

crisis for the sake of indulging the administration's numerous nostalgic cold warriors, like Assistant Secretary of State Roger Noriega and Undersecretary of State John Bolton. But despite the Bush administration's tacit support of the 2002 coup and the substantial funds that the NED poured into the failed recall referendum last August, Chavez has, so far, not given any indication that he intends to cut petroleum exports to the U.S. He did, however, tell Washington to not "even think about trying something similar in Venezuela," referring to what he claims was Washington's orchestrated coup against former Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in February, 2004. Should the U.S. follow this course, he optimistically observed that Venezuela "has enough allies on this continent to start a 100-year war," and that "U.S. citizens could forget about ever getting Venezuelan oil."

Enter the Dragon

In December 2004, President Chavez met with his Chinese counterpart, Hu Jintao, in Beijing to discuss a new bilateral agreement regarding access to Venezuela's energy market. Under the agreement, which Chavez pushed because, in his words, "this is what is needed in the world in order to break with unilateralism." As a result, Caracas will help Beijing with additions to the latter's strategic oil reserves in exchange for Chinese investment in Venezuela's agricultural sector and the development of fifteen currently shut down oil fields. This meeting was preceded by Chavez's renewed calls for the creation of PetroSur, a Latin American version of OPEC. In an interview with IPS, political scientist Alberto Garrido, of the University of Los Andes, reasoned that Chavez "is trying to give a regional, Latin American dimension to his Bolivarian revolution, as reflected in documents from his movement that date back to far before he made it to power."

Chavez's Brinkmanship

None of this can be welcome news to Washington policymakers who are having increasing difficulty finding, or even maintaining, stable sources of oil. With al-Qaeda attacks in Saudi Arabia, the insurgents' continuing sabotage of Iraqi and Colombian pipelines, and civil unrest in Nigeria, U.S. oil managers can only get more desperate in their search for reliable petro exports. With the largest proven oil reserves in the Western Hemisphere (77.8 billion barrels), bilateral deals with China, and an attractive six-day transport time to U.S. ports - as opposed to five weeks from the Middle East - Chavez is forcing Washington to take a more protracted look south. Whether the volatile Venezuelan leader is playing a reckless game with Washington that could get him swatted, or is adroitly acting in his country's best interests, is a question that could be explosively answered in a relatively short period.

Evocations of the Monroe Doctrine

In 2003, China surpassed Japan as the world's second largest oil consumer. Given that by 2025 China's net oil imports are projected to be 9.4 million barrels per day (bbl/d), the U.S. Energy Information Agency predicts that by 2030 China will be importing as much oil as the U.S. is currently (11.8 million bbl/d). With its energy consumption expected to double in the next decade, China is looking into markets that traditionally have supplied most of their crude to the U.S. Though Beijing has no choice but to attempt to sate its country's skyrocketing petro demands, the China problem, from Washington's view, is that any increase in Beijing's dependence on Caracas invariably cuts into one of its few remaining, relatively stable sources of crude. Ironically, then, Washington must either throw many carrots at Caracas, or use a very big stick against it.

Drawing a bead on the largest Western Hemispheric reserves would certainly represent a dicey move on Beijing's part. Moreover, China's recent initiative towards Venezuela comes at a time when Beijing has just recently indicated that it has similar designs on Canadian oil markets that today are dominated by the U.S. In other words, not only is Beijing poking its nose in 'our backyard,' but Washington's front yard as well. The New York Times reported on December 23, 2004 that, according to Murray Smith, a former Alberta energy minister, "The China outlet would change our dynamic. Our main link would still be with the U.S., but this would give us multiple markets and competition for a prized resource." How will Washington view Beijing's initiative towards the US's largest source of oil imports? The same Times story cited Calgary's The National Post, which pithily editorialized, "Watch the Americans have a hissy fit if a Chinese incursion materializes . . . So far, the Americans have taken Canada's energy for granted."

Thus, the immediate short-term problem facing Washington from the Caracas/Beijing axis is two-fold; on the one hand, it cannot allow China to get too cozy with one of its closest suppliers, which may provoke Washington to exhume the Monroe Doctrine. On the other hand, Washington's current policy of siding with the anti-Chavez opposition risks the very outcome Washington seeks to avoid; pushing Caracas into Beijing's arms or precipitating an anti-Washington embargo. Given the seemingly unstoppable popularity of Chavez, who has, to date, won two presidential elections and a referendum - all with comfortable majorities - the first sensible thing Washington must do is cease its open courting of the opposition. After

all, how would Washington policymakers feel if French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin spent millions of euros in support of a domestic opposition in the U.S., whose stated goal was the removal of President Bush from office?

Kissinger Redux?

Though Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld has most likely managed to exhaust the offensive capacity of the US military for the foreseeable future, it would behoove the increasingly feisty Chavez to review the recently declassified British intelligence document of December 13, 1973 entitled "Middle East - Possible Use of Force by the United States." The Foreign Office memo cited a warning by former Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger to the British ambassador in Washington, Lord Cromer, that the administration would not tolerate threats from "under-developed, under-populated" countries. As noted by The Washington Post in January of 2004, Kissinger later wrote in his memoir, Years of Upheaval: "These were not empty threats. I ordered a number of studies from the key departments on countermeasures against Arab members of OPEC if the embargo continued. By the end of the month, several contingency plans had been completed." Given that the U.S. annually imports as much or more oil from Venezuela as from Riyadh, Chavez should be well advised that any talk of an embargo could trigger a U.S. military intervention. He may risk setting the stage for this possibility if he is perceived by Washington as being too nettlesome in setting up a new OPEC, or if he gets too close to Beijing for Washington's comfort.

Some analysts are already predicting a global clash between the U.S. and China over oil reserves that could trigger a veritable casus belli. As stated by Gal Luft, executive director of the Institute for the Analysis of Global Security, in a recent editorial in The Los Angeles Times, "Without a comprehensive strategy designed to prevent China from becoming an oil consumer on par with the U.S., a superpower collision is in the cards." Dr. Luft suggests the U.S. do everything it can to shift China in the direction of non-petro based energy supplies, such as hydrogen or natural gas. However, barring such a spectacular advance in the technology of harvesting hydrogen fuel cells or the like, China will need to look anywhere it can in order to satisfy its petro consumption demand.

So far, neither Chinese nor U.S. authorities have, at least publicly, anticipated anything like a global clash over energy sources. Reported by Stephanie Ho of AXcess News, Chinese Embassy spokesman Sun Weide said, "Of course, as our two economies continue to grow, we both need reliable and, I think, affordable energy supplies . . . So, there is very good basis for cooperation between the two countries." But such optimism belies the fact that Washington is facing an almost certain intrusion into its oil markets by the world's second largest petro importer. Though Beijing will somehow have to satisfy its energy demand, which grows annually at 7.5%, Washington will not look kindly on any such incursion into its traditional oil suppliers. As observed by Luft in The New York Times, "China's gone after the low-hanging fruit so far. Now they're entering another level of ambition, in places such as Venezuela, Saudi Arabia and Canada that are well within the American sphere."

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<http://news.independent.co.uk/world/environment/story.jsp?story=603752>

Global warming approaching point of no return, warns leading climate expert
By Geoffrey Lean, Environment Editor

Global warming has already hit the danger point that international attempts to curb it are designed to avoid, according to the world's top climate watchdog.

Dr Rajendra Pachauri, the chairman of the official Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), told an international conference attended by 114 governments in Mauritius this month that he personally believes that the world has "already reached the level of dangerous concentrations of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere" and called for immediate and "very deep" cuts in the pollution if humanity is to "survive". His comments rocked the Bush administration - which immediately tried to slap him down - not least because it put him in his post after Exxon, the major oil company most opposed to international action on global warming, complained that his predecessor was too "aggressive" on the issue.

A memorandum from Exxon to the White House in early 2001 specifically asked it to get the previous chairman, Dr Robert Watson, the chief scientist of the World Bank, "replaced at the request of the US". The Bush administration then lobbied other countries in favour of Dr Pachauri - whom the former vice-

president Al Gore called the "let's drag our feet" candidate, and got him elected to replace Dr Watson, a British-born naturalised American, who had repeatedly called for urgent action.

But this month, at a conference of Small Island Developing States on the Indian Ocean island, the new chairman, a former head of India's Tata Energy Research Institute, himself issued what top United Nations officials described as a "very courageous" challenge. He told delegates: "Climate change is for real. We have just a small window of opportunity and it is closing rather rapidly. There is not a moment to lose."

Afterwards he told The Independent on Sunday that widespread dying of coral reefs, and rapid melting of ice in the Arctic, had driven him to the conclusion that the danger point the IPCC had been set up to avoid had already been reached. Reefs throughout the world are perishing as the seas warm up: as water temperatures rise, they lose their colours and turn a ghostly white. Partly as a result, up to a quarter of the world's corals have been destroyed.

And in November, a multi-year study by 300 scientists concluded that the Arctic was warming twice as fast as the rest of the world and that its ice-cap had shrunk by up to 20 per cent in the past three decades. The ice is also 40 per cent thinner than it was in the 1970s and is expected to disappear altogether by 2070. And while Dr Pachauri was speaking parts of the Arctic were having a January "heat wave", with temperatures eight to nine degrees centigrade higher than normal. He also cited alarming measurements, first reported in The Independent on Sunday, showing that levels of carbon dioxide (the main cause of global warming) have leapt abruptly over the past two years, suggesting that climate change may be accelerating out of control.

He added that, because of inertia built into the Earth's natural systems, the world was now only experiencing the result of pollution emitted in the 1960s, and much greater effects would occur as the increased pollution of later decades worked its way through. He concluded: "We are risking the ability of the human race to survive."

US "Enthroned" by W Feb. 8, 2005 - CommonDreams.org
by Salle Engelhardt

Yo, fellow Americans! Short attention span lifestyle is not an option any more. Think back about W's modus operandi. This guy has never earned an honest dollar in his life, he was born to a wealthy family, and given "special privileges" only afforded to the wealthy during the Viet Nam war. Then his education, well, that was clearly "purchased" since it's obvious that he is barely capable of the independent cognitive functioning required for anything above the level of a drug dealer or bar room antagonist

Then look at all of his business dealings. Where did all that money come from? Certainly not his earned income, it was all borrowed from wealthy friends of his daddy--which he subsequently lost in a hurry. Oh well, wasn't his money. Just like what's in the U. S. treasury. . . not his, ours--and he is no more capable of handling that responsibly either.

Was he ever held accountable for any of those failed ventures? No. And then there was that Enron thing, you know, those rich pals of W and daddy who ripped off several states and millions of common folk for billions and never went to trial and are still incredibly rich and free? Just a test run for the raping of a nation, I'd say. Look at the fiscal situation in this country, what with the Enron-like appointees in powerful government positions, the non-accountability of anyone for anything, the lies, cover ups and "oh well" attitude about the falsely explained rolling blackouts and gas price hikes, and the missing billions of Iraqi oil revenues for the past couple years . . . sound familiar? You know, like the nonexistent WMD's and Saddam as an imminent threat and champion of terrorists--but that was so last year.

Why do we allow this gang to get away with bankrupting this supposed greatest nation on the planet? Because we the people haven't got enough interest in paying attention for more than the fifteen seconds it takes for the corporate media to tell us what our opinion should be.

When will Americans get it? Many of my friends were raised in former communist countries. They laugh at my fears for my country and tell me, "Get used to it, it's just like communists. They will take everything from you and you can do nothing because their police will stop you. They will spy on you, intimidate you, and take everything for themselves while they insist that you work like dogs and you will have nothing for yourself. The rich will have everything they want and the poor will live like serfs."

This is profoundly disturbing, because I can actually see this happening and nobody, at least not that has a way of reaching the many, can sound an alarm to wake up the sleeping people of a nation that has already taken several turns for the worst. Mussolini would be proud of this administration.

Take a serious look at the budget proposed yesterday, the cost of the wars of late, the push to bankrupt social security, and education. Then there's the gutting of the Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, and all the other regulatory laws that were implemented to protect us, and other living things, from pollution and destruction brought about by corporate non-accountability, responsibility or concern for anything above the bottom line. And the tax cuts that only benefit the wealthy who have no intention of paying their fair share. You couldn't have this kind of wealth in any other country, therefore, you should pay your taxes to support the system that made it possible for you to be rich. Both George Soros and Bill Gates Sr., two very wealthy but compassionate Americans, have been saying this for years now.

So what's up with this restructuring of social stratification to two layers? Soon there will be the very rich and the poor, nothing in between. Perhaps this has something to do with those who see themselves as the "chosen few" such that the fewer there are of them, the easier it will be to isolate and insulate themselves from the distastefully poor masses. A hypothetical rationale, though I suspect I may be wrong about the hypothetical quality of it, this could be related to the continuation of the concept of "manifest destiny" and other horrid perceptions of privilege, power, and domination. Only this time it isn't just a continent, it's the whole planet that is at stake-or the prize.

Consider this: If you cut all the social services, there will be massive die-off due to disease, starvation, and food wars leaving fewer mouths to feed or worry about since the medical option won't be available either-unless you're wealthy. You can work the poor harder since they aren't going to last long anyway and then you just throw them away--the "throw away society" as it has never before been envisioned. It makes using the nuclear option less offensive and more practical since there won't be troops to place in harm's way, so much more ease with which to conquer the world so that W can realize his dream of becoming emperor. Not that he will be necessary in the near future as there are far more intelligent and diabolical individuals who are poised to take over as soon as W gets the dirty work out of the way.

Intellect, morality, and compassion could be mutually exclusive here. With no true education for the poor, eventually the wealthy can do anything they please and none of the poor will be able to recognize deception easily or be in any position to do anything about it. But then, this is already the case and it isn't necessarily due to failings of the educational system, rather, it is a product of conditioning through advertising, apathy, and propaganda. I feel this way because I have been paying attention for decades and I am a life-long participant in my responsibilities as a citizen. I was taught, both at home and in school as a child, to understand the responsibility to participate in government as a component of citizenship. Maybe civics should be a theme of focus in education instead of just the name of a car.

What I see is a once great democratic nation unraveling to its ruin before my very eyes and it scares the hell out of me. I don't expect the rest of the world to mourn this event in the least. We don't deserve that much deference considering the way we have treated them this past half century or so. I have to admit that I'm ashamed to be an American because of the way we demonize everyone who isn't us or longing to be like what we want them to think we are.

As for W and this "born again colonialist agenda for the new American planet," it makes sense considering the afore mentioned rationale that this administration has a lust for weaponry with little regard for humanity, and all the other species on the planet. If you have all the big guns, you could be like John Wayne in the movies, always getting your way and so the winner/hero/bully in your own big fat fantasy from which you never have to awaken, until Judgment day that is. But then again, if nobody is there to tell you that what you're doing is immoral, is religion or morality really necessary? As Mrs. Smith once told me, "If you want to gain control over a large population in a hurry, start a religion."

It's time to wake up and oust these bums. This administration has already proven that they have no concern for the rule of law, humanity or anything outside of their small circle of friends and loyalist shills. Since I'm not inside that small circle, and I suspect that the vast majority of "we the little people" (Dennis Hastert, 1997) aren't, perhaps we'd better start screaming bloody murder and take back the country from these charlatans before we lose our ability recover. Remember, corporate shills do not equal public servants. Regime change starts at home.

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