

History of the Gold Standard

The Bank of England was the first central bank with strict regulations for the issue of bank notes. Founded in 1694, it competed for its first 150 years with other private money issuing banks to be the government creditor. In 1844 after years of abuse, the issue of notes came under strict regulation that allowed a maximum of 14 million pounds in securities to be issued at any time (Peel's Bank Act). These securities would be covered by bonds, but were not tied to gold. Every further pound note would be issued only at 100% gold reserve.

This was the beginning of the classical gold standard. It was the first internationally recognized monetary system with paper money based on gold, and in which note-issuing banks were allowed to issue more vouchers in the form of currency than they actually had in gold reserve.

At the beginning of 1800 England was seen as a leader in world trade and could thus advance the classical gold standard to a global system with little interruption in the following years. According to the British model, every currency was just a national name for a certain amount of gold, whereby the price of gold (per troy ounce) was set through the intervention policies of the Bank of England at its gold market. For almost a century this price remained 3 pounds 17 shilling 9 pence (exchange rate: 1 kg Gold = 136.70£ = 2790 M or 1£ = 20.43 M).

Gold was the global currency and it was circulated throughout of the world as various paper currencies that were linked through a set exchange rate. With the pound worth 9 grams of gold, and a thaler worth 3 grams, everyone would know that 3 talers = 1 pound and 1 taler = 1/3 pounds – and would remain so, since currency law could be changed by parliaments but not by market forces.

After 1914

England was politically and economically too weak to continue its leadership role after 1914. The US was on its way to being a global player while concurring interests and power struggles within Europe eventually escalated into World War I (1914-1918). War, however, can be financed only when enough money for military expenditures is available. The rules of the gold standard did not allow for this. The logical consequence was thus to discontinue the gold standard, in that the following measures were implemented:

- Suspension of free trade of commodities, capital and gold
- Suspension of the requirement of gold reserve by the banks
- Slackening of gold coverage regulations.

In addition to gold, treasury notes were also allowed as "cover." By suspending the gold standard, individual countries were allowed to – with the help of a national money printer – create money from nothing, without gold backing, and thus to finance the war and to push national debt into unforeseeable heights. (This is how, for example, the German money supply during 1914-1918 increased from 9 billion Reich marks (RM) to 52 million RM.) In the years 1920-1922 the US held approximately 70% of all world gold reserves. The influx of gold into the US from weapons payments and other war-related foreign transfers was "sterilized," i.e., not released into circulation. According to the rules of the gold standard, the US should have issued into circulation the equivalent currency for the war gold, but this would have resulted in even higher inflation. During this time there was no pressure for the US to devalue the currency (if necessary through a zero-interest rate policy), in order to restore economic equilibrium.

Bretton Woods and the end of the Gold standard

Under the new world leader the United States of America, the "Bretton Woods system" reintroduced the gold standard following the Second World War. This was a system of essentially fixed but in exceptional situations adjustable exchange rates, with currencies covered by gold and bond reserves of the central banks. The US-dollar and the British pound were the only reserve currencies. The result was a gold-traylor link. Central banks were obliged to exchange currencies for gold at a fixed exchange rate (\$35 per troy ounce). The IMF (international monetary fund) was established to oversee the system. The US could maintain its supremacy with the dollar as the global reserve currency only as long as the US practiced a disciplined financial policy, and as long as the rest of the world considered the dollar as good as gold. But international trust in the dollar's stability weakened as the US lived beyond its means in the aftermath of Johnson's "New Society" program, incurred war-related debts and contributed to global inflation. The dollar reserves of non-American central banks far surpassed the US gold reserves. Theoretically, the US was bankrupt. France demanded that the US convert the French dollar reserves into gold, and to return it to France. In doing so, the French signaled a political crisis that would eventually turn out to their benefit.

On August 15, 1971 US president Richard Nixon unilaterally "closed the gold window" by officially canceling the right for all other central banks to convert dollar holdings into gold. In 1973 the Bretton Woods system was replaced by a system with flexible exchange rate without ties to the dollar and gold.

from <http://www.goldseiten.de>

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Introducing the Petrodollar

To focus on the study of the emerging petroleum revenues in light of the sharp increase in its price as of the beginning of 1974, I wish to introduce a new term Petrodollars. It may be defined as the Unites States dollars earned from the sale of oil. For certain historical reasons, price of oil has been and still is denominated in United States dollars.

It may be observed that 1974 will stand in recent history as the year of energy crisis in industrialized countries, the year of conflict between oil-exporting and oil-importing countries, the year of unprecedented reallocation of resources intra and inter nations and the year of unconventional disequilibria in balance of payments in most of the countries of the world.

Oil, as the main source of energy, is a depletable natural resource for which demand is inelastic. This means that if production is curtailed, both prices of oil and Petrodollars will increase.

As the main oil exporters and with the largest known recoverable reserves in the world, Arab-oil exporting countries reduced their oil production by twenty five percent, stage by stage, to attain justifiable political and economic demands as the result of the Mideast October war of 1973. One of the most significant outcomes of the October events was the substantial increase in oil prices. The price of a barrel of Saudi Arabian 341 crude oil, F.O.B. Ras Tanura, rose from \$2.59 on January 1, 1993 to \$5.12 on October 16, 1973 to \$11.65 on January 1, 1974. Hence Petrodollars surpluses will accumulate until they are to be spent on consumption, development and investments.

Source: Petrodollars: Problems and Prospectsby Dr. Ibrahim M.Oweiss Address before the Conference on The World Monetary Crisis Arden House, Harriman Campus, Columbia UniversityMarch 1 - 3, 1974

The US dollar hegemony has got to go, Asia Times, April 11, 2002

US dollar hegemony has got to go By Henry C K Liu

There is an economics-textbook myth that foreign-exchange rates are determined by supply and demand based on market fundamentals. Economists tends to dismiss socio-political factors that shape market fundamentals that affect supply and demand. The current international finance architecture is based on the US dollar as the dominant reserve currency, which now accounts for 68 percent of global currency reserves, up from 61 percent a decade ago. Yet in 2000, the US share of global exports (US\$781.1 billion out of a world total of \$6.2 trillion) was only 12.3 percent and its share of global imports (\$1.257 trillion out of a world total of \$6.65 trillion) was 18.9 percent. World merchandise exports per capita amounted to \$1,094 in 2000, while 30 percent of the world's population lived on less than \$1 a day, about one-third of per capita export value. Ever since 1971, when US president Richard Nixon took the dollar off the gold standard (at \$36 per ounce) that had been agreed to at the Bretton Woods Conference at the end of World War II, the dollar has been a global monetary instrument that the United States, and only the United States, can produce by fiat. The dollar, now a fiat currency, is at a 16-year trade-weighted high despite record US current-account deficits and the status of the US as the leading debtor nation. The US national debt as of April 4 was \$6.021 trillion against a gross domestic product (GDP) of \$9 trillion. World trade is now a game in which the US produces dollars and the rest of the world produces things that dollars can buy. The world's interlinked economies no longer trade to capture a comparative advantage; they compete in exports to capture needed dollars to service dollar-denominated foreign debts and to accumulate dollar reserves to sustain the exchange value of their domestic currencies. To prevent speculative and manipulative attacks on their currencies, the world's central banks must acquire and hold dollar reserves in corresponding amounts to their currencies in circulation. The higher the market pressure to devalue a particular currency, the more dollar reserves its central bank must hold. This creates a built-in support for a strong dollar that in turn forces the world's central banks to acquire and hold more dollar reserves, making it stronger. This phenomenon is known as dollar hegemony, which is created by the geopolitically constructed peculiarity that critical commodities, most notably oil, are denominated in dollars. Everyone accepts dollars because dollars can buy oil. The recycling

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Allocation of Petrodollars

° Union des Arabes et Francaises (UBAF) was established in Paris in 1970 with more than \$700 million in assets. It is 40% owned by Crédit Lyonnais but controlled by fourteen Arab banks. UBAF has subsidiaries in London, Rome, Frankfurt, Luxembourg and Tokyo. Partners in those subsidiaries including several big European banks and the Bank of Tokyo.

° La Compagnie Arabe et International d'Investissements was incorporated in Luxembourg in January, 1973. It is owned by twenty four Arab and Western banks including the Bank of America together with West German, Italian, Japanese and french banks. It opened its first subsidiary in Paris in April, 1973.

In addition to the above four major consortia, there are several other institutions and banks which are presently competing independently for business with Arab oil-exporting countries. The First National City Bank of New York operates branches in Beirut, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Dubai. The Chase Manhattan Bank

° The European Arab Bank headquartered in Luxembourg started in 1972 . It

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of New York has branches in Beirut and Bahrain. Chase Manhattan along with Morgan Guarantee Trust of New York hold most of Saudi Arabian government deposits. In addition, a number of other American banks operate out of Beirut which is regarded as the Mideast financial center.

There is only one private Arab banking institution, The Arab Bank, which is functioning on an international basis in bidding for deposits of Petrodollars. The Arab Bank was incorporated in Jordan and has branches in Zurich, London and Frankfurt. urthermore, there are a few individuals who manipulate some funds from Petrodollars in world money markets strictly for commission. Using those funds as collateral, they can even borrow money at a certain rate and lend out at a higher rate. This probably explains why four

Source: Dr. Ibrahim M. Oweiss, "Economics of Petrodollars" from The Economic Dimensions of Middle Eastern History, The Darwin Press, Inc., Princeton, NJ, 1990, pp. 179-99

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now a fiat currency

emerged with the implementation of OPEC's Resolution XVI,90 which stressed the necessity of oil-exporting countries to participate in the ownership of concession-holding companies. The buy-back price is what an oil company pays to the country from where oil is exploited for the percentage of oil produced which represents the governments ownership share in the company. In 1974, for example, the ownership of share of Saudi Arabia in the Arabian-American Oil Company (Aramco) represented sixty percent of the total production. A buy-back price is that price Aramco pays the government of Saudi Arabia on sixty percent of the oil produced.

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