

Coal Miners' Futures in Renewable Energy

Exclusive: President Trump has scored political points by touting coal-mining jobs, but he could create more real jobs in coal country by recognizing the potential for renewable-energy jobs, says Jonathan Marshall.

By Jonathan Marshall

If President Trump wants to earn a rare legislative victory and take political credit for reviving hard-hit regions of rural America, he should take a close look at how one Kentucky coal company is creating jobs.

Berkeley Energy Group this month announced plans to put coal miners back to work by building the largest solar project in Appalachia on top of a closed mountaintop strip mine near the town of Pikeville. The Eastern Kentucky coal company is partnering with the Environmental Defense Fund, which has helped develop 9,000 megawatts of renewable energy, to bring jobs and clean energy to the region.

Mining employment in the area has plummeted from more than 14,000 jobs in 2008 to fewer than 4,000 today, owing to mine automation, competition from natural gas, and environmental controls on dirty coal emissions.

Even if Trump's administration and Congress roll back clean air and water rules, most experts agree that coal-mining jobs are not coming back, particularly in Appalachia where production costs are relatively high.

But there is vast potential for the region to reclaim its ravaged landscapes for use in generating solar energy, if federal policy continues to offer incentives. Solar resources in Kentucky, for instance, are favorable enough to power nearly 1,000 homes for every two acres of solar panels.

Reimagining Coal Country

Writing last year in the *Charleston Gazette-Mail*, West Virginia solar entrepreneur Dan Conant wrote, "Our people have given sweat, blood, tears and lives to help build and power America. Reimagining ourselves not as a coal state, but as an energy state – including solar and wind – is critical if we are going to continue powering America. All we need is imagination (and a little encouragement and support) as millennial West Virginians lead the way into the future."

Such visions are still a tough sell in many conservative communities, but many "red" states, whose politicians disdain environmental protection and deny the

threat of global climate disruption, are learning to appreciate solar energy. North Carolina, Arizona, Utah, Georgia and Texas rank among the top 10 states for solar electric capacity. Together, their photovoltaic cells power more than a million homes.

In Florida, the state's largest utility just announced plans to add nearly 2,100 megawatts of new solar capacity over the next seven years while shutting down dirty and expensive coal plants. By 2023, it expects to generate four times more energy from solar than from coal and oil combined.

At the same time, the solar industry is sending out more and more paychecks across rural America. Texas alone supports about 9,400 jobs from its solar industry. Nationally, the solar industry added 51,000 jobs last year and now employs over a quarter million people, more than three times as many as the coal industry. Solar jobs are attractive, paying a median wage of \$26 an hour for installers.

Wind Sweeping Down the Plains

Wind energy is another big job engine that appeals to pragmatic conservatives who care more about the economy than the environment. More than three-quarters of Republican congressional districts have operational wind energy projects or active wind-related manufacturing facilities.

Texas, Iowa, and Oklahoma are the three top states for installed wind generation capacity, beating out former industry leader California. Many other red states, like Montana, Nebraska, and Wyoming, have immense untapped potential for low-cost wind generation.

Power Company of Wyoming is building the largest wind project in the country, with a capacity of up to 3,000 megawatts. Montana is also receiving hundreds of millions of dollars in new wind investments. No wonder: a typical wind project in that state supplies electricity at 4.7 cents per kilowatt-hour, compared to 6.8 cents from coal-fired generation.

Rock-ribbed Republican ranchers and farmers enjoy the income they earn from leasing space to turbines while continuing to use their land. In Texas, the wind industry employs more than 22,000 people and pays more than \$60 million a year to lease holders. Those facts can be appreciated even by politicians who don't care that Texas wind energy avoids carbon dioxide emissions equal to 8.3 million cars on the road.

Nationwide, employment in the wind industry topped 100,000 for the first time last year. The industry added jobs at nine times the rate of the overall economy. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that the fastest growing

occupation in the country is wind turbine technician, with a median wage of \$51,000 a year.

Wind now supplies 5.5 percent of all electricity in the United States, contrary to President Trump's ill-informed claim that "for the most part they (wind turbines) don't work." Wind is now one of the lowest cost sources of electricity, even without federal subsidies, according to newly released estimates by the Department of Energy.

And contrary to Trump's complaint that solar is "so expensive," energy from the sun is now cheaper than new coal or nuclear power. As a result, nearly two-thirds of new U.S. generation capacity in each of the last two years used renewable technologies.

Clean Jobs for Trump

Even if President Trump doesn't yet get it, his Energy Secretary, former Texas Governor Rick Perry, and his Interior Secretary, former Montana Congressman Ryan Zinke, both seem to quietly appreciate the growing potential of renewable energy. Perhaps they can educate the President, and persuade him to reap big political gains by promoting clean jobs along with clean energy in rural and rust-belt America.

Rather than eliminating funding for the Appalachian Regional Commission, for example, Trump could steer more of its resources into clean energy training and investment programs. A study published last year by scholars at Michigan Technological University and Oregon State University showed that "a relatively minor investment (\$180 million to \$1.8 billion, based on best and worst case scenarios) in retraining would allow the vast majority of U.S. coal workers to switch to solar-related positions."

Trump could also ramp up funding for the Solar Training Network, established last year by The Solar Foundation with White House support to "improve access to solar training, resources, and careers" and "increase the quality and diversity of the solar workforce and establish nationally consistent training standards."

In line with Trump's commitment to rebuilding U.S. manufacturing and competing with China, he could also redouble successful Energy Department programs to support research and development on cutting-edge technologies for solar and wind generation, energy storage, and power grid management.

Such proposals, coming from President Obama, earned widespread Republican scorn. Coming from Trump, they could create a major realignment in Congress by forging an alliance of Democrats with pragmatic Red State legislators who see where the new jobs are.

It can be done; in conservative Wyoming, a leading coal state, legislators recently crushed proposals to impose higher taxes on wind energy. President Trump just needs to follow through for once on his grand promises to blue-collar voters, rather than continuing to act like just another traditional Republican pawn of the fossil fuel industry.

Jonathan Marshall is author of “Dangerous Denial of Global Warming,” “Team Trump Ponders Climate ‘Engineering’,” and “U.S. Media’s Global Warming Denialism.”

The Bait-and-Switch ‘War on Terror’

The U.S. “war on terror” has always been a bait-and-switch scam on the American people, with Washington putting the desires of its Mideast allies ahead of defeating Al Qaeda and ISIS, Gareth Porter reports for Middle East Eye.

By Gareth Porter

New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman outraged many readers when he wrote an opinion piece on April 12 calling on President Trump to “back off fighting territorial ISIS in Syria.” The reason he gave for that recommendation was not that U.S. wars in the Middle East are inevitably self-defeating and endless, but that it would reduce the “pressure on Assad, Iran, Russia and Hezbollah.”

That suggestion that the U.S. sell out its interest in counter-terrorism in the Middle East to gain some advantage in power competition with its adversaries was rightly attacked as cynical. But, in fact, the national security bureaucracies of the U.S. – which many have come to call the “Deep State” – have been selling out their interests in counter-terrorism in order to pursue various adventures in the region ever since George W Bush declared a “Global War on Terrorism” in late 2001.

The whole war on terrorism has been, in effect, a bait-and-switch operation from the beginning. The idea that U.S. military operations were somehow going to make America safer after the 9/11 attacks was the bait. What has actually happened ever since then, however, is that senior officials at the Pentagon and the CIA have been sacrificing the interest of American people in weakening Al Qaeda in order to pursue their own institutional interests.

It all began, of course, with the invasion of Iraq. Counter-terrorism specialists in the U.S. government knew perfectly well that U.S. “regime change” in Iraq through military force would give a powerful boost to Osama bin Laden’s

organization and to anti-American terrorism generally.

Rand Beers, then senior director for counter-terrorism on the National Security Council staff, told his predecessor Richard Clarke in late 2002, "Do you know how much it will strengthen al-Qaeda and groups like that if we occupy Iraq?"

After it quickly became clear that the U.S. war in Iraq was already motivating young men across the Middle East to wage jihad against the U.S. in Iraq, the chief architect of the occupation of Iraq, Paul Wolfowitz, came up with the patently false rationalization that Iraq would be a "flytrap" for jihadists.

Breeding Terrorists

But in January 2005, after a year of research, the CIA issued a major intelligence assessment warning that the war was breeding more Al Qaeda extremist militants from all over the Middle East and even giving them combat experience that they would eventually be able to use back home.

In a 2006 National Intelligence Estimate, the intelligence community warned that the number of people identifying themselves as jihadists was growing and was becoming more widespread geographically and even the predicted growing terrorist threats from "self-radicalized cells" both in the U.S. and abroad.

The war managers continued to claim that their wars were making Americans safer. CIA Director Michael Hayden not only sought to sell the flypaper argument on Iraq, but also bragged to the Washington Post in 2008 that the CIA was making great progress against Al Qaeda, based mainly on its burgeoning drone war in Pakistan.

But Hayden and the CIA had a huge bureaucratic interest in that war. He had lobbied Bush in 2007 to loosen restraints on drone strikes in Pakistan and let the CIA launch lethal attacks on the mere suspicion that a group of males were Al Qaeda.

It soon became clear that it wasn't really weakening the Al Qaeda in the northwest Pakistan at all. Even drone operators themselves began privately criticizing the drone attacks for making many more young Pakistanis hate the United States and support Al Qaeda. The only thing Leon Panetta, Hayden's successor as CIA director, could say in defense of the program was that it was "the only game in town".

Barack Obama wanted out of a big war in Iraq. But CENTCOM Commander Gen. David Petraeus and Joint Staff director Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal, talked Obama into approving a whole new series of covert wars using CIA drone strikes and special operations commando raids against Al Qaeda and other jihadist organizations in a

dozen countries in the Middle East, North Africa and Central Asia. At the top of their list of covert wars was Yemen, where Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) had just been formed.

Cruise Missiles and Drones

Since 2009, the Joint Special Operations Command and the CIA have launched 16 cruise missile strikes and 183 drone strikes in Yemen. Unfortunately, they lacked the intelligence necessary for such a campaign. As many as one-third of the strikes killed innocent civilians and local notables – including the cruise missile strike in December 2009 which killed 41 civilians and attack on a wedding party in December 2013. Virtually every independent observer agrees that those killings have fed Yemeni hatred of the U.S. and contributed to AQAP's luster as the leading anti-U.S. organization in the country.

The CIA again claimed they were doing a splendid job of hitting AQAP, but in fact the Yemeni offshoot of Al Qaeda continued to be the primary terrorism threat while the covert war continued. Three times between late 2009 and 2012, it mounted efforts to bring down airliners and nearly succeeded in two of the three.

In late 2011 and early 2012, the contradiction between the U.S. pretension to counter-terrorism in its Middle East policy and the interests sharpened even further. That's when the Obama administration adopted a new anti-Iran hard line in the region to reassure the Saudis that we were still committed to the security alliance. That hardline policy had nothing to do with a nuclear deal with Iran, which came more than a year later.

At first, it took form of covert logistical assistance to the Sunni allies to arm Sunni anti-Assad forces in Syria. But in 2014, the Obama administration began providing anti-tank missiles to selected anti-Assad armed groups. And when the Nusra Front wanted the groups the CIA had supported in Idlib to coordinate with the jihadist offensive to seize control of Idlib province, the Obama administration did not object.

The Obama national security team was willing to take advantage of the considerable military power of the Nusra Front-led jihadist alliance. But it was all done with a wink and a nod to maintain the fiction that it was still committed to defeating Al Qaeda everywhere.

When the Saudis came to Washington in March 2015 with a plan to wage a major war in Yemen against the Houthis and their new ally, former President Ali Abdullah Saleh, the deep state was ready to give Saudi a green light. A predictable consequence of that decision has been to fuel the rise of AQAP, which had

already emerged as the primary threat of terrorist attack on the U.S., to an unprecedented position of power.

The Biggest Winner

As documented by the International Crisis Group, AQAP has been the biggest winner in the war, taking advantage of state collapse, an open alliance with the Saudi-supported government and a major infusion of arms – much of its provided indirectly by the Saudis.

Endowed with a political strategy of playing up AQAP's role as champion of Sunni sectarian interests against those Yemenis whom they wrongly call Shia, AQAP controlled a large swath of territory across southern Yemen with the port of Mukalla as their headquarters. And even though the Saudi coalition recaptured the territory, they maintain a strong political presence there.

AQAP will certainly emerge from the disastrous war in Yemen as the strongest political force in the south, with a de-facto safe haven in which to plot terrorist attacks against the U.S. And they can thank the war bureaucracies in the U.S. who helped them achieve that powerful position.

But the reason for the betrayal of U.S. counter-terrorism interests is not that the senior officials in charge of these war bureaucracies want to promote Al Qaeda. It is because they had to sacrifice the priority of countering Al Qaeda to maintain the alliances, the facilities and the operations on which their continued power and resources depend.

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How US Race Laws Inspired Nazism

As much as Americans like to think of Germany's Nazism as a foreign evil, Adolf Hitler and his henchmen drew inspiration and guidance from U.S. race laws, as documented in a new book, reviewed by David Swanson.

By David Swanson

James Q. Whitman's new book is called *Hitler's American Model: The United States and the Making of Nazi Race Law*. It is understated and over-documented, difficult to argue with. No doubt some will try.

In cartoonish U.S. historical understanding, the United States is, was, and ever shall be a force for good, whereas Nazism arose in a distant, isolated land that lacked any connection to other societies. In a cartoonish reversal of that understanding, which would make a good straw man for critics of this book, U.S. policies have been identical to Nazism, which simply copied them. Obviously this is not the case.

In reality, as we have long known, the U.S. genocide of Native Americans was a source of inspiration in Nazi discussions of expanding to their east, even referring to Ukrainian Jews as "Indians." Camps for Native Americans helped inspire camps for Jews. Anti-Semites and eugenicists and racists in the U.S. helped inspire those in Germany, and vice versa.

U.S. bankers invested in the Nazis. U.S. weapons dealers armed them. Nazis borrowed from U.S. propaganda techniques developed in World War I. Admirers in the U.S. of Nazi Germany and fascist Italy attempted at least one coup against President Franklin Roosevelt. The U.S. refused to admit significant numbers of Jewish refugees or to help evacuate them from Germany. The State Department turned down Anne Frank's visa. The coast guard chased a ship of Jews away, sending them back to their fate. Et cetera. We have known all of this.

We have known how the U.S. treated African-Americans, Japanese-Americans and others at the time of World War II, how it experimented on Guatemalans even during the trials of Nazis for human experimentation, and continued to allow human experimentation in the U.S. for many years. And so forth. The good versus evil cartoon was never real.

What Whitman's book adds to the complex story is an understanding of U.S. influences on the drafting of Nazi race laws. No, there were no U.S. laws in the 1930s establishing mass murder by poison gas in concentration camps. But neither were the Nazis looking for such laws. Nazis lawyers were looking for models of functioning laws on race, laws that effectively defined race in some way despite the obvious scientific difficulties, laws that restricted immigration, citizenship rights, and inter-racial marriage. In the early Twentieth Century, the recognized world leader in such things was the United States.

Troubling Parallels

Whitman quotes from the transcripts of Nazi meetings, internal documents, and published articles and books. There is no doubt of the role that U.S. (state,

not just federal) legal models played in the development of the Nuremberg Laws. The 1930s was a time, we should recall, when Jews in Germany and primarily African-Americans in the United States were lynched.

It was also a time when U.S. immigration laws used national origin as a means of discrimination – something Adolf Hitler praised in *Mein Kampf*. It was a time of de facto second-class citizenship in the United States for blacks, Chinese, Filipinos, Puerto Ricans, Japanese, and others. Thirty U.S. states had systems of laws banning interracial marriage of various sorts – something the Nazis could find nowhere else and studied in comprehensive detail, among other things for the examples of how the races were defined.

The U.S. had also shown how to conquer territories of undesirables, such as in the Philippines or Puerto Rico, and incorporate them into an empire but not give first-class citizenship rights to the residents. Up until 1930, a U.S. woman could lose her citizenship if she married a non-citizen Asian man.

The most radical of the Nazis, not the moderates, in their deliberations were the advocates for the U.S. models. But even they believed some of the U.S. systems simply went too far. The “one-drop” rule for defining a colored person was considered too harsh, for example, as opposed to defining a Jew as someone with three or more Jewish grandparents (how those grandparents were defined as Jewish is another matter; it was the willingness to ignore logic and science in all such laws that was most of the attraction).

The Nazis also defined as Jewish someone with only two Jewish grandparents who met other criteria. In this broadening the definition of a race to things like behavior and appearance, the U.S. laws were also a model.

One of many U.S. state laws that Nazis examined was this from Maryland: “All marriages between a white person and a Negro, or between a white person and a person of Negro descent, to the third generation, inclusive, or between a white person and a member of the Malay race or between a Negro and a member of the Malay race, or between a person of Negro descent to the third generation, inclusive, and a member of the Malay race . . . [skipping over many variations] . . . are forever prohibited . . . punished by imprisonment in the penitentiary for not less than eighteen months nor more than ten years.”

Jim Crow Inspiration

The Nazis, of course, examined and admired the Jim Crow laws of segregation as well but determined that such a regime would only work against an impoverished oppressed group. German Jews, they reasoned, were too rich and powerful to be segregated. Some of the Nazi lawyers in the 1930s, before Nazi policy had become

mass murder, also found the extent of the U.S. segregation laws too extreme.

But Nazis admired racist statements from contemporary U.S. pundits and authorities back at least to Thomas Jefferson. Some argued that because segregation was de facto established in the U.S. South despite a Constitution mandating equality, this proved that segregation was a powerful, natural, and inevitable force. In other words, U.S. practice allowed Nazis to more easily think of their own desired practices in the early years of their madness as normal.

In 1935, a week after Hitler had proclaimed the Nuremberg Laws, a group of Nazi lawyers sailed to New York to study U.S. law. There, they were protested by Jews but hosted by the New York City Bar Association.

U.S. laws on miscegenation lasted until the 1967 *Loving v. Virginia* ruling. Vicious and bigoted U.S. policies on immigration and refugees are alive and well today. Whitman examines the U.S. legal tradition, noting much that is to admire in it, but pointing to its political or democratic nature as something that the Nazis found preferable to the inflexibility of an independent judiciary.

To this day, the U.S. elects prosecutors, imposes Nazi-like habitual offender (or three-strikes-you're-out) sentences, uses the death penalty, employs jailhouse snitches' testimony in exchange for release, locks up more people than anywhere else on earth, and does so in an extremely racist manner. To this day, racism is alive in U.S. politics. What right-wing dictators admire in Donald Trump's nation is not all new and not all different from what fascists admired 80 or 90 years ago.

It's worth repeating the obvious: the United States was not and is not Nazi Germany. And that is a very good thing. But what if a Wall Street coup had succeeded? What if the United States had been bombed flat and faced defeat from abroad while demonizing a domestic scapegoat? Who can really say it couldn't have or still couldn't happen here?

Whitman suggests that Germans do not write about foreign influence on Nazism so as not to appear to be shifting blame. For similar reasons many Germans refuse to oppose the slaughter of and mistreatment of Palestinians.

We can fault such positions as going overboard. But why is it that U.S. writers rarely write about U.S. influence on Nazism? Why, for that matter, do we not learn about U.S. crimes in the way that Germans learn about German crimes? It seems to me that it is U.S. culture that has gone the furthest overboard into a sea of denial and self-idolatry.

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