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Opinion: The answer to Russia's aggression isn't more oil. It's different energy

It will ameliorate climate change, and make Putin's energy weaponization irrelevant

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Vladimir Putin's war of aggression in Ukraine has made it abundantly clear that our fossil fuel-dependent economy jeopardizes our national security as hostile foreign leaders weaponize their energy resources.

Similarly, the rapidly intensifying climate crisis, which is causing widespread disruption with no place on earth escaping the impacts of rising temperatures and increasingly extreme weather, is tied directly to our dependence on fossil fuels.

For these reasons, the time is now for the U.S. to take bold climate action by accelerating our transition away from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources and instituting forward-looking policies.

The problem of our dangerous dependence on imported fossil fuels isn't new or even partisan. Sixteen years ago, in his State of the Union address, President George W. Bush said, "...We have a serious problem: America is addicted to oil, which is often imported from unstable parts of the world."

Although Putin's invasion of Ukraine and the resulting humanitarian crisis are dominating the headlines now, we must heed the warning by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in [its new report](#) that says if countries don't immediately and drastically slash their emissions from oil, natural gas, and coal, we likely won't reach the goal of limiting the catastrophic impacts of climate change.

Even rural communities like Chaffee County are experiencing the expensive and devastating impacts of climate change from excess atmospheric carbon, exhaust carcinogens, temperature inversions, outsized wildfires, and more. Further, [a new study](#) has found that global warming is increasing the likelihood that heavy rains following wildfires in the American West will lead to mudslides and flash floods. If we don't take swift action, the costs to our communities will continue to increase.

Some argue that the solution to our dangerous reliance on imported fossil fuels is to increase domestic drilling. That's an ill-conceived and dangerous solution that will only exacerbate the climate emergency and further hurt the pocketbooks of Americans.

The oil and gas industry has been sitting on 9,000 approved, but unused drilling permits to drill on federal public land, while at the same time demanding more oil and gas lease permits that wouldn't even result in easing the supply shortage anytime soon, rising gasoline prices at the pump, and raking in billions in record profits.

Further, oil and gas extraction on our public lands [accounts for about 25% of U.S. climate emissions](#), and the U.S. has sustained 310 weather and climate disasters since 1980, costing more than \$2.155 trillion.

The United States cannot drill its way to energy independence. Ramping up gas, oil, and coal production is not the answer. Instead, we must transition away from the boom-and-bust cycles of fossil fuels and act swiftly to ensure that we are more energy efficient in using our energy while promoting energy conservation.

At the same time, we must accelerate the development of clean energy sources such as wind and solar, which are increasingly reliable and are the cheapest

energy sources available, as well as one of the fastest-growing. These approaches, along with other smart policies, will reduce the economic damage caused by foreign supply chain disruptions and/or international political conflicts while also lowering costs.

A new Princeton University study found clean energy investments included in the Build Back Better Act that the House passed in November 2021 but has stalled in the Senate [would lower 2030 U.S. energy expenditures by 6.6%](#), delivering an annual savings of 67 billion dollars for households, businesses, and industry, and help counter inflation.

As a businessman and veteran — including time spent monitoring the Caspian Basin oil and gas industry as a strategist on the Joint Staff — the war in Ukraine and the dire warnings from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change make clear to me that we must end our addiction to fossil fuels by harnessing our nation's talent and resources to greatly expand our viable clean energy sector.

Taking these forward-looking actions will help combat the devastating and costly impacts of climate change and bring more geopolitical stability, energy security, price predictability, and protect our land, water, and air for future generations.

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