Solvency

Natural gas won’t tank nuclear

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(3/16/2012. “More to the Story on Nuclear Power and Cheap Natural Gas” http://blog.heritage.org/2012/03/16/more-to-the-story-on-nuclear-power-and-cheap-natural-gas/)

Back to nuclear.

As natural gas use was growing through the mid-2000s, the nuclear industry was refining its product. It continued to bring plants on line that had been permitted prior to the TMI accident and worked to hone its safety procedures and operational efficiency. The numbers show the progress. In 1979, American had 72 plants on line. Today there are 104.

Back then, America’s reactors operated at an average capacity factor of less than 60 percent. That means that the average plant spent 40 percent of that year not producing electricity. Today, reactors routinely exceed 90 percent capacity factors. This has resulted in low-cost, reliable electricity. And because the cost of fuel makes up a small percentage of actual costs, nuclear power prices do not vary over the lifetime of the plant. Best of all, these benefits are buoyed by increasing safety.

This progress positioned nuclear power to mount a comeback by the late 2000s. Indeed, 18 utilities submitted applications to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to build nearly 30 new reactors.

Now, once again, with cost estimates rising for nuclear power, natural gas prices dropping, and renewed public anxiety fueled by a major accident, some like the Economist and The Wall Street Journal are questioning whether nuclear power has a future.

Part of the answer can be found in the Journal’s article. It points to three concerns regarding over-reliance on natural gas:

 Diversity of fuel source. As one of the executives interviewed clearly states, even if one fuel source is cheap, there is great value in fuel diversity. An over-reliance on a single fuel will likely result in higher costs.

 Long-term prices are unpredictable. Few expected the precipitous drop in natural gas prices that has occurred since 2008. Likewise, no one is predicting any near-term price spikes. However, if history is any guide, we should expect a rise over time. The lower prices go, the less incentive there will be to find additional reserves. The Wall Street Journal reports that this is already happening. And demand will surely increase as more natural gas is used for home heating and electricity production, and industrial applications and export opportunities emerge.

 Fuel supply. There is also growing concern that existing pipeline capacity will not be adequate to support growing demand.

The rest of the answer lies with the nuclear industry and the federal government and how they interact. As the industry underwent significant safety and operational reform after TMI, the time is now for another significant reform effort geared toward relating to the federal government. These reforms should include:

 Regulatory reform. America’s nuclear regulator, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, does an outstanding job at regulating public health and safety for existing plants in a slow/no-growth market that is built around a single technology. It is not built to regulate a technologically diverse, growing nuclear industry.

 Waste management. While the private sector efficiently manages front-end (fuel-related) activities and plant operations, the government remains in control of America’s dysfunctional regime for waste management. Under the current system, there is little connection between used-fuel management programs, economics, and the needs of the nuclear industry. Any successful plan must grow out of the private sector, be driven by sound economics, and provide access to the funds that have been set aside for nuclear waste management activities.

Though there are no guarantees, nuclear power—despite much adversity—has proved to be much more than a survivor. The right policy reforms today will open up markets to more abundant, more affordable, and even safer nuclear energy.

Prolif

#### Global nuclear renaissance now

Jessica Lovering, Ted Nordhaus, and Michael Shellenberger are policy analyst, chairman, and president of the Breakthrough Institute, a public policy think tank and research organization, 9/7/2012 (http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/09/07/out\_of\_the\_nuclear\_closet?page=full)

A year and half after the accident, it's clear that the political fallout from Fukushima has been less than many anticipated. Despite the predictable denunciations from anti-nuclear campaigners and high-profile shifts away from nuclear both in Germany-- which is now planning to phaseout nuclear power entirely by 2022 -- and Japan -- where the government is seriously considering making the country's post-Fukushima shutdown permanent -- the nuclear landscape today looks much as it did before the accident. In places where rapidly growing energy demand has outstripped the availability of domestic fossil fuel reserves, nuclear remains the only reliable alternative to generate sufficient electrical power. China and India are proceeding apace with plans to expand their nuclear generation capacity dramatically. South Korea recently announced plans to increase significantly the percentage of electricity it gets from nuclear energy. Yes, in a number of developed economies with lower rates of growth and abundant reserves of fossil energy, reawakened nuclear fears have raised the bar for new nuclear projects. But these economies weren't building many new nuclear plants before Fukushima anyway. Germany's on-again, off-again relationship with nuclear has dragged on for decades, and in the wake of Fukushima, off is back in. But tellingly, despite top German officials' promises that "the nuclear power chapter has come to an end for us," Germany has not actually shut down a single plant since Fukushima. Japan has shut down its fleet, at great economic cost, but already has restarted one reactor in Ohi. Now some in Japan are suggesting restarting more of them in the interest of reducing the nation's almost total dependence on imported coal, oil, and gas, which has turned Japan's long history of large trade surpluses into an enormous and unprecedented trade deficit in little over a year.

Politiccs

#### Empirics prove – both candidates support nuclear expansion

Wood 12

Elisa Wood September 13, 2012 What Obama and Romney Don't Say About Energy http://energy.aol.com/2012/09/13/what-obama-and-romney-dont-say-about-energy/

Fossil fuels and renewable energy have become touchy topics in this election, with challenger Mitt Romney painting President Barack Obama as too hard on the first and too fanciful about the second – and Obama saying Romney is out of touch with energy's future. But two other significant resources, nuclear power and energy efficiency, are evoking scant debate. What gives? Nuclear energy supplies about 20 percent of US electricity, and just 18 months ago dominated the news because of Japan's Fukushima Daiichi disaster – yet neither candidate has said much about it so far on the campaign trail. Romney mentioned nuclear power only seven times in his recently released white paper, while he brought up oil 150 times. Even wind power did better with 10 mentions. He pushes for less regulatory obstruction of new nuclear plants, but says the same about other forms of energy. Obama's campaign website highlights the grants made by his administration to 70 universities for research into nuclear reactor design and safety. But while it is easy to find his ideas on wind, solar, coal, natural gas and oil, it takes a few more clicks to get to nuclear energy. The Nuclear Energy Institute declined to discuss the candidates' positions pre-election. However, NEI's summer newsletter said that both "Obama and Romney support the use of nuclear energy and the development of new reactors."

Russia

Sustainable – their ev mistakes posturing for policy.

McDowell 11 [Daragh McDowell is a doctoral candidate in International Relations at the University of Oxford. His research is primarily focused on Russian post-Soviet foreign policy, but he also writes on European domestic and international affairs. He is a native and current resident of Dublin, Ireland. Don't Sweat the Russia 'Reset' BY DARAGH MCDOWELL | 22 AUG 2011 BRIEFING http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/9837/dont-sweat-the-russia-reset]

In recent weeks, pundits, diplomats and assorted foreign policy wonks have started raising the alarm on U.S.-Russia relations, with the Obama administration's much-trumpeted "reset" seeming to be increasingly under threat. A recent travel ban by the U.S. State Department on certain Russian officials believed to be involved in the death of lawyer Sergei Magnitsky elicited an angry response from Moscow threatening cooperation in areas ranging from Afghanistan to North Korea. Russia's ambassador to NATO, Dmitry Rogozin, has started grousing about U.S. missile defense plans again. And all of this comes against a backdrop of increasing criticism from Prime Minister Vladimir Putin and his factional supporters in the Russian government about U.S. policy in Libya and Syria. Predictably, this has resulted in a stream of op-eds in the Western press raising the specter of a "new Cold War." So is the concern justified? In a word, no. There has been no major break in U.S.-Russian relations, nor is one likely. What we are seeing is yet another one of Russia's periodic succession crises in the run-up to next year's presidential election. As Russia is in functional terms a nondemocratic state, there is no effective and broadly accepted mechanism for ensuring an orderly transfer of power, and arguably there hasn't been one since the days of the tsar. The selection and installation of a new ruler tends to be a perilous affair for everyone involved. It also tends to make Russian foreign policy highly reactive and aggressive until the crisis passes. To understand why this is, we first need to examine how the Russian regime actually operates. Though the idea has taken hold in much of the Western press that the Russian state can be reduced to Putin, Russia's leadership is actually a collection of various elite interest groups, often referred to as "clans." The role of the national leader is to ensure a rough balance of power among the clans and to keep open conflict from breaking out. This presents an obvious problem when the time comes to change the national leader. Since the new leader must come from within the current elite, he or she will already be a member of an established clan. That raises the risk that the new boss will use his position to benefit his own clan rather than to maintain the balance of power among them all. As the stakes rise, nerves fray and intra-elite conflict becomes more likely. This leads to a more confrontational foreign policy for two key reasons. First, during a domestic crisis, the regime is at its weakest, and as a result it seeks to keep the influence of external actors to an absolute minimum by scaring them away. Think of a cat giving birth: It screeches and howls and spits to scare off other predators, all in an effort to hide the fact that it is momentarily powerless to defend itself. Similarly, during a succession crisis, the Russian Foreign Ministry makes alarming noises in order to put the West on the defensive while the Kremlin sorts out its internal affairs. But there is another and admittedly more worrying reason for this phenomenon. When the clans start to fight one another, there are few restrictions on either the site of battle or the weapons employed. For the siloviki clans -- members and former members of the security services -- in particular, political struggles are often a matter of life and death. Interfering with foreign policy can be a potent weapon: By creating a tense and even hostile international environment, clan members can tilt the scales in favor of conservatism, a hard-line leadership and preservation of the status quo. The last such crisis occurred in 2007, as Putin prepared to make way for President Dmitry Medvedev. At that time, a siloviki war broke out in Russia, leading to several mysterious deaths. Furthermore, the succession crisis is the most plausible explanation for the assassination of Alexander Litvinenko. By this argument, elements in the regime wanted to either display their capabilities for mischief-making to the various leadership contenders or else create a crisis that forced Putin to stay in a position of power. Why else would the Russian security services use polonium to kill Litvinenko, thereby leaving a radioactive trail leading right back to the Kremlin, when they have access to an array of lethal and nearly untraceable poisons? Luckily, the current impasse is more of a mini-crisis. The ruling tandem of Putin and Medvedev has managed to keep a fairly tight rein on power, and the smart money remains on Medvedev remaining as president with Putin continuing as prime minister. There is still an element of uncertainty though. The caricature of Medvedev as "Putin's puppet" has always been inaccurate, and as president Medvedev has gained leverage to push both a foreign and domestic agenda that has discomfited his political opponents. Many hardliners would dearly love to see Medvedev out and Putin back in as unrivaled leader of the Russian political elite. The next few months will therefore be rough ones for Russia's relations with the West. But when the dust settles and the official candidate -- and therefore winner -- of the 2012 presidential election becomes clear, things should settle down just as quickly as they have recently flared up. In the meantime, Europe and the U.S. should try to react as little as possible and avoid doing any lasting damage that can't be easily repaired.

Putin is strong – opposition is divided.

Monaghan 12 [Andrew, Research Advisor in the Research Division of the NATO Defense College (NDC) in Rome July 2012 The end of The PuTin era? http://carnegieendowment.org/files/end\_of\_putin.pdf]

Yet, all forms of opposition are fractured and far from presenting a real challenge to the Putin system. The demonstrations remain limited in scale and are not the face of a swelling, unified opposition democratic movement. Moreover, the careers of the current systemic opposition leaders may be end- ing. Its senior figures were defeated handily in the presidential election and are now likely to wrestle with internal power struggles. Setting the movement back further is Putin’s unwillingness to guarantee that he will engage in the kind of reforms that many opponents and some supporters claim are required. An attempt to implement slow, evolutionary change appears to be the most likely way forward for the Russian leadership. This was already seen in one of the Kremlin’s early responses to the demon- strations—the dismissal of a number of officials and the promise that after the election there would be a serious “rotation” of personnel. A rotation, however, does not mean a deep reshuffle with the firing of senior officials. In the immediate term at least, Putin is not losing power. Of course, with the left-leaning parties in parliament offering some opposition and numerous practical difficulties wracking the country, from insufficient or decrepit infra- structure to corruption, Putin’s leadership team still confronts many chal- lenges. But it is far from clear that the end of the Putin era is nigh.