

America, Oil, and Our National Security

Summary

With current oil prices at a high level across the nation, much attention has been given recently to our dependence on foreign sources of oil, the possibility of finding domestic oil sources to serve the needs of our nation, and the advantages of using other sources of energy besides oil. In this lesson, students will explore the oil crisis of the 1970's while comparing it to today's modern oil needs.

Objectives

Students will:

- 1) discuss the meaning of the term "national security;"
- 2) research the effect America's dependence on oil, both foreign and domestic, has on our nation and the rest of the world;
- 3) become familiar with opposing viewpoints on the question of America's continued dependence on oil;
- 4) debate these differing viewpoints in a class discussion.

U.S. History Event or Era

This lesson can be used with any unit dealing with the 1970's (reliance on foreign oil and OPEC), or 20th-century American foreign policy. It can also be used as a current-events lesson.

Grade Level

This lesson can be used in an 8th-grade American History class, but may be more appropriate for high school students due to the level of difficulty in some of the readings and the each student's responsibility to conduct research during class time and on their own.

Materials

Each student should receive a copy of the reading excerpts on pages 9-15. Also, each pair of researchers in each group will need access to a computer with internet access and a copy of appropriate websites (page 7-8).

Lesson Time

This lesson will require at least two-to-three block periods, or five regularly scheduled class periods. **Optional:** Instead of breaking students into eight groups, pair students, give each pair one of the eight positions, and have them do research on that position. Allow each pair to present their findings to the class.

Lesson

Procedures:

Day One:

- 1) As your students enter class, have them answer one of the following three **Preview** questions:
 - a. Imagine that gas and oil did not exist. How would your life, and the life of most people in the United States, be different than it is now? List at least three differences. Do you think that life would be different for the majority of the world's population?
 - b. What, in your opinion, is meant by the term "national security"? In your own words, try to think of a definition that the rest of the class can use (a "workable" definition). Do you think that availability to sources of cheap oil is an issue of America's "national security"?
 - c. How has the rising price of gas in the last year or so affected your lifestyle? Why do you think that the price of gas continues to rise, up from just over a \$1 a gallon a couple of years ago to almost \$2 a gallon now? What other affects do you think the rising cost of gas could have on all Americans?
- 2) After 5-7 minutes, allow your students to share their answers in a class discussion:
 - a. Answers for the first Preview question about oil could include, but are not limited to: "I wouldn't have a car;" "transportation would be a lot slower;" and "I wouldn't have to mow my yard anymore." Have them think a little more by asking them how goods are delivered to the places where they shop, whether it's a grocery store or department store. Then ask them to consider air travel and how goods are sent by air, too (FedEx and UPS, to name a few). Lastly, they should consider how war would be different with no gas or oil. No tanks, no jets or helicopters, and no transport vehicles.
 - b. Expect answers to vary in a discussion on such a broad topic as "national security." But you should be able to come up with a class-wide consensus on what "national security" means. Generally, it should be anything that has any kind of impact on the safety and security of the people of the United States and its interests, both at home and abroad. Next, your students should be able to draw their own conclusion about whether access to foreign and domestic sources of oil is a part of our national security.
 - c. Obviously, any student who drives their own automobile knows firsthand how the rising cost of gas has changed their lifestyle, whether it is only in terms of a dent in their own pocketbook. However, many students may not realize that there are more subtle effects that increasing costs of fuel have on them; for instance, they may not have noticed that there has also been a slight increase in the cost of goods and services paralleled with the cost of fuel, which they pay for, also. It should be pointed out to your students that the cost of fuel keeps rising because the United States buys most of its oil from foreign countries; as these countries continue to raise the selling cost, the American consumer continues to pay the difference.
- 3) Inform students that today's class will focus on the current debate about whether or not the U.S. should drill for oil in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and off the Gulf Coast of Florida. This will take the form of a debate/role play where the class will be divided into 8 separate groups, each representing a different perspective. The groups will be: members of the Bush Administration who are in support of drilling; members of Congress and state politicians opposed to drilling; domestic oil company representatives (BP Amoco, Exxon, Texaco, etc.); environmental groups; indigenous groups in Alaska (Inupiat Eskimo, Gwich'in neighbors); the Florida tourism industry; advocates for finding new forms of energy and transportation (like the Florida bullet train); and foreign oil company representatives (such as OPEC).

- 4) Divide your students into the eight groups. Each member of the group should have a specific role, as well as the general task of researching some part of their group's assignment. Specific roles could include: researchers (responsible for finding information on the internet or through other sources that defend their group's stance); prop developer (responsible for making a sign showing the group's name and a visual symbol representing the group (see example on next page); and speaker (responsible for delivering and debating group's position in a classroom forum).
- 5) Assign each group their group assignments randomly. Expect that many students will not agree with the position that they have been assigned. Explain to these students that in order to more fully understand their own opinions, it is important to be immersed in the opinions of their opposition. Also explain that this could be a very useful tool in a debate; being familiar with both sides, they will know more information than their opponents.

Example 1- Group sign



Bush Administration

This is an example of what the sign representing the Bush Administration could look like. Your students could use pictures from ClipArt, magazines, or drawn and colored pictures. Be sure that your students are respectful of the differing viewpoints in this contentious debate.

- 6) Pass out to each student the reading passage titled "**The Energy Crisis of the 1970's- Part I**" taken from The American Journey by Glencoe (Chapter 31, "Search for Stability").
- 7) Ask students if they can see any similarities between the energy situation thirty years ago and today. Then, have them read Part II on their handout:
- 8) At this point, inform your students that they need to keep one central question in their minds as they work on their assignments: which is more important to our national security, protecting wilderness areas like ANWR and pristine beach areas like the Florida Gulf Coast while continuing to rely on imported oil, or increasing access to domestic oil reserves?
- 9) Here are a few secondary questions to have students think about as they prepare their debates: a) should we continue to rely on oil as our primary energy source; b) how do we each personally benefit from this reliance; c) what values/attitudes/beliefs support this reliance on oil; d) what changes would we, as a society, have to make in order to free ourselves from this reliance; e) what obstacles prevent us from making these changes?
- 10) Students will also need to brainstorm a list of questions they will need to answer in order to get prepared for the debate. For example, who are some specific individuals and groups who represent their position (They will be expected to take on the role of real individuals/groups involved in this debate and to base their position on specific writings, actions, and speeches of the individuals/groups they represent)? What is their position on ANWR and/or drilling off the coast of Florida and why? What steps have they taken or do they plan to take? Where can they begin to look for this information?

- 11) At this point, your students will be ready to begin researching. Give them a list of appropriate websites where they will be able to find information relevant to their position (found on page 7-8).

Day Two and Three:

- 12) Time will be given to groups to research their position and to plan their presentation.

Day Four:

- 13) Debate: Should the U.S. drill in the ANWR and off the Gulf Coast of Florida? Each group should be prepared to tell the class who they are, what their position is, why they support it, and how it relates to the issue of national security. The debate will be organized in a way that will allow time for groups to question each other and to challenge each other's position respectfully.
- 14) Homework (optional): students will be asked to reflect (2-3 pages) on their personal thoughts and opinions in regards to the issue of drilling in ANWR and Florida and the central question—which is more important to our national security, protecting wilderness areas like ANWR and the pristine beaches of the Florida Gulf Coast, or increasing access to domestic oil reserves?

Day Five (optional):

- 15) General class discussion debriefing the activity and exploring the central question.

Activities

The Energy Crisis of the 1970's- Part I

During President Richard Nixon's second term (1973-74), severe economic problems confronted the nation. One of the most critical problems was the cost of fuel, especially imported (foreign) oil.

The U.S. economy depended heavily on oil. Much of this oil came from the Middle East. Arab oil-producing countries belonged to OPEC, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries. In 1973, these countries placed an embargo on all oil shipments to the United States. At the same time, they raised their prices.

The sharp price increases and the six-month embargo damaged the nation's economy. Many companies had to lay off workers, while others raised their prices. Angry consumers complained about the high prices and the long lines at gas stations.

The president imposed emergency measures to conserve oil. Nixon also urged Americans to conserve energy voluntarily. Congress reduced speed limits on highways because a vehicle burns less fuel at lower speeds.

To deal with the long-range problem of dependence on imported oil, Nixon urged development of domestic oil, especially in Alaska, which possessed vast, untapped oil reserves.

Part II

Despite information and scientific research showing the effects of air pollution and global warming caused by the continued burning of fossil fuels, the United States still bases its economy on oil in the beginning of the 21st century. Not much has changed in the thirty years since the first energy crisis. Instead of finding and using more renewable sources of fuel, Americans are driving SUVs that guzzle gas on an unprecedented scale and continue to consume more energy than the rest of the world. In fact, 20% of the world's population (the U.S., Western Europe, and Japan) account for over 90% of the world's energy consumption annually. In the United States alone, Americans use 19 million barrels of oil each day, or 7 billion barrels of oil per year.

Meanwhile, with the rising cost of imported oil, some leaders in the federal government and domestic oil companies have begun to lobby for oil exploration. They want to go into areas in the geographic confines of the United States to find domestic oil reserves that would rival the output of our current suppliers. And what a large amount of oil that would have to be; Saudi Arabia's 262 billion barrels, a quarter of the world's total proven reserves, is the single largest producer of oil in the world. Iraq is a close second, with 113 billion barrels, which is eleven percent of the world's total. However, expert estimates show that Iraq could easily produce 200 million barrels or more with an increase in production.

Obviously, though, the Middle East is a very unstable region of the world. It is also a region that harbors much ill will towards the United States. The reason behind the push for finding our own domestic oil reserves is to not have to rely on these nations for our energy supply. But to explore our own nation for oil means to possibly go into areas that have been set aside as nature preserves, such as the Arctic National Wildlife Preserve in Alaska. In 1980, the U.S. Geological Survey

estimated the Alaskan Coastal Plain could contain up to 17 billion barrels of oil and 34 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. The U.S. Department of Interior (DOI), in its April, 1987 report on the oil and gas potential of the Coastal Plain, estimated that there are billions of barrels of oil to be discovered in the area. DOI estimates that "in-place resources" range from 4.8 billion to 29.4 billion barrels of oil. Recoverable oil estimates ranges from 600 million barrels at the low end to 9.2 billion barrels at the high end. They also reported identifying 26 separate oil and gas prospects in the Coastal Plain that could each contain "super giant" fields (500 million barrels or more).

Here are some other selected readings to help you with your research:

Iraq's proven oil reserves are 113 billion barrels, the second largest in the world after Saudi Arabia, and eleven percent of the world's total. The total reserves could be 200 billion barrels or more, all of it relatively easy and cheap to extract. Thus increasing Iraqi oil production will diminish the market pressure on oil-importing countries like the US. It will also weaken the power of OPEC to influence oil markets by decisions to restrict output. Indeed, were Iraqi oil production to expand to near its capacity, the quotas established by OPEC would cease to be honored in today's market.

But the US is not just interested in oil from Iraq, it is concerned to maintain political dominance over all the oil-producing countries of the region. Secretary of State Colin Powell gave a glimpse of US intentions when he told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on February 6 that success in the Iraq war "could fundamentally reshape that region in a powerful, positive way that will enhance U.S. interests." In conceding that it will be necessary to station US troops in occupied Iraq for the foreseeable future, the US is serving notice to Iran and to Saudi Arabia (both of which were once secure bases for US troops but are so no longer) that the US will reassert its presence as the dominant military power in the region.

'The United States remains a prisoner of its energy dilemma. Iraq remains a de-stabilising influence to ... the flow of oil to international markets from the Middle East. Saddam Hussein has also demonstrated a willingness to threaten to use the oil weapon and to use his own export program to manipulate oil markets. Therefore the US should conduct an immediate policy review toward Iraq including military, energy, economic and political/ diplomatic assessments. 'The United States should then develop an integrated strategy with key allies in Europe and Asia, and with key countries in the Middle East, to restate goals with respect to Iraqi policy and to restore a cohesive coalition of key allies.'

Read the following article to find how people in other countries view “Operation Iraqi Freedom”:

Why Bush Wants to Attack Iraq

Giridhar Stinivasan, *Business Line*, (financial), Chennai, India, Sept. 3, 2002

Strategy is about where to compete and how to compete. So where does Iraq fit into the Bush administration’s strategy for fighting the war against terrorism? What is the value of a head-on military conflict with Saddam Hussein, a tyrant despot enough to use chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons? Can doing this help end Islamist terrorism?

Playing the situation out, it becomes apparent how eliminating Saddam is just one part of the Bush administration’s long-term strategy for fighting the war against terrorism.

If the Americans occupy Iraq, they will undoubtedly control how much oil Iraq produces. As a result of the United Nations sanctions, Iraq today pumps around two-thirds of its pre-Gulf War capacity of 3 million barrels per day (MBPD). The U.S. control of Iraq’s current potential production, which is roughly 11 percent of OPEC’s current production of 27.5 MBPD, will deny OPEC and the Saudi leaders the ability to dictate marginal changes in world oil supply. Developing Iraq’s vast potential in the medium term can only increase the American leverage over world oil prices.

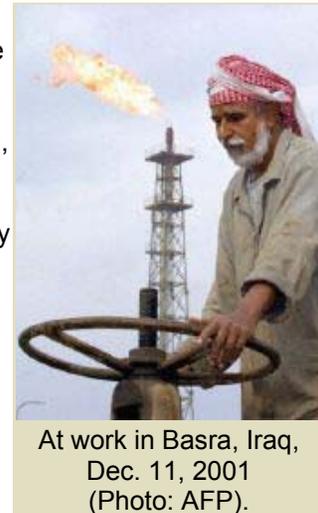
So here is the link: Islamist terrorism is financed and spread by revenue earned from petroleum exports. So the Bush strategy is to control Iraq, break OPEC’s stranglehold on oil markets, force oil prices down, and thus deny Islamist terrorism access to petroleum financing. The Bush administration is not just going after Saddam and his weapons of mass destruction. It is going after OPEC and the global financial infrastructure that supports terrorism.

So what happens after the United States occupies Iraq? It is not so much what may happen as much as what surrounding countries such as Iran and Syria think could happen. The two countries, high on the State Department’s list of supporters of terrorism, would have just seen the United States whip the meanest thug in the neighborhood. Bush rattled Iran with his “axis of evil” comment, and Iranian strategists already talk of “feeling encircled” by American troops in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and a Russia that is no longer a reliable ally. The presence of thousands of American troops in Iraq would only heighten Iranian anxiety about what Bush could do—say, destabilize the Iranian government or even invade outright. But for now, Bush does not need to do anything. Just being the 800-pound gorilla next door could be enough to force the changes he wants.

Syria, another cradle of terrorism, would face a similar challenge. Encircled by American troops in Iraq and Turkey, and of course by Israel, it will be compelled to end support for such terrorist groups as Hezbollah. Israel may also force Syria into a tight negotiating corner over the Golan Heights.

Such moves have the power to significantly alter the balance of power in West Asia. And in the long run, permanent guarantees of cheap oil will put the world economy on a sound footing. But such one-dimensional military planning presents a host of problems. First, if Saddam Hussein feared that he actually would be killed, he might use weapons of mass destruction as a last-ditch effort—an absolutely terrifying thought, which should give everyone a pause.

Second, bankrupting Islamist terrorism could destroy the “large-scale infrastructure” of terrorism—training camps, the network of communication systems, recruiting and paying jihad fighters—and, most important, terrorists’ ability to purchase weapons of mass destruction on the black market. But the Sept. 11 hijackers cruelly showed that low budget and low-tech can be deadly enough. Destroying the finance infrastructure of terrorism can strike a mortal blow at the network of terrorism but cannot prevent every individual terrorist act.



At work in Basra, Iraq, Dec. 11, 2001 (Photo: AFP).

Third, this military strategy does nothing to solve the simmering conflict between the ordinary Arab people and their repressive governments. Many informed observers argue that ordinary Arabs view U.S. support for their governments' repressive policies as the cause of their suffering. But weakened and impoverished Arab autocrats are likely to resort to more totalitarian means of controlling their populations. If the United States is seen as the cause of this, it will only engender more hatred. If wealthy but politically disenfranchised young Arab men were such willing foot soldiers for terrorism, then poorer, more demoralized, and further re-pressed Arab youth can only be far more volatile. Impoverishing Arab youth cannot possibly end terror. Whether or not this is Bush's intent, the very presence of U.S. troops will force this to become the strategy the day they control Iraq.

The temptation to break OPEC, control oil supplies, and destroy the Islamist terror infrastructure would be too much, even for a U.S. president who was not a former oil executive. And there is little that the United States can do to control Syrian and Iranian perceptions. Once in Iraq, the very presence of U.S. troops will seem like a threat, and that may be enough to either spark changes or cause sparks to fly.

How Much Oil Does Iraq Have? Saudi Arabia is a pivotal player. With 262 billion barrels, it has a quarter of the world's total proven reserves and is the single largest producer.⁶ More importantly, the Saudis have demonstrated repeatedly--after the Iranian revolution, and following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait--that they are prepared to compensate for losses from other suppliers, calming markets in times of turmoil.

The pariah state of Iraq, however, is a key prize, with abundant, high-quality oil that can be produced at very low cost (and thus at great profit). At 112 billion barrels, its proven reserves are currently second only to Saudi Arabia's. At present, of course, this is mere potential--the Iraqi oil industry has seriously deteriorated as a result of the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq War, the 1991 Gulf War, and inadequate postwar investment and maintenance. Since 1990, the sanctions regime has effectively frozen plans for putting additional fields into production. But once the facilities are rehabilitated (a lucrative job for the oil service industry, including Vice President Cheney's former employer, Halliburton) and new fields are brought into operation, the spigots could be opened wide. To pay for the massive task of rebuilding, a post-sanctions Iraq would naturally seek to maximize its oil production.

Washington would gain enormous leverage over the world oil market. Opening the Iraqi spigot would flood world markets and drive prices down substantially. OPEC, already struggling with overcapacity and a tendency among its members to produce above allotted quotas (an estimated 3 million barrels per day above the agreed total of 24.7 million b/d), might unravel as individual exporters engage in destructive price wars against each other. A massive flow of Iraqi oil would also limit any influence that other suppliers, such as Russia, Mexico, and Venezuela, have over the oil market.

Environmental Damage It's worth noting that one fifth of the world's population accounts for 90% of total personal consumption globally. In comparison, around 4 billion people are surviving on less than \$2 a day. All of that consumption being done in the United States, Europe and Japan results in tremendous harm to the environment. Those of you reading in your luxury townhomes in suburban America may not see it and that's because much of the damage has been shifted overseas where regulations are lax or nonexistent. The citizens of Mexico, for example, put up with much higher levels of water and air pollution so that the maquiladoras (factories) located there can make and sell cheap consumer goods to Americans. Traditional fishing practices are interrupted in Thailand as a result of shrimp farming operations that destroy the coastal mangrove forests there, habitat critical to the reproduction of many aquatic species. Where does the shrimp go? Into your frozen Gordon's Shrimp Bowls. In India, thousands died when the U.S.-based Union Carbide operated their factory in a dangerous manner. The chemicals (still) made there are destined for export back to the western industrial societies. The rising sea will swallow up entire nations in the Indian and Pacific Oceans as anthropogenically-caused climate change heats up the world. The United States is by far the leading producer of the greenhouse gases responsible for global warming.

Here in the United States, we tend to forget that natural resources are still the basis of all economic activity on the planet. You may sit at your plastic desk typing on your plastic computer all day, moving bits of information around for a salary but ultimately all wealth is still dependent on clean water, clean air, forests, soils, abundant seas and many other processes and material that is created every day by the thin, fragile ecosystem of which we are only a part. This connection to nature is still felt strongly in other parts of the world. In fact, close to half of all jobs worldwide depend on fisheries, forests, and agriculture. In one-fourth of the world's nations natural resources directly produce more income than industry. These countries, not coincidentally, are generally the same countries facing the greatest threats to the environment as well as high levels of poverty. While it is oversimplifying to say that poverty leads to terrorism, it is not too much of a threat to say more broadly that mass poverty is a threat to peace. Poor, jobless people tend to be easily susceptible to the rantings of nationalistic and maniacal leaders calling for a fight against those perceived as oppressors.

It is not so difficult, then, to imagine a different world should better care of the environment become a priority. If people from Iraq to India could count on clean air to breathe, clean water to drink and safe and abundant sources of food and if they could live free of the disease brought into

their lives by factories leaking dangerous chemicals then one can imagine there would be less unrest in the world. For hundreds of years humans all over the planet have shown in their art, their customs and their politics a deep respect and need for wild places to exist. If we could stop the rampant destruction of ecosystems, then perhaps we could also slow or reverse the growing feelings of helplessness and disconnection that lead otherwise peaceful people to take drastic actions.

It's unrealistic and grandiose in the extreme but stop for a second and imagine how things might change were the United States to spend \$300 billion a year on a definition of "national security" that included things like environmental conservation and protection rather than simply force projection and building weapons of mass destruction. That sort of commitment of resources could rather quickly and easily move our industry and consumption-based economy toward a much more sustainable path. Imagine powering your automobile with hydrogen instead of gasoline. Thousands of oil pumps, refineries and other processing facilities would close. The need for wars against poor nations like Iraq would all but disappear. The global impact of marine contamination, in terms of human disease and ill health, may be running at nearly \$13 billion a year, less than 5% of what the U.S. spends on defense. How much goodwill would we spread by resolving to help poor nations to improve their sewer systems and otherwise develop more environmentally sensitive strategies for dealing with contaminated runoff? I'd wager more than is gained by spending the same on a new aircraft carrier. If national security really is foremost in President Bush's mind these days, why isn't he considering these ideas?

New Campaign Possibilities: While Sierra Club lawyers were battling BNP lawyers and NPS on May 29, President Bush was meeting with Jeb Bush at the White House and telling him that the federal government will pay the Collier family--the owners of the minerals below Big Cypress National Preserve in Florida--\$120 million for the mineral rights. This means that the family will no longer have the right to drill in the National Preserve to get the natural gas. The feds are also paying Chevron and two other companies \$115 for their offshore oil and gas leases. "W" said that it was "good public policy" and his "new environmentalism for the 21st century." Everyone, including W, admits that the buyout is an attempt to win votes in Florida for Jeb and W. However, Rick Perry is going to be needing some votes pretty soon, too! A buyout of the privately-held mineral rights under the Padre Island National Seashore may be the only way to stop the drilling.

Assessment

Students will be assessed on the quality of their performance during the debate and the critical thought and demonstration of knowledge in their reflective essay. In addition, students will also be asked to hand in a typed annotated bibliography of all the sources they used in their research.

Resources

<http://arcticcircle.uconn.edu/ANWR/anwrindex.html>

www.greenpeaceusa.org/arctic/arctic.htm

www.anwr.org

www.heritage.org/Research/EnergyandEnvironment/WM27.cfm

www.jimmycarterlibrary.org/documents/speeches/su78jec.phtml

<http://old.smh.com.au/news/0104/20/world/world9.html>

[http://exchange.law.miami.edu/everglades/news/2002/washington%20post%20everglades%20articles/deals to block drilling in evergl.htm](http://exchange.law.miami.edu/everglades/news/2002/washington%20post%20everglades%20articles/deals%20to%20block%20drilling%20in%20everglades.htm)

<http://www.brevarddemocrats.org/action-oil.html>

http://www.sierraclub.org/sierra/200203/grassroots_printable.asp

<http://www.miami.com/mld/miamiherald/3084745.htm>

http://www.bettertransportation.org/Issues/2000/issues2000_aviation.htm

http://216.239.57.100/search?q=cache:w4rgyz9-gzgC:www.myflorida.com/myflorida/governoroffice/documents/stimulus_package.doc+florida+%2B+%22tourism+industry%22+%2B+%22hotel+industry%22+%2B+jobs&hl=en&ie=UTF-8

http://www.publictransportation.org/news_air.html

<http://www.angelfire.com/super/vndragon/economics/world/general/02/oil-impact.htm>

http://www.energy.gov/HQDocs/speeches/2001/marss/energy_speech.html

<http://www.napta.net/resource/pubs/shapiro.htm>