

# The long emergency: a critical analysis essays examples

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The long Emergency: Surviving the Converging Catastrophes of the Twenty-First Century, written by James Kunstler, is intended by the author to be a wakeup call to humanity about an impending crisis. Kunstler contends that much of our lifestyle – suburban living, skyscrapers, automobiles, industrial farming, interstate travel and transportation, etc. – has been built on the availability of cheap oil as an energy source. He predicts that the major oil suppliers have all either reached their peak capacity for production or will shortly. As supply remains stable, demand will keep increasing, driving up the price of oil. As producing countries exhaust their supply of oil, overall supply will diminish further, thus driving up the price of oil. The rising price of oil, coupled with simultaneous non related catastrophes like climate change, water scarcity, economic instability and regional conflicts, will cause society as we know it to break down.

The book was written in 2005 so fortunately I have the benefit of 9 years of hindsight to work from and its obvious many of Kunstler's main assumptions have just not gone as he anticipated.

First, oil has never been as cheap as it should have been. The world's largest oil producers banded together as OPEC (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries), for the sole purpose of managing supply to ensure supply was always slightly less than demand, thus keeping oil pricing artificially higher than under a free market structure. As OPEC members may indeed be reaching their peak production capacity, new producers are developing to increase overall supply, preventing the cost of oil from skyrocketing as Kunstler suggests. These new producers have no intent on an OPEC like structure and will do everything to pump as much oil as they can to

maximize their income, keeping oil pricing stable.

Three new producers are Brazil, Mexico and the US. Brazil has discovered huge new oilfields offshore in their territorial waters. They are actively working to extract that oil. Mexico has long been known to have major oilfields offshore as well. Within the past year, the Mexican government has reversed course and for the first time ever, entered into agreements with others to help develop their oil fields. And in the US, new technology has driven the extraction of oil from oil shale, a process known as fracking. A wild card in oil production is Russia.

I agree with Kunstler that there is no one alternative energy source to replace oil. That said, we have made great advances in alternative energy. The US has become a major world supplier of cheap natural gas. Auto manufacturers have used new engineering technology to dramatically increase miles per gallon, decreasing the demand for gasoline. The use of solar power is growing and becoming less expensive. The primary deterrent to increased nuclear energy is political.

In conclusion, I believe Kunstler was wrong in his overall predictions of doom and gloom, so he did not succeed in changing my opinion of oil production. He failed to account for new oil suppliers developing and failed to account for new technology being developed both in oil production and in development of alternative sources of energy. His assumptions were all based on the status quo in 2005 remaining stable for the foreseeable future and that didn't happen.

## **Works Cited**

" The End is Nigh." » American Scientist. N. p., n. d. Web. 26 June 2014. .

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