



## Oil and Snake Oil

The big oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico is bad enough in itself. But politics can make anything worse.

Let's stop and think. Either the government knows how to stop the oil spill or they don't. If they know how to stop it, then why have they let thousands of barrels of oil per day keep gushing out, for weeks on end? All they have to do is tell BP to step aside, while the government comes in to do it right.

If they don't know, then what is all this political grandstanding about keeping their boot on the neck of BP, the Attorney General of the United States going down to the Gulf to threaten lawsuits — on what charges was unspecified — and President Obama showing up in his shirt sleeves?



Just what is Obama going to do in his shirt sleeves, except impress the gullible? He might as well have shown up in a tuxedo with white tie, for all the difference it makes.

This government is not about governing. It is about creating an impression. That worked on the campaign trail in 2008, but it is a disaster in the White House, where rhetoric is no substitute for reality.

Just what is Obama going to do in his shirt sleeves, except impress the gullible? He might as well have shown up in a tuxedo with white tie, for all the difference it makes. If the Obama administration was for real, and trying to help get the oil spill contained as soon as possible, the last thing its Attorney General would be doing is threatening a lawsuit. A lawsuit is not going to stop the oil, and creating a distraction can only make people at BP start directing their attention toward covering themselves, instead of covering the oil well.

If and when the Attorney General finds that BP did something illegal, that will be time enough to start a lawsuit. But making a public announcement at this time accomplishes absolutely nothing substantive. It is just more political grandstanding.

This is not about oil. This is about snake oil.

Nothing will keep a man or an institution determined to continue on a failing policy course like past success with that policy. Obama's political success in the 2008 election campaign was a spectacular triumph of creating images and impressions.

But creating political impressions and images is not the same thing as governing. Yet Obama in the White House keeps on saying and doing things to impress people, instead of governing.

Once the elections were over and the time for governing began, there was now a new audience to consider — a much more savvy audience, the leaders of other countries around the world.



Written by [Thomas Sowell](#) on June 17, 2010

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However impressed the media and the Obama cult might be with the President's image, rhetoric and style, leaders of other countries — allies and enemies alike — are interested in results.

Even our domestic policies can affect foreign leaders, as Ronald Reagan's breaking of the air traffic controllers' strike impressed the Russians with what kind of man they were going to have to deal with, as former Soviet officials said publicly many years later.

By the same token, domestic bungling by Barack Obama sends a dangerous signal to countries hostile to us, in addition to the signal sent by his displays of amateurism on the world stage.

President Obama had barely settled into the White House before he began demonstrating his willingness to sell out this country's friends to appease our enemies. His trip to Moscow to try to make a deal with the Russians, based on renegeing on the pre-existing American commitment to put a missile shield in Eastern Europe, was the kind of short-sighted betrayal whose consequences can come back to haunt a nation for years.

Obama spoke grandly about "pressing the reset button" on international relations, as if all the international commitments of the past were his to disregard.

But if no American commitment can be depended upon beyond a current administration, then any nation that allies itself with us is jeopardizing its own national security, because dangers in the international jungle last longer than 4 years or even 8 years.

We are already seeing the consequences. Even Turkey- formally a NATO ally- is cozying up to Iran, now that it is painfully clear that Obama is not going to do anything that has any realistic chance of stopping Iran from going nuclear.

If leaders of other nations can't depend on the United States, then they need to make the best deal they can with our enemies. They understand that preserving their nation's security is a leader's top priority, even if Barack Obama doesn't.

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