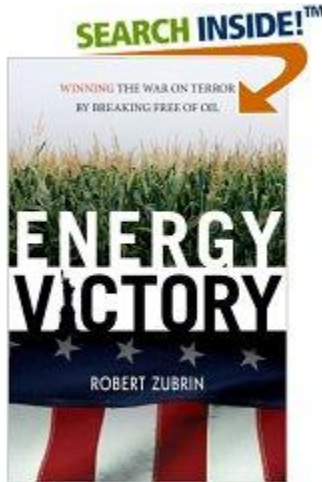


“Energy Victory” by Robert Zubrin

A book review by Glenn R. Jackson



[Energy Victory: Winning the War on Terror by Breaking Free of Oil \(Hardcover\)](#)

by [Robert Zubrin](#)

“Are we still a nation of pioneers? Do we choose to make the efforts required to continue as the vanguard of human progress, a people of the future, or will we allow ourselves to be a people of the past, one whose accomplishments are celebrated only in museums?”, so wrote Robert Zubrin from the preface to his first book “The Case for Mars”, reminding Americans’ that their

nation achieved greatness because they, as a people, always sought the future. And in their seeking they found a way free of control and of any check against their collective dreams for themselves and their children’s children. In establishing the American age, they would find that national greatness comes from a shared vision as a people for a future lived in freedom, and not just from some happenstance or whim of nature.

Often as a nation we have aimed high and missed the mark, but never have we been a people to settle, to content ourselves with going along for the ride. As “The Case for Mars” asks the question of why we are content to dabble in space post-Apollo, Zubrin’s latest action inspiring book, “Energy Victory” asks the resounding question of the American age - why has America remained a contented captive of the Arab Petroleum cartel? And why does America continue to help cultivate, finance and shelter the benefactors of the very forces that we commit our young men and women in the armed services to fight in a struggle of “kill or be killed?”

In “Energy Victory,” Zubrin details not only a plan for energy independence, but demonstrates conclusively the absurdity of our present national energy policy. From pointing out the role of Saudi Arabia in spreading worldwide the fanatic Islamic Wahhabi worldview and that worldviews direct ties to our current “terror war,” to the use of petroleum wealth in buying influence in the corridors of Washington, our national energy policy is seriously missing the mark of American national interest. For anyone still doubting that Islamic terrorism is a grave threat because of the vast wealth of the oil Sheiks being used to finance it, and the influence that their wealth buys in the corridors of power in the world’s remaining “superpower,” Zubrin’s first sixty pages are conclusive for all but those few still awaiting their second cup of Kool-Aid.

Yet “Energy Victory” goes beyond just building the case about an oil and Islamic fanaticism co-dependency, but sets an ambitious strategic goal of destroying the OPEC cartel and creating an energy independent America that plays straight to our nation’s natural resource strengths. Based on Nineteenth century technology and chemistry that is easily understood with no more than a high school chemistry background he argues that to “annihilate the oil cartel, we need to switch the world to a different fuel.”

In the chapter “Changing the Energy Trump Suit,” Zubrin acknowledges that currently oil is the fuel with the trump role and the United States is by far the worst loser in the energy game with oil as the trump “card.” Yet the U.S. energy position changes dramatically when the trump fuel cards are changed to one of the world’s other major energy resources of coal, natural gas, or biomass. To make that change in the trump card the U.S. would need to convert coal, natural gas, and biomass into their “energy equivalent in usable liquid fuels,” or simply “all we need to do is make alcohol,” and in point of fact the simplest alcohols – ethanol and methanol. And while the energy densities, as Zubrin points out, of the alcohols are not that of petroleum based liquid fuels the current price points of gasoline and other fuels make alcohols very attractive and doable, while the strategic imperative of breaking the back of terror’s financiers makes an alcohol based energy source a necessity.

The technologies exist today, and have for the last 30 plus years, to convert our automobile production to 100% flex-fuel internal combustion, meaning an internal engine monitoring that burns all mixtures of fuels whether alcohol or oil based. Add to that “Nobel Prize winning chemist George Olah” has shown that “...nearly every synthetic plastic currently made from petroleum products can be efficiently produced through methanol chemistry instead,” and it is clear that all that is lacking is the political will to move America in the direction of freedom’s power.

As Robert Zubrin builds his compelling case for converting to an alcohol based energy economy it becomes apparent that our national energy problems stem in largest part from lack of political foresight and will, and not from an absence of technical knowhow, resource availability, or even environmental concerns. From President George W. Bush’s famous hand-holding stroll at the Crawford ranch with Saudi King Abdullah, to former secretary of state Henry Kissinger and former Senate majority leader George Mitchell both resigning from the 9/11 commission rather than disclosing their Saudi Arabian consultancies, this is a government that is deeply infiltrated by big money...and the Saudi’s have some of the deepest pockets. And they know how to use it, like funding for a popular Washington think-tank the American Enterprise Institute, home to many prominent neo-conservative “advisors.”

The American Enterprise Institute (AEI) is a favorite venue for members of the current administration and is a provider of choice for any administration policy in search of a position paper of support. The President’s state of the union address suggested Hydrogen Fuel Cell initiative being a fine example of policy being driven by think tank position paper. As they say,

it sounds good on paper, but the energy required to create free Hydrogen for fuel cells in fact creates an energy deficit. All of which makes the AEI guilty of yet another policy misdirection.

Robert Zubrin's "Energy Victory" is an easy read, compelling in exposing the dangers of Saudi Arabian Wahabbism, disturbing in detailing Saudi influence peddling at the highest U.S. government levels, and completely understandable in portraying the strategic planning needed to bring the United States into an energy independent future. With "Energy Victory" the question is no longer about a blue print to follow in building a secure American future, but in how to compel action from the political class that may have become too compromised to serve America's national interest. Reforming that American political system is an approaching crusade, but without question a first step is to buy this book and become an informed constituency.