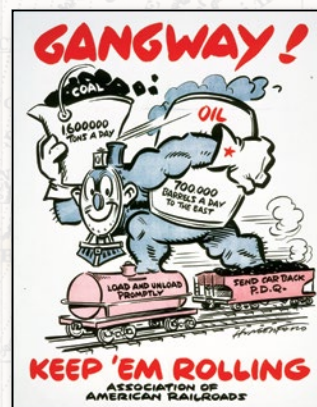
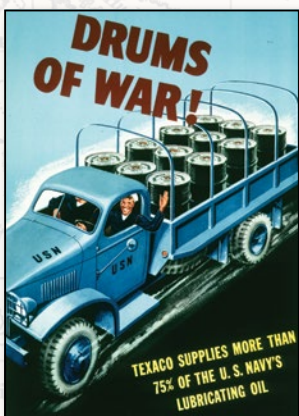


# STRATEGIKA

CONFLICTS OF THE PAST AS LESSONS FOR THE PRESENT



How Will New Gas and Oil Production Affect, If at All, America's Military and Geostrategic Role Abroad?

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Williamson Murray • Kori Schake • Walter Russell Mead • Victor Davis Hanson



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MARCH 2015 · ISSUE 22

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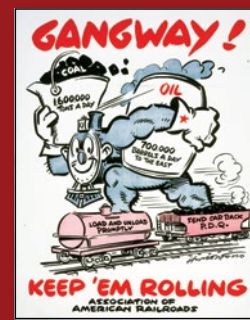
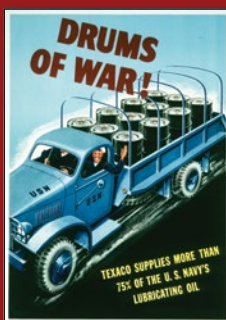
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# The Strategic Consequences of Increased US Energy Production

*Williamson Murray*

Over the past decade, we have seen an astonishing recovery of America's position as a major producer of fossil fuels. In the case of natural gas, the reserves in North America appear extensive enough to sustain most of the energy demands of the American, Canadian, and Mexican economies and still export substantial amounts of that crucial energy well into the next century. The outlook for crude oil does not appear to be quite so favorable; yet, there is no doubt that with the exception of Russia, the position of the United States is the most favorable of all the major powers in its access to sources of crude oil that are not subject to disruption by troubles in the Middle East or elsewhere. Obviously, the decrease in the dependence on foreign sources of energy has already had a major impact not only on the US economy, but on its strategic situation as well. That situation appears set for the coming decades.

This change, the result of fracking and Canada's extensive development of Alberta's tar sands, represents one of the most important changes in America's strategic position in the past fifty years. Nevertheless, it is somewhat ironic that this situation—not only beneficial to America's economic situation, but to poor and working class Americans as well—would elicit violent opposition not only to fracking, but to the pipelines designed to carry Canadian oil to refineries in the United States, from those who have consistently opposed the commitment of US military forces to the troubles in the Middle East and US efforts to stabilize that region. Yet, once again we have seen an American president, who has steadfastly opposed the commitment of American ground forces to the Middle East throughout his political life, veto the Keystone pipeline that would carry Canadian crude to American refineries.

Admittedly, the United States has intervened extensively in the Middle East since Saddam Hussein launched the Iraqi Army into Kuwait in August 1990, and not always with success. The commitment of US military forces by President George H. W. Bush to Saddam's invasion of Kuwait did in fact rest, as its critics in Washington and elsewhere suggested at the time, in a desire to insure that a substantial portion of that region's vast oil reserves remained outside of the control of a vicious dictator. It represented the use of



America's overwhelming military power to the protection not only of its economic interests, but those of a globalized economy that was already emerging before the Soviet Union's collapse. Thus, the motivations for Desert Shield and Desert Storm were much more than a quixotic effort to restore Kuwaiti independence, but one that had the larger economic interests of the United States at its heart.

Over the past several years, the considerable increases in US and Canadian oil production have resulted in a significant drop in crude oil prices, which has had a major impact on the strategic position of the United States. It has led some analysts to suggest that the Saudis have continued their production levels as a means of discouraging the fracking efforts in US shale oil fields.<sup>1</sup> Such arguments, however, largely miss the context of Saudi strategic interests. It is far more likely that the Saudis, as with their increased production in the mid-1980s, are aiming their efforts to keep oil prices low, not as an effort aimed at decreasing the incentives for fracking in the United States, but rather at hurting Iran's economy, their immediate political and religious opponent in the region.

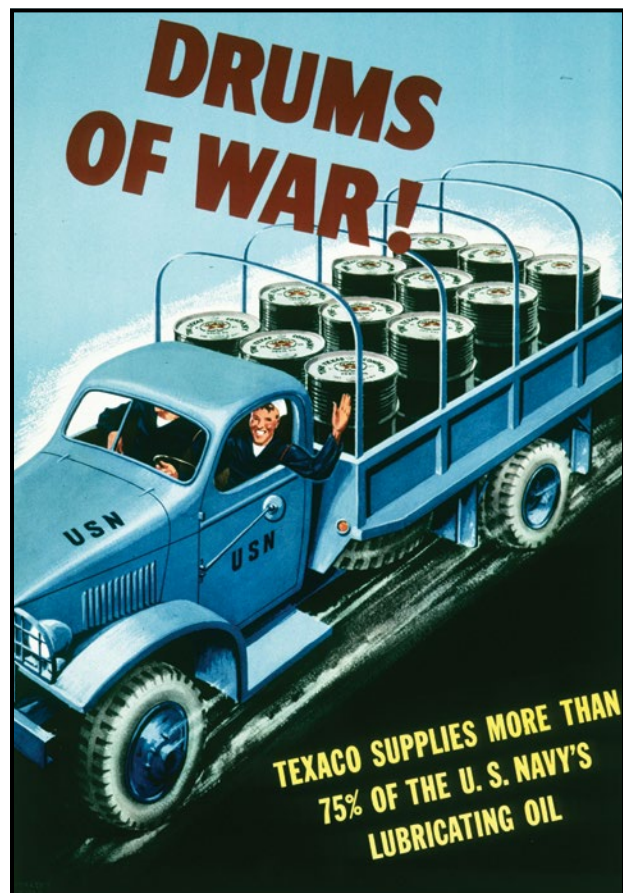
Nevertheless, in the case of the present, it is the perturbations in the American markets, caused by fracking, that have driven the price of natural gas down in the United States and crude oil prices down throughout the world. In the latter case it has had a direct and significant impact on Russia's economic and—in the long term—political stability. This was indeed an unintended effect, but it certainly fits within America's long-term, global strategic interests. While the decline in crude oil prices has not been the cause of Russia's appalling behavior in the Ukraine, it has certainly not made Putin and his thugocracy more willing to consider altering their course. Nevertheless, it has certainly decreased Russia's ability to manipulate its European customers and significantly damaged its economic strength.

It is likely that once American industry acquires the plants necessary to store and then ship by sea the vast quantities of natural gas already available throughout the United States to Asia and Europe, we will see a similar drop in natural gas prices in the markets of those essential players in the world economy. That too will have a strategic impact, for example, on the ability of the Russians to blackmail their European neighbors over the continued supply of Russian natural gas, just as the drop in crude oil prices has had a negative impact on Russia's present economic and strategic situation. In every sense then, the extensive development of North American oil and gas deposits has had and will continue to shape the economic and strategic environment in a fashion that is favorable to the interests of the United States and its allies in both Asia and Europe. Nevertheless, one should not ignore the possibility that Russia's economic difficulties, caused by the decreasing value of its exports of crude oil and gas, might well make Putin and his crew even more of a truculent and irascible threat to the stability of Eastern Europe. Their room

for maneuver, unless they are willing to take extraordinary risks, has, however, significantly decreased.

For some, this present situation has suggested that the United States has now achieved a position where it can safely ignore, or minimally intervene, in the troubles that seem to be exploding in the Middle East or with Russia's increasing baneful interference in the affairs of Europe. Unfortunately, that is not the case. One of the drawbacks of a globalized economy is the fact that during a period of crisis or crises, it would be virtually impossible to separate the intricate balance of economic and financial transactions that occur throughout the world. Just as the collapse of the Danube frontier in the third century AD before the onslaught of the Goths resulted in a devastating series of reverberations in a Mediterranean economy that reached from Northern Britain to the southern shores of North Africa, the potential for a massive religious war between Shi'a and Sunni could have the same kinds of damaging effects.

Such a conflict is in the cards unless the United States is willing to use its military, economic, and political power to bring a reasonable amount of stability, particularly in the Middle East. The Roman Empire's economic stability depended on the ability of the legions to hold the barbarians at bay north of the Danube and Rhine Rivers and away from the Empire's economic heartland. Today, the economic heartland of the globalized world does not have a geographic frontier as such; rather, its frontier lies in the ability of the globalized economy to access the energy that it requires. And that depends at present and for the foreseeable future on the ability of American military power and that of its allies to maintain reasonable access to the Middle East's oil, even given the increasing production of gas and crude oil in North America. The destructive impact of a religious civil war within the Islamic world between the Sunnis and the Shi'a could drive oil prices to extraordinarily high levels. The oil and gas production of North American sources would undoubtedly shield Americans to a certain extent in



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such a case. Nevertheless, the breakdown of peace throughout much of the Middle East in the external world would still have profoundly disturbing effects on the global economy as well as that of the United States. An interdependent, globalized world depends on access to raw materials and particularly to fossil fuels, and quite simply that means the United States will have to be willing to commit military forces, including ground forces, to keeping a rough stability in those areas where the world's greatest oil reserves lie, namely the Middle East. In the long term, alternative sources of energy may mitigate that dependence, but it will not remove that dependence, at least in this century.

The bottom line is that the United States has a deep strategic interest in maintaining a reasonable level of stability in the globalized world. Its relative—and increasing—dependence of fossil fuels (including coal) will provide it with a significant cushion to mitigate some of the impact of major disruption in the world's supply of crude oil, but it will not decrease the absolute requirement to support the access of the globalized economy to Middle Eastern supplies of energy.

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<sup>1</sup> "The new economics of oil: Sheikhs v shale," *The Economist*, December 6, 2014, <http://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21635472-economics-oil-have-changed-some-businesses-will-go-bust-market-will-be>.



WILLIAMSON MURRAY serves as a Minerva Fellow at the Naval War College. He graduated from Yale University in 1963 with honors in history. He then served five years as an officer in the US Air Force, including a tour in Southeast Asia with the 314th Tactical Airlift Wing (C-130s). He returned to Yale University, where he received his PhD in military-diplomatic history under advisers Hans Gatzke and Donald Kagan. He taught two years in the Yale history department before moving on to Ohio State University in fall 1977 as a military and diplomatic historian; in 1987 he received the Alumni Distinguished Teaching Award. He retired from Ohio State in 1995 as a professor emeritus of history.



# America Strikes Oil, Literally and Figuratively

*Kori Schake*

J. Paul Getty advised young people to rise early, work hard, and strike oil. It was the recipe to success for many an American robber baron of the nineteenth century, a fortune in both senses of the word being made all over again as hydraulic fracturing enables American energy production to burgeon. American energy production is advancing our national security, as well, emboldening our friends and impinging on our enemies.

Energy is yet another modern proof of America's economic dynamism, springing as it does from technological inventiveness, amenable geology, venture capital availability, a swarm of wildcatting small operators, geographic mobility in the labor force, and local control of mineral rights. In July of 2013, the United States surpassed Russia as the world's largest producer of oil and natural gas, with 22 million barrels per day of combined oil and gas production.<sup>1</sup>

Not only is energy production good for our country's balance of payments, energy prices for all consumers have plummeted by half as our reduced imports free up quantity, even reducing the cost of coal. So the American bonanza of energy production is benefitting others as well as us.

Initially, the shale revolution is predominantly helping and hurting all the right countries: Russia, Venezuela, and Iran are all struggling because state finances rely almost entirely on energy production. All three lack the rule of law and global connectedness

necessary to produce economic vibrancy. With inflation running 60 percent in Venezuela, its economy is teetering.<sup>2</sup> Europe's previous dependency on Russia became a glaring vulnerability with Gazprom's thuggery in 2006; to its great credit, the European Union has used its competition law to force accountability on the seedy business practices of Mr. Putin's quasi-state cabal. Falling energy prices bought Europe time to transition. The al-Sisi government—problematic in many other ways—has used the breathing room provided by falling prices to terrific advantage, reducing subsidies and freeing up Egypt's markets.

Norway, another energy behemoth, not only has a diversified modern economy, but also wisely invested and scrupulously accounts for its sovereign wealth. America's oil-producing Middle Eastern allies also created sovereign wealth funds (although with less transparency) to diversify their economies, and are funding and promoting Western education in the hopes of spurring greater entrepreneurialism and breadth. Mexico, seeing dramatic changes leaving behind its indigenous oil company, spurred market-friendly reforms; moving to consolidate North American energy production and distribution would give Canada, Mexico, and the United States a further competitive advantage. So governance turns out to be hugely important in building resilience for economies with heavy reliance on energy production or cost inefficiencies related to energy use.





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Energy markets are notoriously volatile; expanded production and fortuitous political events are incentivizing longer-term price declines, however. OPEC's major producers are playing a complicated game of accepting near-term losses in order both to maximize the pain of sanctions on Iran, and also to make unprofitable further shale exploration and extraction. Nor will Russia cut production, desperate as it is for revenues as credit dries up due to US and EU sanctions for its invasion of Ukraine.

China, Argentina, and Algeria all have larger natural gas reserves than does the United States, but also greater impediments, either natural or governmental, to utilizing the resources. In China, for example, *The Wall Street Journal* noted that "from May 2010—when Shell was conducting early exploration in the region—to March 2013, the company lost 535 days of work across 19 wells due to 'spontaneous village based blockades' or 'government requests to halt operations.'"<sup>3</sup>

And while the United States certainly has governmental obstacles—as President Obama's veto of the Keystone Pipeline legislation once again underscored—it also has significant advantages over other potential gas providers. Infrastructure is more developed and transport distances shorter than for others. Legal predictability and enforcement, so important for companies making large, long-term investments, are lacking in Russia, China, and other potential producer countries. Most importantly, under American law, titleholders to land also own mineral rights, giving local communities a big incentive to accommodate the inconveniences and sometimes even danger of drilling, fracking, and transportation.

Becoming energy independent will not obviate American interest in the Middle East; its production will remain the price setter for energy markets. We

will not be able to write off the Middle East. And even if Middle Eastern oil were irrelevant, its problems are not. America has a huge interest in whether the forces of moderation win those wars. The forces fighting for our interests and our values need our leadership and our active involvement if they are to prevail.

All of which means that the United States is likely to sustain its current politico-economic advantages—and be able to impose its preferred penalties—for a substantial period of time. Somewhere, J. Paul Getty is chuckling.

1 Russell Gold and Daniel Gilbert, "U.S. Is Overtaking Russia as Largest Oil-and-Gas Producer," *The Wall Street Journal*, October 2, 2013, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052702303492504579111360245276476>.

2 Tim Bowler, "Falling oil prices: Who are the winners and losers?" *BBC News*, January 19, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/business-29643612>.

3 Brian Spegele and Justin Scheck, "Energy-Hungry China Struggles to Join Shale-Gas Revolution," *The Wall Street Journal*, September 5, 2013, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB1000424127887323980604579030883246871124>.



KORI SCHAKE is a research fellow at the Hoover Institution. She has held the Distinguished Chair of International Security Studies at the United States

Military Academy and worked in the Pentagon, State Department, and National Security Council, and as senior policy adviser to the 2008 McCain presidential campaign. Her most recent book is *State of Disrepair: Fixing the Culture and Practice of the State Department*.



# A More Powerful United States

*Walter Russell Mead*

The revolution in US energy production is one of the big stories of our time, and it has consequences for the future of America's primary geostrategic project of generating, leading, and defending a liberal capitalist world order. Not every result of American energy production will be positive, but the net effect will be to support America's ability to play a leading role in world affairs.

The first benign consequence of the energy revolution will be a sustained economic boost for the United States and most of the world. The favorable supply shock will reduce energy prices at any given level of demand, and the safe location of the new supply will reduce the world economy's vulnerability to the geopolitical instability of the Middle East and other oil-producing regions. This is already happening: world oil prices fell in 2014–15 despite chaos in Libya, uncertainty in Nigeria, war in Iraq, sanctions on Iran, and political confrontation between Russia and the West. Pre-shale boom, this concatenation of unfavorable developments would have driven energy prices significantly higher, with seriously negative consequences for economic growth in Europe, Asia, and North America.

The improved global outlook bodes well for America's alliance network and for strengthening the prosperity and political order at the heart of American strategy worldwide. While China is also a beneficiary of lower energy prices, and so will arguably have more resources with which to compete with the United States, a healthy global economy will also promote the kind of Chinese economic engagement which makes war a more costly and difficult choice for Beijing.

America's "sticky power" increases when participation in a global trading system becomes more attractive; America's energy abundance will lubricate the gears of global commerce.

Additionally, the United States will do better out of the energy revolution than many others. While oil and gas are fungible, so that increases in the supply in one part of the world influence prices all over the world, the enormous growth in American natural gas reserves means that the United States is likely to enjoy cheaper energy prices than parts of the world, like China and Japan, where liquefied natural gas must be imported. Liquefaction of natural gas is an expensive proposition and likely to remain so; countries like the United States that do not need to use it will see significant long-term energy price advantages, with consequences for investment in energy intensive manufacturing.

At the same time, of course, a long-term (if sometimes erratic) domestic energy boom will support American growth in other ways by creating jobs, reducing import costs, and promoting economic development in the heartland where much of the new energy resources are found.

Some of the consequences will be tangible. Washington's long-term budget picture, for example, is likely to improve, making more resources available for foreign policy goals without scanting domestic priorities. Greater foreign confidence in the future of the dollar will tend to reduce interest rates in the United States and promote more foreign investment. Other benefits, though less tangible, will be equally consequential.





With a more prosperous domestic economy, and better job opportunities for blue collar workers, for example, Americans are likely to be more confident that their system works and have more faith in political leaders when they call for American engagement abroad. A dynamic, energy-exporting United States is also likely to enjoy more respect abroad; foreign perceptions of the United States are often driven by foreign perceptions of the successes and failures of the American economic and political models. The energy boom increases the likelihood that we will appear more successful in the future than in the recent past, and this success will lend prestige to American values and society as well as to the American government.

To fully appreciate the importance of the energy revolution in world affairs, one must take into account the degree to which the American revolution is only part of a larger phenomenon: a North American energy revolution in which Canadian and ultimately Mexican energy resources will play a significant part. America's energy reserves can change the global energy picture; with Canadian and Mexican production included, North America will transform it. Include Venezuela (which presumably will achieve a rational government at some point) and Brazil, and the Americas as a whole

could rival or even supplant the Middle East as the center of global energy production in the twenty-first century.

Given the unique US role in the geopolitics of the Americas, the ability of the United States to assure key allies in Europe and Asia of secure energy supplies will grow substantially in the twenty-first century. It is also likely that the shift from a mostly state-run, cartel-based Middle Eastern oil system to one that is grounded more firmly in private ownership and market pricing will change the dynamics of the international economic and political system in ways broadly favorable to American interests.

The outlook is not entirely positive. Greater self-reliance in energy may support a more isolationist political attitude among some Americans. Why worry about the Middle East if we have plenty of oil right here at home?

In fact, the Middle East, given its continuing importance for European and Asian energy supplies, will remain a vital interest of the United States for a long time to come. Serious Middle East supply disruptions that caused economic crises among our key allies and trading partners would have devastating consequences for the American economy. Politicians will have to work harder to ensure that public opinion understands the connections between American domestic prosperity and security, and troubled hotspots around the world even when the average voter no longer thinks that a quiet Middle East assures his or her personal energy supply at an affordable price.

There will be other drawbacks and complications as the consequences of the energy revolution continue to unfold. Nevertheless, on balance the energy revolution is likely to make the American people stronger, richer, better respected, and more free in the twenty-first century than they would have otherwise been.



WALTER RUSSELL MEAD the James Clark Chace Professor of Foreign Affairs and Humanities at Bard College and editor at large of the *American Interest*. Until 2010

Mead was the Henry A. Kissinger Senior Fellow for US Foreign Policy at the Council on Foreign Relations; until 2011 he was a Brady-Johnson Distinguished Visiting Fellow in Grand Strategy at Yale University. He is the author of *Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How It Changed the World* (2002, winner of the Lionel Gelber Prize and nominated for the 2002 Arthur Ross Book Award).



# America's Too Much of a Good Thing

*Victor Davis Hanson*

The United States is currently importing oil at about 1996 levels, or roughly 2.5 million barrels per day less than its peak years of 2005–6 when imports topped 10 million barrels per day. And the price per barrel has collapsed by more than half to about \$50. The old 1970s dream of a United States self-sufficient in fossil fuel energy is now conceivable. Indeed, in short order the United States could soon be a net exporter of coal and natural gas, while meeting all its oil needs through North American augmentation from Mexico and Canada.

While such yearly energy savings are not huge by standards of annual \$600 billion budget deficits and \$18 trillion in aggregate debt, nonetheless the United States is saving—depending on changing daily import levels and pricing—about \$45 to \$50 billion per year in reduced import costs. But more importantly, the ability of the United States to curb its import needs is having a depressing effect on world oil prices at a time when the global economy is not yet consuming energy at its full capacity. Countries in the Persian Gulf are intent on using their huge production capacities to drive down prices for geostrategic reasons, largely the diminution of Iran's ability to subsidize terrorism, gain a nuclear bomb, and spread its hegemony to Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, and Yemen. And the specter of rapidly increasingly alternate sources of fuel adds a psychological element to the equation of making it wiser for cash desperate countries like Russia and Iran to pump more now rather than later.

Strategically the quite unexpected energy renaissance in the United States is an enormous boon. America is less likely to become hamstrung by disruptions in Middle Eastern oil; psychologically, it is now mostly immune from threats of another politically driven oil boycott. And the collapse in prices hurts many of its loudest enemies, in particular Iran, Russia, and Venezuela. Coupled with similar spectacular energy finds in Israel's offshore new

## **POLL: HOW SHOULD THE UNITED STATES USE ITS NEW ENERGY BOUNTY?**

- The United States should keep out of private energy markets, and not use oil and gas as foreign policy tools.
- The United States should reduce carbon fuel production to curb global warming and bridge the gap to a renewable energy future.
- The United States should use its new resources only at home, forbid energy exports, and free itself from the Middle East.
- The United States should form an energy alliance to protect our importing friends from embargoes and boycotts.
- The United States must produce as much gas, oil, and coal as possible to collapse global energy prices and weaken our enemies.

fields, the entire complexion of the Middle East soon should begin to turn topsy-turvy.

But what is ironic about the energy revolution is how independently it has developed from the US government. Fracking and horizontal drilling came despite, not because of the Obama administration. New leases on public lands remain in limbo; most finds of gas and oil were on private ground. Far from being in the driver's seat in the Middle East by virtue of being the world's largest fossil fuel producer, the United States instead seems by intent marginalized and in retreat. In a logical world, both Israel and the United States would have forged even stronger relationships since both are less exposed to the capriciousness of the world energy markets, especially supplies from hostile Islamic enemies and fickle friends.

Why the disconnect? The energy bonanza could not have come at a more importune time for the Obama administration. Its climate change obsessions argue for less production of fossil fuels, not more. Punishing Iran and Russia through lower oil prices did not accord well initially with naïve ideas of Russian reset and the more recent fantasy that Iran might become a strategic partner. The Obama administration wanted to leave the Middle East, not gain more leverage and independence within it. Israel was supposed to be more dependent on US aid and vulnerable to its pressure, not suddenly flush with more strategic and economic options. For the Obama administration vast new deposits of energy are just too much of a good thing.

VICTOR DAVIS HANSON is the Martin and Illie Anderson Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution. He is a military historian, commentator on modern warfare and contemporary politics for various media outlets, and former professor of classics at California State University, Fresno. Hanson has also been the annual Wayne and Marcia Buske Distinguished Visiting Fellow in History at Hillsdale College since 2004. He was awarded the National Humanities Medal in 2007 by President George W. Bush. Hanson is the author of over 20 books and is also a farmer (growing raisin grapes on his family farm in Selma, California) and a critic of social trends related to farming and agrarianism



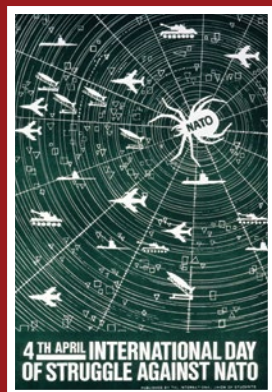
## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

HOW WILL NEW GAS AND OIL PRODUCTION AFFECT, IF AT ALL, AMERICA'S MILITARY AND GEOSTRATEGIC ROLE ABROAD?

1. Will US oil and gas production eventually weaken Russia and Persian Gulf autocracies?
2. Will lower US energy prices lure industries from Europe and Japan?
3. Are there any downsides, at home or abroad, to increasing US oil and gas production?
4. Are the strategic consequences of new US oil and gas production short-term or long-lasting?

## IN THE NEXT ISSUE:

**WILL NATO SURVIVE AS A CREDIBLE ALLIANCE—AND SHOULD IT?**



## Military History in Contemporary Conflict

As the very name of Hoover Institution attests, military history lies at the very core of our dedication to the study of “War, Revolution, and Peace.” Indeed, the precise mission statement of the Hoover Institution includes the following promise: “The overall mission of this Institution is, from its records, to recall the voice of experience against the making of war, and by the study of these records and their publication, to recall man’s endeavors to make and preserve peace, and to sustain for America the safeguards of the American way of life.” From its origins as a library and archive, the Hoover Institution has evolved into one of the foremost research centers in the world for policy formation and pragmatic analysis. It is with this tradition in mind, that the “Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict” has set its agenda—reaffirming the Hoover Institution’s dedication to historical research in light of contemporary challenges, and in particular, reinvigorating the national study of military history as an asset to foster and enhance our national security. By bringing together a diverse group of distinguished military historians, security analysts, and military veterans and practitioners, the working group seeks to examine the conflicts of the past as critical lessons for the present.

## Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict

The Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict examines how knowledge of past military operations can influence contemporary public policy decisions concerning current conflicts. The careful study of military history offers a way of analyzing modern war and peace that is often underappreciated in this age of technological determinism. Yet the result leads to a more in-depth and dispassionate understanding of contemporary wars, one that explains how particular military successes and failures of the past can be often germane, sometimes misunderstood, or occasionally irrelevant in the context of the present.

## Strategika

*Strategika* is a journal that analyzes ongoing issues of national security in light of conflicts of the past—the efforts of the Military History Working Group of historians, analysts, and military personnel focusing on military history and contemporary conflict. Our board of scholars shares no ideological consensus other than a general acknowledgment that human nature is largely unchanging. Consequently, the study of past wars can offer us tragic guidance about present conflicts—a preferable approach to the more popular therapeutic assumption that contemporary efforts to ensure the perfectibility of mankind eventually will lead to eternal peace. New technologies, methodologies, and protocols come and go; the larger tactical and strategic assumptions that guide them remain mostly the same—a fact discernable only through the study of history.



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Washington, DC 20005  
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