

---

**The New Map: Energy, Climate, and the Clash of Nations by Daniel Yergin, Penguin Books, 2021.**

Mark T. Peters, Ph.D.  
*USAF, Retired*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/jss>  
pp. 85-88

---

**Recommended Citation**

Peters,, Mark T. Ph.D.. "The New Map: Energy, Climate, and the Clash of Nations by Daniel Yergin, Penguin Books, 2021.." *Journal of Strategic Security* 15, no. 2 (2022) : 85-88.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5038/1944-0472.15.2.2030>

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/jss/vol15/iss2/6>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Open Access Journals at Digital Commons @ University of South Florida. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Strategic Security by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ University of South Florida. For more information, please contact [scholarcommons@usf.edu](mailto:scholarcommons@usf.edu).

---

**The New Map: Energy, Climate, and the Clash of Nations by  
Daniel Yergin, Penguin Books, 2021.**

***The New Map: Energy, Climate, and the Clash of Nations* by Daniel Yergin, Penguin Books, 2021. ISBN 9780143111153. Photographs, graphics, sources cited, end notes, index. Pp., 524. \$22.00**

Review by Dr. Mark T. Peters II, USAF, Retired

If you haven't read Daniel Yergin's previous books on energy, *The Prize*, and *The Quest*, leaping in with the *The New Map: Energy, Climate, and the Clash of Nations* offers an effective introduction to his writing. Yergin summarizes across regions, policy, and technology to offer a comprehensive view. Each section, if not each chapter, starts historically, expands through modern development, and proposes possible futures. The book's first two-thirds uses a geographical progression through North America, Russia, China, and the Middle East, while the last quarter explores climate and technology challenges. Not remaining on purely traditional petroleum discovery and mining, the work includes shale oil, natural gas, and how political policy affects existing resources. Yergin rounds out the study with forthcoming technologies such as ride-sharing and electric power as well as renewable energies. The book was enjoyable, offering an excellent refresher for energy wonks as well as providing additional perspective for the next several years. It is recommend for anyone seeking an update on how energy affects policy or just looking for deeper political understanding.

The book's thesis states changing geopolitical concerns create a new global map influencing power dynamics for traditional energy from oil, gas, coal, and renewables as well as national power shaped by economics, military power, and geography. This postulate expands to cover coronavirus impacts on shifting global oil frameworks through physical distribution (Supply chain) challenges and political constraints. Regional traditional energy supply changes are tied to expanding technology in shale oil, renewable power, and transportation impacts. Transportation impacts include self-driving cars and the potential to shift from oil to electric. The future political concentration highlights the potential disruption as countries shift from a primary energy supply to multiple sources as driven by green agreements and breakthrough technologies. The thesis supports change, highlighting recent changes and where future transitions may occur.

The first stop on exploring geographic change occurs in the Americas and largely focuses on the dynamics created by shale oil improvements. Shale oil involves obtaining material from tight sands not reachable with normal drilling through horizontal drilling at depth and using hydraulic fracturing, “fracking,” to inject water and solvents to assist recovery. More expensive than traditional drilling, while oil prices remained high, shale oil created additional opportunities. This opportunity ties to expanding Liquid Natural Gas (LNG) distribution, cooling released gas to liquid form under pressure and shipping domestically or internationally. These items were driven by existing pipelines and in 2018, led to the U.S. taking the lead as the world’s premier oil producer for the first time in over 40 years. This lead evaporated after 2021 Biden administration’s actions to shut pipelines and reduce U.S. oil production, leading to Russia and the Middle East retaking leading positions. The US has established production, and distribution facing primarily internal political challenges to resume a world-leading role.

Russia, a traditional US adversary, has long depended on oil production as the premier source of wealth to create global influence, especially in the European theater. This section, consequently, deals with international sanctions impact on Russia, and Russian relations with Ukraine. The work traces conflict origins, beginning with the USSR dissolution, and then continuing with Ukrainian pipeline tariffs when delivering EU products. Yergin proposed that sanctions helped internal Russian economic growth, clearing out insolvent banks and transitioning consumers to Russian-produced goods. Briefly explored are Russian-Chinese relations, Kazakhstani oil, and the Nordstream 2 pipeline that delivers LNG directly to the EU without Ukrainian influences. Russia’s future growth depends more on distribution than development, hampered by its aggressive foreign relations, and lack of warm-water ports.

The Chinese perspective addresses distribution through the South China Sea (SCS) and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The SCS remains a hotly contested geographic area where China continues to argue for political control based on streamlined distribution needs and the oil development potential. This area is contested by Japan, the Philippines, Vietnam, and the U.S among others. China’s historical claim begins in 1436 with the treasure fleet and deepens in 1936 when the first 9-Dash Line map was

created. The 9-Dash Line extends China's international maritime boundaries to the edges of the SCS and would prevent other nations from developing or transiting without Chinese approval. The BRI, a modern Silk Road, reflects similar goals by eventually providing China with a globe-spanning network of ports and development not subject to international interference. China still faces internal challenges from pollution and population control but strives to address both through expanding economic prosperity.

Differing slightly from the previous section, the new Middle East roadmap continues old trends by exploring how geographically-based conflict and political decisions affected oil distribution. The section begins with Sykes-Picot agreement to initially set geographic lines in the area and then wanders through how Iran, Iraq, and Israel deal with continuing conflict before touching briefly on Egypt, Bahrain, and Yemen. Yergin spends more time detailing conflicts than dealing with oil specific issues. The last element highlights recent OPEC problems with consensus agreements and the lingering COVID-19 impacts on oil prices. U.S. and Russian oil production and development successes have affected the global perception of the Middle East as the primary world oil provider. Overall, the individual country influences and political turbulence make it difficult to foresee any unified oil sustainability decisions from this region over the near, or even long, term.

After thoroughly exploring geography, Yergin quickly, less than a quarter of the book, touches on how sustainability and technological improvements could change markets. New technology outlooks examine improved electric car batteries and robot-driven options, the auto-auto. Missing is how energy production might affect charging electric vehicles. On the sustainability side, the text reviews the Paris Accords attempt to reach green standards as well as developments in renewables like wind or solar. A serious challenge is raised in that many developing countries will likely continue to need oil with only limited opportunities for the more expensive investment required for renewables. For all the renewable emphasis, it is disappointing that Yergin spends only seven pages out of 500 discussing those issues. Challenges posed to oil due to new and changing technologies seem to pose little threat to overall global usage due to their minimal replacement value for energy delivered and the high capital investment required.

One major disappointment in this work is it completely skips over any discussion of using nuclear power to mitigate dependencies on coal and natural gas. The U.S. Energy Information Administration currently reports 60% of U.S. power is fossil fuels (38% natural gas, 21% coal), 19% nuclear, and 20% from renewables with 9% wind, 6% hydropower, and 3% solar.<sup>1</sup> Globally, we see relatively similar numbers, but hydropower overtakes nuclear at 16% versus 10%.<sup>2</sup> Some of this could be due to developing countries' impact as nuclear is a more mature technology. Wind and solar have been rising globally, largely making up for the nuclear reduction rather than any change to coal or gas usage. Oil production has dropped as source production but produces largely the same terawatt energy amounts as in 1985 while nuclear production has doubled. Nuclear energy has been relatively consistent over the past 40 years with the biggest change coming from the growth in wind and solar renewables. A more comprehensive look across multiple sources could have helped better inform the reader.

Overall, *The New Map: Energy, Climate, and the Clash of Nations* provided an interesting perspective on oil production today, and changes in the near term. The book does not show the clear focus of other Yergin's publications but provided at least nominal coverage on a lot of areas. This is an excellent update for those new to energy politics but if one has been following the field, most of the information is repetitive. At the same time, it proves beneficial to have all that information collocated into a single reference source. The underlying geographic politics are covered adequately while the new technology and climate material has been addressed recently in numerous publications with much greater detail. I would recommend this book to those looking for a quick energy knowledge update or moving into new areas involving energy.

---

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Energy Information Administration (2022) What is U.S. electricity generation by energy source. <https://www.eia.gov/tools/faqs/faq.php?id=427&t=3>

<sup>2</sup> Ritchie, H. and Roser, M. (2022). Electricity mix. Our World in Data. <https://ourworldindata.org/electricity-mix>