

The National Security Implications of the Changing Global Energy Picture

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Abstract

Energy security remains an ongoing concern for U.S. policy makers, diplomats, and military even as the United States reaps the benefits of dramatic increases in its oil and gas production. Threats to oil flowing through the Strait of Hormuz, Bab al-Mandab, and Strait of Malacca remain U.S. foreign policy concerns as shown by recent developments in the Persian Gulf. Russia sees natural gas as a tool to reward, punish, or otherwise influence governments. Elements of China's Belt and Road Initiative are specifically designed to ensure the security of China's oil and gas supplies. Energy security, furthermore, includes more than just affordable oil and natural gas. Hostile actors can cut off electricity supplies, and the rising intersection of energy, computers and information technologies creates new and under-appreciated national vulnerabilities. The U.S. military, as the world's largest consumer of energy, and an actor called upon to keep open shipping lanes and otherwise act to protect national interests, has a direct interest in the global energy sector. Looking at recent developments, particularly the example of the Caucasus and Central Asia where Russia, Iran, and China each act in ways affecting global energy security, provides useful insights and approaches for handling U.S. national security interests while also driving home the point the United States does not enjoy complete energy security unless other countries do as well.



Ambassador (ret.) Robert F. Cekuta

Biography

Ambassador to the Republic of Azerbaijan (2015–2018), Robert Cekuta has long and extensive experience as a top-level U.S. diplomat. Deeply engaged for almost four decades in advancing high-profile international energy projects trade policy initiatives and agreements, commercial sales, and other complex international security matters, Amb. Cekuta's positions in the State Department included Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Energy Resources as well as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Energy, Sanctions, and Commodities.

Ambassador Cekuta's earlier overseas positions included the U.S. Embassies in Berlin and Tokyo where he oversaw the full range of economic, commercial, non-proliferation, and scientific relations. He was Deputy Chief of Mission in Albania and held positions in Kabul, Vienna, Baghdad, Johannesburg, and Sana'a, Yemen. He established the Economic Policy Analysis and Public Diplomacy Office in the State Department's Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs, and served on the boards of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) and the International Energy Agency (IEA), where he also chaired the IEA Board's Standing Group on Long-term Cooperation charged with anticipating global energy developments.

During his career with the State Department Ambassador Cekuta received nine Senior Service Performance Awards, four Superior Honor Awards, five Meritorious Honor Awards, and the Career Achievement Award. He is a graduate of Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service and holds Master's degrees from the Thunderbird School of Global Management and the National War College.

