

It's Not About Oil

The Financial Times recently debunked the "It's all about oil" myth

One of those great ideological divides that seem to withstand all reasoned argument is the view that America's determination to oust Saddam Hussein is born of the desire to gain control of Iraqi oil. This view is prevalent in much of Europe and is shared in other parts of the world, especially in the Middle East. Even the wise Nelson Mandela believes it. The view is not, however, dominant, or even much discussed, in the US. Despite the chasm, the implausibility of this view warrants at least one more effort to dispel the myth.

And so they make the effort.

But they do not address another issue: what accounts for the tenacity with which this view is held – and will continue to be held – despite its "implausibility" and despite the efforts of the FT and all others who examine the question rationally?

Wed, 04/02/2003 - 20:22 | [digg](#) | [del.icio.us](#) | [permlink](#)

War for oil, or for the flag?

If this war *were* about oil, it might be justifiable. I mean that if a foreign tyrant had seized oil fields legitimately owned by a private owner, the state representing this owner could be justified in protecting its citizen's property.

The problem is that this war is *not* about oil. It started as an extension of the so-called "war on terror", then invoked the excuse of disarming Saddam Hussein's regime, and finally started under the guise of liberating the Irakis (a large part of whom apparently don't want to be liberated from their tyrant more than most of us want to be liberated from the ones who rule over us).

This war is not about oil, alas! It is about legitimizing and glorifying our monstrous states.

As for why the false view of "war for oil" continues to be held, I submit that it is for the same sort of reasons that warmongers cling to their views: ideological irrationality in general, and naïveté

towards the state in particular. I don't want to imply that the Iraqi tyrant is not much worse than our own, but isn't it strange that the state (our states, the good states, the nice states, flectamus genua) is presumed to be man's best friend, despite the lessons of 25 centuries of history – and of five decades of Public Choice economic analysis?

Pierre Lemieux
<http://www.pierrelemieux.org>

by [Pierre Lemieux](#) on Wed, 04/02/2003 - 20:33 | [reply](#)

It's Not About Oil

I agree that this war is not mainly about oil. Although the prospect of the US enjoying direct access to it cannot be discounted. The "about oil" myth appears to be propagated by Middle Eastern sources and believed by many in the West. Another reason ascribed is the defence of the US dollar against the euro as the currency for oil purchases.

It is true that the initial Iraqi reaction to their "liberation" did not appear to be one of unalloyed joy, but more recent news clips show that the US, and the rest of us, did not fully appreciate the extent to which the Iraqi people in general had been suppressed and terrorised by the regime and its followers.

Our states may not be models of perfect liberty, but I doubt if in this imperfect world we inhabit it is likely to improve very much. At least we ordinary people all have the liberty to go to Iraq and fight for Mr Hussein, but the reverse is certainly not true.

by [Ralph Maddocks](#) on Wed, 04/02/2003 - 23:08 | [reply](#)

War for Rightness

The people who think the war is for oil are basically Marxists and anti-state cynics who can't believe that any country could possibly choose to risk life and limb for the sake of something more important than money. To them, the idea of a state actually trying to do what is morally right, despite the human costs, is unimaginable.

(Not that money isn't important and good, too: but saving the world from nuke-laden terrorists is even more important. It's hard to make any kind of a living when you're fallout dust.)

So, what do the Arab states have that we don't have? Oil is about it, really. In every other respect, they are entirely uncovetable. So oil it must be! The reason why those who hold this belief are impervious to argument is simply that they aren't **interested** in argument. Any more argument would upturn their entire world-views.

In the meantime, things are moving fast in Baghdad, and I very much look forward to hearing what more of the Iraqi people really **do** think about all this, as soon as the war ends and they can start

feeling safe. Until then, we should bear in mind that Saddam is still officially their leader and they are under fear of torture and death if they dare to do anything for the TV cameras other than enthusiastically support his regime.

by [Alice](#) on Thu, 04/03/2003 - 21:06 | [reply](#)

Confessions of a limb

I recognize myself in "the anti-state cynics who can't believe that any country could possibly choose to risk life and limb". I still have to meet a country for a drink, watch his limb, and listen to him talk about his life with his collective mouth. In the history of political thought, this is called social organicism. Auguste Comte, the French 19th-century scientist, believed that individuals were only "organs of the great social Being" -- limbs of the great country, as it were. Danten believed that society (substitute "race" in the case of Hitler) could scarifice an organ (read: an individual) when necessary for social health purposes, just as an individual decides to have a cankered limb cut off. Emile Faguet, the famous French literary critic of the turn of the (other) century (and extraordinary writer), LOL-ROTFed about this "zoological conception of society": "You believe you are a man," he wrote, "but you are only a foot."

Pierre Lemieux

<http://www.pierrelemieux.org>

by [Pierre Lemieux](#) on Fri, 04/04/2003 - 01:34 | [reply](#)

We even have oil. At least Ve

We even have oil. At least Venezuela does...

by [Daniel Strimpel](#) on Mon, 04/07/2003 - 00:57 | [reply](#)

False economy

Does anyone really believe that there is an oil shortage in the western world? No, so why would we want Iraqi oil? Well obviously, if we have access to their oil then the price of oil will go down, right?

Now can someone explain to me why they think this saving will outweigh the cost of firing billions of dollars worth of missiles at iraq, and then paying a comparable amount to repair all the damage caused by them afterwards?

Surely it would be easier just to use this money to subsidise oil in the first place, no?

by [Socrates](#) on Tue, 04/08/2003 - 14:24 | [reply](#)

Oil, Oil. Oil

The United States can't afford to "make it all about oil"! If the

United States rips one penny off Iraq, then all of OPEC would embargo the U.S.!

ditariel

by a reader on Sun, 06/15/2003 - 18:38 | [reply](#)

I Disagree

"Let's look at it simply. The most important difference between North Korea and Iraq is that economically, we just had no choice in Iraq. The country swims on a sea of oil." ~ Paul Wolfowitz, US Deputy Defense Secretary

by a reader on Thu, 07/03/2003 - 14:56 | [reply](#)

la de da

he's saying economic sanctions won't work on an oil-rich country.

-- Elliot Temple

<http://curi.blogspot.com/>

by [Elliot Temple](#) on Thu, 07/03/2003 - 16:58 | [reply](#)

its not about OIL its about \$\$

Money is everything today, Money is power.

The USA itself is not earning a cent, they are paying all that, but its not the USA itslef its the US citizens tax dollars, that are spent in missiles and fighterjets. Its YOUR taxmoney that is going to Bechtel co. that is doing the rebuild. Its not the USa itself that is owning the iraqi Oil, the oil will propably go in private hands. Privatisation is the key i think. al that belongs to the iraqi ppl today will be sold soon, who has the money to buy that stuff? the iraqis???????? its all about oil is just to simple. Its about the liberation and a good thing ,wel that would be nice, but it isnt. Voilence brings only new problems. There are Billions to earn, not by the US itself, but by some ppl inside the USA with much influence in the US goverments and other Goverments. Folowe the money!

by a reader on Sat, 08/23/2003 - 13:50 | [reply](#)

It's about oil and many other things!

If it were only about oil we would simply have planted our flag in Kuait 12 years ago and started pumping away.

Why must there be only one reason. A ruthless tyrant has been deposed, the children of Iraq have a chance for a decent future. Are they any less important than American children? How long were the no fly zones to be enforced, forever? Can anyone imagine solving the problem of Islamic terrorism in a world where Saddam Hussain is still in power? When the President speaks of liberty, freedom and justice for all people of the world how can anyone credibly argue

against him? History is being made in front of our eyes and I for one want to look back some day and knowing I was on the right side of it.

Oil, yes it's about oil too. The free flow of it among other things.

by a reader on Wed, 11/26/2003 - 22:09 | [reply](#)

Supporting Iraq war doesn't become you, libertarians!!! Get rid

What are you talking about? Many people agree that it is not about oil. So what?

- 1) Iraq supported terrorism. No more than: Iran, Syria, Lebanon, Iemen. USA supported terrorists in Macedonia
- 2) Saddam supported Ben Laden - very weak link is observed and it is still not proven. Again, not more than etc.
- 3) Tyran regime. Not more than Northen Korea etc. etc. USA supported Ben Laden at the beginning of his "career".

Does it look like a hypocrisy to you?

4) WMD. A little doubt is remaining about why Saddam resisted and that was probably about well hidden WMD. Again no proofs, a weak doubt after all.

5) Liberate people. They will always choose Islam. And Islam is "incompatible" with democracy. Do they want to be liberated? You talking about children making their choices. Now you have to tell that adult Iraqis are less able to make a choice. Hypocrisy again. Or a devil in details?

by a reader on Mon, 03/15/2004 - 12:16 | [reply](#)

The invasion of Iraq is not about Nation Building or WMD

It is about survival. The world is running out of oil (Noth Sea oil will last just another 5-6 years) and the industrialised world needs desperately the stuff at an affordable price. With a real danger of Saudi Arabia falling in the hands of a fundamentalist regime I belive that securing and controlling the world's second largest oil reserves is just plain common sense. Good luck!

by a reader on Mon, 09/20/2004 - 20:54 | [reply](#)

Make your point intelligently

Wouldn't it be nice if some of the hotshots who want to change the way the world works or explain to all of us who are obviously STOOPID (stupid to the power of 10) could, just once, spell correctly in their musings and make correct use of the language.

by Ted Harris on Fri, 11/26/2004 - 22:15 | [reply](#)

Elections, money, empire, oil and Dad

Of course the second Iraq war was not **all** about oil.

It was about "elections, money, empire, oil and Dad" (to quote Andrew Motion).

To make the point less flippantly, we have the following:

- (1) The USA's constant, gargantuan thirst for oil.
- (2) The fact the Iraq is the second most oil-rich nation on Earth (if I recall correctly - in any case, there's a hell of a lot of oil there).
- (3) The fact that replacing Saddam with a pro-Western regime has the 'side-effect' of securing long-term American access to the oil (*provided that this regime doesn't collapse*. However, we have every reason to think the Americans believed 'their' Iraq would (will) be nice and stable in the long term.)

Put them all together, and the conclusion that Iraq's oil factored heavily in the decision to go to war is almost unavoidable.

Suppose you put a plateful of food in front of a hungry man at 9:00 and by 10:00 he has eaten it. What possible evidence could overturn the contention that the man ate at least partly because he was hungry?

by Neil Fitzgerald on Sat, 11/27/2004 - 03:05 | [reply](#)

A foot in the door

What it's all about is securing a foothold in a vast area hostile to "the life" as we all know it in the west.

Where are an endless number of crazed murderers coming from?

Why are they fighting with barbarity beyond all known values of engagement?

And how are they instructed, trained and financed?

Who knows...Perhaps the neighbouring dictators are a bit uptight about democracy creeping closer and closer...

Or are the Sharia puritans of the near by theocracies worried sick by freedom with all it's accompanying degenerate baggage of fun,alcohol,porn,gambling,choice and all that..

My preference is for an extension of the real world..tourism and decadence included.Murdering women, molesting mules,amputations or even a Friday night out clubbing in Teharan or Jeddah just are'nt my cup of tea...

But that's me

Hooray George.W..Afganistan and Iraq are a good start.

by accidental tourist on Wed, 12/22/2004 - 15:54 | [reply](#)

Advancement depends on cheap energy!

If you can think without your "American Dream" bias, you will soon see that the underlying issue is the building up of defense to maintain "the American Way of Life". In the past two decades things have changed dramatically in regards to foreign oil dependency. This includes that the Asias(China,Japan,India)have become grossly dependent on the same oil we depend on) All have started implementing a oil stockpile strategy .We also have seen peaks in discovery of new oil wells in the 1970s . In the 1950's we were using about 50million barrels per day, now we are using around 75 million barrels per day worldwide. Many physicist believe that our limit to production may very well be around 110 million barrels per day. In the 1970's America experienced its first energy crisis, where we only saw a drop of about 5% in production. (That is all that is needed to cripple our nation, OIL DOES NOT NEED TO RUN OUT TO CAUSE A COLLAPSE)

So, what do we do as Americans, well we pretend to believe that there is sufficient research and advancement of alternative energies, where as the US energy policy contradicts thees "pipe dreams". Simply stated the US energy policy (dealing with the aspect of oil production decrease) is to continue to build up a massive defensive program. If you cannot realize the importance and uniqueness of oil as an energy, then you have your eyes closed. What other liquid can push a 3000lb piece of metal 10 miles with one gallon. The bottle of water you buy everyday and throw away, the car you drive, plastics, paints, distribution systems (average piece of food travels 1500 miles before being consumed) are some of the many of thousands of luxuries we will have to live without if we want to avoid major global resource wars in the future. As long as we have a reason to send 150,000 troops to an oil abundant nation (terror) we will also be able to baby-sit our oil supplies on that side of the planet. Certainly people have come up with great ideas like hydrogen for instance. Another pipe dream, "the hydrogen economy" is a complete fallacy. At the moment the only economical hydrogen fuel cell must use platinum, which is a very finite resource (like oil) and would not come close to replacing the 700million vehicles worldwide. Even if it could, Hydrogen is currently a energy carrier, which means it takes more energy to create potable hydrogen then is actually given out. Furthermore, things you may not even connect with oil are: pesticides to maintain agriculture, running water, construction (6,500 gallons of gas per average house built) and our basic monetary system is controlled by the price of gas per gallon. If you can't see the deeper turmoil that is brewing between the major contenders, China, America and the middle east, then maybe you are just another ignorant American, that comes home from work, turns on the big screen, and absorbs all of the propaganda that the US media has to offer.I certainly realize that our little hundred year spurt of burning off massive amounts of petrochemicals to create prosperity in America will not last through even the next two generations. If we do not address the situation of American over consumption, and global overpopulation, we will have no choice but to go to war to

maintain the same increase in energy consumption we see each

year.

Sincerely

Matthew E. Coyle

University Films Production Executive

*Coming soon, the end of the industrial age, the beginning of the resource wars!

by [Matthew Coyle](#) on Wed, 04/20/2005 - 18:49 | [reply](#)

Your argument makes little se

Your argument makes little sense when you look at who's paying (us, taxpayers) and that some non-paying parties (corporations) are benefiting in the breakdown, buildup and available resources thereafter.

by a reader on Wed, 11/23/2005 - 06:12 | [reply](#)

Re: Your argument makes little sense

Your counter-argument of cui bono, to have any substance, would have to include some account of how the benefit to certain corporations was translated into the liberation of Iraq. How, for instance, did it cause large numbers of people to become persuaded of the rightness of such a liberation? And how did it cause the President and his Administration to embark on a mission whose real purpose was to dispossess their own voters for the benefit of a third party?

Without such an account, your counter-argument is just a general-purpose **conspiracy theory**.

by [Editor](#) on Thu, 11/24/2005 - 00:59 | [reply](#)

The war on Iraq was more on a

The war on Iraq was more on and ego booster than oil. People who are speculating that America needs the oil of Iraq are totally lost. Perhaps it is a possible reason, but I don't see any logic since America is already controlling Saudi's oil. The attack on Iraq was Bush's move to show the world not to mess up with America or else.

by [Online Wong PoKér Hu](#) on Fri, 11/25/2005 - 00:13 | [reply](#)

hahahaha

what an amazing time capsule about how retarded the supporters of the phony war in Iraq were back in the day.

they're still totally stupid but back then they were goose-

stepping!!!!

by a reader on Sat, 12/03/2005 - 18:27 | [reply](#)

Firmly in the 'stupid' camp!

Whichever side of this debate you come down on, anyone who spends some time considering the facts and questioning some of the half-truths and propoganda that surround this issue, will quickly realise that there were strong, valid and logical reasons both for and against going to war in Iraq.

Anyone who dismisses the other side as: "Retarded", "Totally Stupid" or "Goose-stepping" is either themselves too stupid to understand the debate, or (more likely) too intellectually lazy.

Unless they change, they are doomed to learn nothing from history, and blunder through life with their shallow, mistaken opinions, continually astonished at the 'stupidness' of others, and the 'retarded' nature of others' actions.

I can only hope that 'a reader' never ends up in a position of power where his/her ignorance and laziness can do any real harm.

by Mark on Mon, 08/21/2006 - 11:18 | [reply](#)

'A reader'

If this pathetic, infantile tirade is what 'a reader' has to contribute, then I suggest he go back to playing in his sandbox, because he is not fit to join an adult debate.

His screeching reference to goose-stepping tells us a lot about the 'mind'-set of this ignorant individual.

by **Yoni** on Sun, 09/10/2006 - 16:03 | [reply](#)

OIL AS A WEAPON

Osama bin Laden himself has said if America leaves the Middle-East, Muslims will still sell them oil. What do THEY need the oil for? Here's a critical point that everyone seems to keep missing though: OIL IS MONEY! Not primarily for us, for THEM!! And tell me, oh great wise CONSPIRACY THEORISTS OF THE WORLD, what will the Fanatical, Extremist Islamic Fundamentalists of the Middle-East DO with that oil money?

Why don't we FIGHT in Darfur? Why don't we invade South-East Asia again? Why don't we take-on North Korea? Is it REALLY because they don't have oil? Actually YES! But not because WE make money, but because the radical assholes who have the OIL make money! Do we invade NICE nations, with good leaders and decent political potential, who happen to have OIL? NOPE!

North Korea can't even feed its' own, let alone fight US. The Sudan

might spread their violence across their borders, which may cause us to go in, even without the oil, as we did in the former Yugoslavia. We don't tolerate the 'spreading' of violence so much. BUT, if you have OIL, if you have MONEY from that OIL, you are a much, Much, MUCH bigger international threat!!!

Think about it please, before you go on and on about how we are fighting for cheap OIL, oil for US! No, it's to keep OIL MONEY out of the pockets of tyrants.

by REN on Fri, 11/10/2006 - 06:23 | [reply](#)

Are you people serious?

Consider two things:

1 The US is by far the largest user of oil.

Our own reserves, combined with Venezuela and Mexico could not sustain us. We could not meet demand when OPEC cut us off in the 70s, and we use far more today than we did then.

2 Iraq has around 25% of the proven oil reserves in the world. The Persian Gulf has 50% all together.

No, oil was not the only factor. Partly the war was an excuse to increase military spending, to set a precedent of ignoring the UN, and to generally get citizen support of increased government - particularly executive - power over both our own lives and the world.

Partly it is a warning to other countries that the US is not to be messed with, that we should be given whatever we want without having to ask twice.

Basically it is about world domination.

However, oil is a huge component of that, and it is not coincidence that we choose as our target the country with the second most oil reserves on the planet.

There are plenty of other countries with human rights abuses, genocide, a lack of democracy, or Islamic based governments. We did/do not send massive amounts of troops into Rwanda or Darfur even though what happened/is happening in those countries is at least as bad as anything Saddam ever did.

Saudi Arabia has a King and no Parliament or congress. There are no elections in Saudi Arabia. There never have been. Saudi Arabia is also a Islamist country in which law is based on the Koran. People have very little freedom.

Yet, Saudi Arabia is our ally.

Iraq, by contrast, was a secular government. People had far more freedom in Iraq than in Saudi Arabia, and in fact, more freedom under Saddam than they do now (for example, in most areas not directly controlled by US troops today women must wear head scarves).

Ultimately it is about preserving the American way of life - i.e. CONSUMPTION. Massive, excessive amounts of consumption. When our leaders use the term "democracy" what they actually mean is "capitalism". Unrestricted free trade is what allows our corporations (which are becoming more and more synonymous with

government) to become as excessively wealthy as they are. If we did not display a giant show of force now and then, the rest of the world would not put up with us. Iraq is a warning to OPEC. We leave Saudi Arabia alone because they give us a fair price. Most people, when making a deal with the mafia or any other bully, offer a good price, and then except what ever terms are suggested. Saddam had balls, so we cut them off to serve as a warning to everyone else. Getting control over the immense Iraqi oil fields is much more than just a side benefit.

It is about power. We are exploiting the world. This is why illegal immigrants want so badly to get in here. Everyone would prefer to be on this side of the fence, since we have both the guns and the money.

The "threat" of "terrorism" is no different than the "threat" of "communism" a few decades ago. What did the communists want which made them evil?

They want to take away the money of the wealthy, and spread it around.

That's it.

Nothing to do with democracy or authoritarianism. It has to do with capitalism. Russia was a democracy. Not a perfect one, but ours never has been either (look at a Gerrymandering district map).

And they were able to convince the American people that it was an issue of good (us) vs evil (them).

Even today you see people on this very form using "Marxist" as an insult, with no context or basis. And so it continues...

by Jay Aziza on Wed, 12/20/2006 - 16:19 | [reply](#)

Oil or Oil Money

We are not getting much oil out of Iraq, but our economy is still doing well. Therefore Iraqi oil is not necessary for the United States and Great Britain to be economic powers.

On the other hand, we did try and should keep trying to keep oil money (and money from other sources) out of the hands of Saddam and other evil dictators. We need to do this because many dictators use money from oil and money from other sources to foment evil throughout the world.

We don't invade other countries whom we would also like to deprive of the resources to foment evil, either because we lack the power to do so without grave consequences to ourselves or other innocents, or because such countries have less capacity to create evil throughout the world.

Although we should pay much more attention to Darfur and other African tragedies, we are currently not paying much attention because we suspect that many countries in Africa, ruled by evil dictators, will not have the resources to be able to immediately hurt freedom loving peoples throughout the world.

The reason we don't attack North Korea, despite their potentially

very threatening war machine, is that if we do so, we are concerned that our freedom loving brothers and sisters in South Korea will be killed.

That's why we invaded Iraq, and do not want to invade North Korea (right now). And that's why we basically ignore Darfur, but not Tehran.

Now, whether our invasion of Iraq will keep more money out of the hands of terrorists and states that sponsor terrorism, for example, is open to debate. But that was our intent.

by a reader on Thu, 12/21/2006 - 00:57 | [reply](#)

A little volatile of a post,

A little volatile of a post, but spot on. Another reason that we didn't invade N. Korea is because they already had nukes, and Saddam didn't (yet).

by a reader on Wed, 04/11/2007 - 21:33 | [reply](#)

Reading past posts is humorous.

A few Americans must be feeling sheepish right about now. I wonder, have the posters become more informed regarding U.S. policy towards oil in the past, present, and future?

by a reader on Fri, 06/22/2007 - 21:12 | [reply](#)

1) A country (in our case the

1) A country (in our case the USA) is not an agent, it is an aggregate of many people with various opinions. Therefore, the different reasons that people give to go to war can all be correct in the same time.

2) Even if simple everyday acts are often driven by single motives (going out to buy cigarettes), political decisions are usually taken after a complex process of weighting pros and cons.

Conclusion:

-Most of you are probably right in different degrees.

-If we want to discuss this topic seriously we should try to avoid speaking of America as a single entity and start speaking about Bush, a typical conscript, a board member of Halliburton, a think tank representative, Cheney etc...

P.S. Understanding demands cold blood, rational thinking and a careful hear for arguments of the opposite conviction. After the analyse is done, speaking forcefully for one side and calling the other side blind is sometimes justified! Sometimes one side is 99.9% right.

by jmd on Sat, 10/06/2007 - 23:26 | [reply](#)

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