

Keystone XL

基石管道

Back in the pipeline

折戟沉沙

Congress has a fruitless fight over a modest proposal

国会唇枪舌战，基石刍议破产

ACCORDING to Joe Manchin, a Democratic senator from West Virginia, one advantage of the Keystone XL pipeline is that "wars could be prevented". Barbara Boxer of California, also a Democrat, says that the pipeline would bring Shanghai-like smog to America—her point illustrated with a huge picture of Chinese people in facemasks.

在基石管道工程这个问题上，来自西弗吉尼亚的民主党议员琼曼钦表示此提议破产的好处之一就是可避免战火弥漫，加利福尼亚民主党人芭芭拉·柏克瑟说，这一关管道的建设无异于将上海的雾霾“输往”美国，她还以一幅中国人面戴面罩的大图加以解释说明。

So goes the hyperbole which surrounds the proposed pipeline, which is intended to link Canadian oilfields and tar sands with American refineries. On November 18th the Senate narrowly failed (59 votes to 41, 60 being required) to pass a bill that would have authorised its construction. The tight vote, with 14 Democrats joining all the Republicans to try to push it through, gave a hint of what may happen when the Republicans take over the Senate in January.

此提议一瓦解，萦绕其周围的光环也随之冰消雪融，该管道本意在于将加拿大石油与油砂输送到美国进行提炼，但 11 月 18 日在参议院，授权管道建设的提案以微弱劣势破产（59 票比 41 票，60 票同意则通过），而这之前为推动提案通过，14 名民主党人加入了共和党阵地，这也成为 1 月共和党占领国会后的缩影。

The Obama administration is not over-keen on the pipeline. The vote was mostly the work of Mary Landrieu, a centrist Democrat from Louisiana. She is fighting a run-off election for her seat against Bill Cassidy, a Republican congressman who sponsored the passage of the same legislation through the House. Oil is a big industry in Louisiana, and the president is deeply unpopular there: Ms Landrieu hoped the vote on her bill would help to prove her independence and "clout". Harry Reid, the Senate majority leader, apparently allowed the vote to bolster her campaign.

奥巴马政府在管道问题上的热情并不高涨，拉票主要归功于路易斯安那民主党中间派玛丽兰德里，她将在决胜选举中对战共和党议员比尔卡西迪，众议院投票中他推动了提议的通过，石油是路易斯安那的支柱产业，而奥巴马在此地的人气并不旺，兰德里希望她议案的票数将展现她的独当一面，影响不凡，很明显参议院多数党领袖亨利瑞德顺水推舟，让选举为她加了把力。

Keystone XL makes environmentalists livid: many of them protested, inflating an enormous black plastic pipeline on Ms Landrieu's lawn in Washington. Oil extracted from Canada's tar sands produces about 17% more carbon dioxide than conventionally-pumped supplies do—largely thanks to the energy needed to get it out of the ground. The process uproots forests and leaves toxic lakes behind. A pipeline carrying Canadian oil to Gulf coast refineries would lower the cost of getting such oil to market, so it might encourage energy firms to extract more.

基石工程让这些环保人士言论风生，他们中的很多人都反对铺设一条巨型黑色的塑料输油管道，穿过兰德里在华盛顿的草地，从加拿大油砂中提炼石油排放的二氧化碳比传统输油要多

17%，这在很大程度上是因为油砂挖取需要能量，但铺设管道将加拿大的石油运送到墨西哥湾海岸进行提纯将降低石油进入市场的费用，各种能源公司开采石油也会更加奋发有力。Supporters point to the jobs that the scheme will create: some 42,000, according to estimates by the State Department (Ms Landrieu rounded this figure up to “millions” in the Senate debate). Some also suggest the pipeline will reduce America's dependence on oil from the Middle East and lower petrol prices for Americans in the states where the oil will be refined. A few, such as Mr Cassidy, deny that global warming is a problem at all.

支持者认为这项工程将带来大量就业机会，国务院估计它将产生 42000 个就业岗位（在参议院辩论中，兰德里说这项工程将回来上百万工作岗位），有些人说这条管道将减轻美国对中东石油的依存，一些提纯石油的州的油价负担将减轻，但也有一部分人比如说凯斯迪认为全球变暖问题根本是无中生有。

Yet the curious reality is that few experts think the pipeline is all that important, either way. Canadian oil is already getting to market, points out Charles Ebinger of the Brookings Institution, a think-tank—just mostly by barge and train. A new pipeline would ease the strain on Canada's railways and increase the profitability of extracting the oil. But compared with swings in global oil prices, the effect will be small. Nor will many jobs be created. Most of those 42,000 are temporary posts; just 35 full-time permanent employees will be needed to run the pipeline.

但令人好奇的事实是几个专家认为无论从哪方面考虑这条管道都没有那么重要，智库布鲁金斯学院的查尔斯艾冰格认为，加拿大石油大多已经以船舶和铁道运输已经与市场接轨，新管道将缓解加拿大铁道运输的压力，增加石油开采收益，但与国际油价的波云诡谲将比，这无疑收效甚微，创造的就业岗位也不会有多少，42000 个岗位中，大多是临时性的，而只有 35 个需要被雇来长期负责管道维护。

Oddly, the project may not matter much in Louisiana. If completed, Keystone XL will deliver oil to Texas, not its neighbour. Some voters do still care, reckons Pearson Cross of the University of Louisiana, but they are unlikely to switch allegiance as a result of an ineffective vote in Congress. “The only way this could change anything around ultimately is if this got to Obama's desk and he signed it,” says Mr Cross. Even then, he reckons, the effect would be slight

另外，这个项目对路易斯安那也没多大影响，即使完工，即使管道不过只会向德克萨斯州输油，与其邻州没多大关系，但路易斯安那大学的博森说，有些人确实十分关注，但这项提案已经在国会碰壁，他们也无力回天，唯一的挽救可能是直接投递到总统办公桌前得到通过，但这种影响估计也是微弱的。

Mr Obama may well end up signing a bill authorising the project. Just not yet. Allowing the pipeline to be built now would not just upset the president's few remaining fans, especially when he is trying to cheer them up with immigration reform (see Lexington); it would also throw away a bargaining chip that could be useful in the future. When Republicans take control of the Senate, Mr Obama will want as many of those available as possible.

奥巴马也可能会授权批准这项法案，只是还不是时候，允许法案通过只会让总统剩余的寥寥几个追随者忐忑不安，而现在他还在尝试用移民法案鼓舞士气，基石法案变更显的不合时宜，这会使他失去未来可能大有用处的谈判筹码，当共和党人控制国会，这种筹码对他来说更是多多益善。