



DrumBeat: July 12, 2009

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[The planet's future: Climate change 'will cause civilisation to collapse'](#)

An effort on the scale of the Apollo mission that sent men to the Moon is needed if humanity is to have a fighting chance of surviving the ravages of climate change. The stakes are high, as, without sustainable growth, "billions of people will be condemned to poverty and much of civilisation will collapse".

This is the stark warning from the biggest single report to look at the future of the planet – obtained by *The Independent* on Sunday ahead of its official publication next month. Backed by a diverse range of leading organisations such as Unesco, the World Bank, the US army and the Rockefeller Foundation, the 2009 State of the Future report runs to 6,700 pages and draws on contributions from 2,700 experts around the globe. Its findings are described by Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the UN, as providing "invaluable insights into the future for the United Nations, its member states, and civil society".

The impact of the global recession is a key theme, with researchers warning that global clean energy, food availability, poverty and the growth of democracy around the world are at "risk of getting worse due to the recession". The report adds: "Too many greedy and deceitful decisions led to a world recession and demonstrated the international interdependence of economics and ethics."

[Richard Heinberg: "We Have Reached The Global Limits To Growth"](#)

At the deepest level, our societal expectation of perpetual economic growth is based on the assumption that we will always have increasing amounts of cheap energy with which to power the engines of production and distribution. This expectation of growth became institutionalized in ever-increasing levels of debt and in increased financial leveraging. Thus when the amount of energy available started to level off or decline, the entire financial house of cards came tumbling down.

[What population apocalypse is affecting us now?](#)

For many groups yesterday, July 11, on which we marked World Population Day, was another chance to bemoan "the relentless growth in human population," while the

United Nations Population Fund says “stabilising population would help sustain the planet.” The problem, however, is not population but poverty.

Over-population enthusiasts have always claimed there is not enough land or resources for everyone and, even as their predictions of apocalyptic famines, epidemics and shortages failed to come true, they gained support from many environmentalists.

[Trial Balloons](#)

The Obama administration is, rather quickly changing the tenor of the discussion. We will likely be told soon that the America we used to know is in a state of flux -- the old assumptions may not apply. Obama needs to do this now to prevent the pitchfork-and-torch crowd from stirring things up as we deal with the global financial crisis and it's attendant issue: peak oil.

[Gordon Brown: Britain's green revolution will power economic recovery](#)

Two centuries ago, Britain was at the forefront of a new industrial age that transformed our small island into the workshop of the world and a global economic powerhouse.

Now we must once more harness the expertise of our engineers and scientists - and the ambition of our entrepreneurs - to embrace a green revolution that will significantly change the way we all live and work. At a historic summit in Italy last week, G8 leaders agreed to limit global warming to 2C above pre-industrial levels and cut their emissions by 80% by 2050.

["Peak Oil Day" dodges political roots of crisis](#)

You'd think by now these guys would have figured out that predicting the future is a dangerous business. We are not anticipating a robust recovery, but the question (for now) remains one of control of oil—not "energy scarcity." There are still vast resources that have not been brought on line—from Iraq to the Caspian to the Amazon. But the effort to bring this oil under imperial control—especially via the Iraq adventure—has meant a hemorrhage of the national wealth of the world's biggest economy. This has more to do with the current econocataclysm than the specter of "energy scarcity."

[How \\$30/Barrel Oil Could Save the World](#)

The UK and France took action last week to limit speculation in oil prices. The US government is also seeking a way to limit oil price speculation. It is obvious that lower oil prices can help most corporations and also help people in the price of gas they pay at the pump, which in turn can end the recession.

However, there is an even bigger reward for bringing down the price of oil to \$30.00 a barrel, which is probably the correct price as governed by today's supply and demand ratio. The lower oil price can bring an end to Iranian backed terrorism and peace to the Middle East and Afghanistan.

[If Gas Prices Go Up, Are Speculators To Blame? \(audio\)](#)

Some U.S. lawmakers and a number of international leaders say oil prices are being driven far higher than necessary by financial investors who gain from driving up commodity prices. They want to limit futures contracts to crack down on speculation.

Daniel Yergin, author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning book, *The Prize*, talks with host Scott Simon about the role of speculators in the energy markets.

[Oil prices could ruin us yet](#)

It strikes some on the outside looking in that the normal operations of the oil market are not only manipulated by speculators but all too brazenly by the producer nations as well.

Many of them formed the oil cartel OPEC that effectively has curtailed production to offset reduced demand, helping to sustain a high price for its commodity that even before the epic bubble set new records as it broke through one barrier after another.

[UK: New energy strategy 'will cost'](#)

Households will face rising fuel bills as Britain shifts to a low-carbon strategy, Energy and Climate Change Secretary Ed Miliband warned.

Mr Miliband - who publishes the Government's renewable energy strategy on Wednesday - rejected reports that the change could add £230 a year to the average household fuel bills.

[How to Invest in Peak Oil](#)

Think back to July of 2008, oil was over \$140/barrel and a lot of talk on "Peak Oil" (the point in time when the maximum rate of global petroleum extraction is reached) was floating around. By late December a hard hitting recession (depression?) and a strengthening dollar drove prices under \$35/barrel. Suddenly there was very little peak oil talk. Today oil is around \$60/barrel - and dropping. It is time to again visit peak oil thinking.

[Oil giants tremble at Nigeria's oil reforms](#)

A proposed law aimed at sweeping reforms of Nigeria's oil sector is almost halfway through the legislative stages of approval but some of its provisions are sending jitters among giant oil operators.

[Nigeria rebel Okah agrees to gov't amnesty -lawyer](#)

LAGOS 12 (Reuters) - A top Nigerian rebel leader has agreed to the terms of a federal amnesty programme, his lawyer said on Sunday, but analysts doubt that militants will halt attacks in Africa's biggest oil sector.

Henry Okah, suspected leader of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), may be freed as early as Sunday after more than a year in detention, one of his lawyers Wilson Ajuwa told Reuters.

[China rises in Latin America to a top trade partner](#)

RIO DE JANEIRO, Brazil - All but invisible in Latin America a decade ago, China now is building cars in Uruguay, donating a soccer stadium to Costa Rica and lending \$10 billion to Brazil's biggest oil company.

It's supplanted the United States to become the biggest trading partner with Brazil, South America's biggest economy.

[Alaska natural gas gets new competition](#)

If there weren't already enough barriers to building a gas pipeline from Alaska's North Slope, the Lower 48 recently entered its biggest-ever natural gas boom.

Just as the prospects for the Alaska gas line seem to be growing brighter, new drilling techniques have unlocked vast pools of natural gas all over the Lower 48, from Texas to Pennsylvania. For now, demand isn't keeping up. Prices have swooned and drill rigs are idling.

[Turkey willing to compromise on Nabucco gas pipeline](#)

Istanbul- Turkey on Sunday has expressed a willingness to compromise in a row over delivery of natural gas in the Nabucco pipeline, a day before an accord for the multi-billion-euro European Union project is due to be signed in Ankara. Turkish media quoted Energy Minister Taner Yildiz as saying that Turkey will no longer insist upon

receiving 15 per cent of the gas transferred through the pipeline.

[Kurds lay claim to land and oil, defying Iraq's central government](#)

TAK TAK OIL FIELD, Iraq – With the passage of a controversial new constitution, the Kurdish regional parliament has added fuel to an already raging fire between Kurdish leaders in northern Iraq and Iraq's central government.

The constitution, which still must be ratified in a popular vote, asserts Kurdish sovereignty over Kirkuk and other disputed areas, including oil fields. The constitution would require Baghdad to get Kurdish government approval of any international treaty signed by Baghdad that affects several disputed provinces with sizable Kurdish populations.

Officials in the central government strongly oppose the constitution, saying it's an illegal grab for power.

[Iran preparing package for talks with West](#)

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Iran is preparing a package of proposals to present to Western powers that could be a basis for future talks, the country's foreign minister said Saturday.

Manouchehr Mottaki told a news conference that the package deals with political and economic issues as well as security and international affairs but did not say whether its proposals also covered Iran's nuclear activities.

[Bangladesh - Gas crisis: 4 power plants likely to use liquid fuel from August](#)

Four gas-based power plants are likely to be converted to dual-fuel system to run by using imported liquid fuels from next month for unimpeded production of much-needed electricity, official sources said.

[Oil Tank Blast in Urumqi Not Human Fault, Xinhua Says](#)

(Bloomberg) -- An oil tank explosion today in a chemical plant in Urumqi, capital of China's Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, was not caused by human-related factors, state-run Xinhua news agency reported, citing a plant official.

[U.S. makes \\$3 billion available for renewable energy](#)

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The Obama administration on Thursday unveiled guidelines that will allow companies to apply for some \$3 billion in government funds to boost development of renewable energy projects around the country, creating jobs.

The funding will help meet the White House's goal to double U.S. renewable energy production over the next three years and also provide companies with easier financing than many can obtain in the private sector where credit remains tight.

[A Rough Year for High Ethanol Blends](#)

Far fewer people have been refueling with high ethanol blends this year in parts of the Midwest.

In North Dakota, sales of E85 — gasoline blended with 85 percent ethanol — were down by more than 60 percent this year from January to May, compared with a year earlier, according to the state's Commerce Department.

[€400bn energy plan to harness African sun](#)

The world's most ambitious green energy project is about to take shape. It is a plan for a chain of mammoth sun-powered energy plants in the deserts of North Africa to supply power to Europe's homes and factories by the end of the next decade.

[Solar program a success, with 50,000 units installed](#)

Hawaiian Electric's \$2.5 million payment backlog to contractors in its solar water heater program detracts from its success.

The program helps Hawai'i homeowners and businesses escape from nation-leading electricity rates in the state while cutting down on the amount of imported foreign petroleum used in the generation of electricity here.

[Carbon dioxide bill may aid oil recovery](#)

With an economy beholden to oilfields, fuel refineries and chemical plants, Louisiana was not exactly prepared for the inauguration of President Barack Obama, who has put renewable energy and the fight against global warming at the forefront of his administration.

But state lawmakers may have found a way to walk between the two worlds. Passed with little fanfare last legislative session was House Bill 661, also known as the Louisiana Geologic Sequestration of Carbon Dioxide Act. The bill, which was signed by Gov. Bobby

Jindal last week, would create a new unit within the Department of Natural Resources dedicated to capturing that greenhouse gas.

[Clean-coal project gains government support](#)

HOUSTON (Reuters) - The Taylorville Energy Center, a proposed clean-coal project to be built in Illinois, expects to obtain a federal loan guarantee of nearly \$2.6 billion after being selected by the U.S. Department of Energy for final term-sheet negotiations, the developers said on Friday.

Taylorville, a hybrid integrated gasification combined cycle (IGCC) plant, will produce 525 to 550 megawatts of electricity along with substitute natural gas.

The plant will also capture and store at least 50 percent of its carbon dioxide emissions, reducing emissions to levels more like that of natural gas-fired plants.

[Lima: Desert city in need of water](#)

In the past the flow of the rivers was adequate to supply Lima's needs. But Lima is a growing city and the flow of water down the rivers has decreased during the Andes' dry season. In the past glacial melt kept river levels high in the dry season but the glaciers are disappearing due to global warming.

Now Lima has a water shortage for many months of the year and recent droughts are exacerbating the problem even further. Shutting off the water supply to homes and businesses during the wee hours of the morning is occasionally done and cutting back on landscape watering is also practiced. These water-saving strategies, however, appear to be insufficient to resolve Lima's long-term water problem. Desalinization of ocean waters is too expensive for Peru and would require the use of the planet's ever-dwindling supply of fossil fuel. Stay tuned.

[OSU study: Thin forests can't fight warming](#)

GRANTS PASS — Scientists conclude in two government-funded studies that forests in the Pacific Northwest have a huge potential to store more carbon to combat global warming, but not if they are heavily thinned to prevent wildfire.

That poses a dilemma to the U.S. Forest Service, which has historically focused on balancing timber production against maintaining fish and wildlife habitat, but is increasingly trying to thin out young trees and brush to control wildfires that regularly cost \$1 billion a year.

[Climate change may displace millions in Mekong Delta: report](#)

Climate change impacts will force the displacement and migration of large populations in Vietnam, particularly the Mekong Delta, international experts reckon.

A report jointly written by experts from the United Nations, CARE International, and the Earth Institute of Columbia University estimates more than 14 million residents in the Cuu Long River Delta could lose their rice fields if sea levels were to rise by two meters.



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