know better: an energy plan that calls for increased reliance on the Persian Gulf countries and on other suppliers located in areas of recurring turmoil will not be able to overcome every conceivable threat to American energy interests through economic and diplomatic efforts alone. At some point, it may prove impossible to ensure access to a particular source of oil without the use of military force.

It is in this regard that one cannot help but be struck by the clear parallels between the Administration’s energy policy and its preferred military strategy. To fully appreciate the extent of overlap between the energy and security policies of the Bush Administration, it is first necessary to know something about the types of capabilities the United States might need to ensure access to foreign sources of oil at a time of crisis or conflict. Essentially, such action would require the possession of well-equipped and versatile forces that could be sent to distant areas in order to protect a vital supplier against enemy attack or internal disorder, or to reestablish control over an oil-producing area that has fallen under the control of a hostile power. These forces might also be required to protect pipelines, ports, refineries, and other such facilities against sabotage or attack.

In American military parlance, the formations that are earmarked for these sorts of activities are generally identified as ‘power projection’ forces, meaning forces that can be transported from established bases in the United States and Europe to distant combat zones, and then fight their way into the area (if no friendly bases are available) or otherwise come to the assistance of a beleaguered ally. Typically, power projection forces are said to include both the ground and air combat units intended for penetration of enemy territory plus the ships and planes used to carry these units into the battle zone. Power projection forces also include long-range bombers and the naval platforms – aircraft carriers, surface combatants, and submarines – used to launch planes or missiles against onshore targets.

It is precisely these sorts of forces that have been accorded top priority in the military plans of the Bush Administration. During his first presidential campaign,
George W. Bush promised to conduct a sweeping reassessment of US military policy when assuming office and to commence the ‘transformation’ of American forces, so as to render them better equipped to confront the perils of the 21st century. Because these perils might arise at any point on the earth’s surface, Bush explained in an important speech at The Citadel military academy on September 23, 1999, ‘Our forces in the next century must be agile, lethal, readily deployable, and require a minimum of logistical support.’ In particular, our land forces ‘must be lighter [and] more lethal’; our naval forces must be able ‘to destroy targets from great distances’; and our air forces ‘must be able to strike from across the world with pinpoint accuracy.’

These priorities dominated US military planning during the early months of the Bush Administration and established the baseline for future military budget requests. From a strategic perspective, the most significant expression of this outlook was contained in the report of the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), released in September 2001. Many aspects of US military policy are covered in the QDR, including homeland security, national missile defence, information warfare, and anti-terrorism. As in Bush’s Citadel speech, however, heavy emphasis is placed on bolstering America’s capacity to project military power to distant battlefields. ‘The United States must retain the capability to send well-armed and logistically supported forces to critical points around the globe, even in the face of enemy opposition,’ the report notes.

By the end of the Administration’s second year in office, therefore, the White House had succeeded in incorporating many of its basic strategic objectives into formal military doctrine. As we have seen, these objectives stress the steady enhancement of America’s capacity to project military power into areas of turmoil – that is, to strengthen precisely those capabilities that would be used to protect or gain access to overseas sources of petroleum. Whether this was the product of a conscious linkage between energy and security policy is not something that can be ascertained at this time; what is undeniable, however, is that President Bush gave top priority to the enhancement of America’s power projection capabilities at exactly the same time that he endorsed an energy strategy that entails increased US dependence on oil derived from areas of recurring crisis and conflict.

What we have, therefore, is a two-pronged strategy that effectively governs US policy toward much of the world. Although arising from different sets of concerns – one energy-driven, the other security-driven – these two strategic principles have merged into a single, integrated design for American world dominance in the 21st Century. One or the other of these policy concerns may play the lead role in any particular situation, but it is the combination of the two that increasingly will set the tone for America’s international behaviour in the decades ahead.

Clearly, this is not a reactive strategy, but one that requires assertive action on the part of the United States to satisfy its growing energy requirements. As America’s reliance on oil from the Persian Gulf, the Caspian Sea basin, West
Africa, and Latin America grows, Washington will become more deeply involved in the political and economic affairs of key producing states in these regions. This will entail, at the very least, close ties with friendly regimes in these areas and the conspicuous presence of American oil companies. In many cases, it will also involve the delivery of arms and military assistance to friendly regimes. And, in those cases where there is a direct threat to the flow of oil, we can expect outright military intervention.

This pattern has long been evident in the Persian Gulf area. The United States first declared its intent to employ force in the protection of Persian Gulf oil in 1980, in the Carter Doctrine, and first applied this principle in 1987, with the ‘reflagging’ of Kuwaiti oil tankers (equipping them with American flags so as to permit their defence by US naval forces). The 1990-91 Gulf War was another application of this principle, and, in effect, so was the 2003 US invasion of Iraq. Now, what we are seeing is the extension of this principle to other areas of the world upon which the United States has become dependent for its petroleum supplies, including the Caspian Sea area and Colombia. If America’s experience in the Gulf is any indication, this will ultimately result in the deployment and use of American military forces in these areas.

Where and when this principle will next be put to the test cannot be foreseen. What can be stated, however, is that the two-pronged strategy adopted by the Bush Administration in 2001-2002 will almost certainly lead to further US military intervention in the major oil-producing areas. Such intervention may not be described as a ‘war for oil’, but the underlying logic of the Bush strategy will be evident to all those who have followed its development over the past few years. ‘Blood for oil’ has, in fact, become a dominant feature of the Bush Administration’s military policy.

NOTES


5 For background on the 2000-2001 energy crisis and its implications for the


12 NEPDG, NEP 2001, chap. 8, pp. 1, 3-4.

13 *Ibid.*, Figure 2, p. x.


18 NEPDG, NEP 2001, chap. 8, p. 4.


22 For details, see Klare, *Resource Wars*, pp. 62-68.
24 DoE/EIA, IEO 2003, Table D1, p. 235.
30 For background, see Klare, *Resource Wars*, pp. 84-92.
32 For background and discussion, see Klare, *Resource Wars*, pp. 88-92, 100-4.
38 DoE/EIA, IEO 2002, Table D1, p. 239.
41 NEPDG, NEP 2001, chap. 8, p. 11.
45 Ibid., Chap. 8, p. 10.
47 Ibid.
48 NEPDG, NEP 2001, chap. 8, p. 9.
49 Ibid., chap. 8, p. 10.
51 For background on the Colombian oil industry, see US Department of

