



Drumbeat: August 8, 2009

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Topic: [Miscellaneous](#)

[Climate Change Seen as Threat to U.S. Security](#)

WASHINGTON — The changing global climate will pose profound strategic challenges to the United States in coming decades, raising the prospect of military intervention to deal with the effects of violent storms, drought, mass migration and pandemics, military and intelligence analysts say.

Such climate-induced crises could topple governments, feed terrorist movements or destabilize entire regions, say the analysts, experts at the Pentagon and intelligence agencies who for the first time are taking a serious look at the national security implications of climate change.

Recent war games and intelligence studies conclude that over the next 20 to 30 years, vulnerable regions, particularly sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and South and Southeast Asia, will face the prospect of food shortages, water crises and catastrophic flooding driven by climate change that could demand an American humanitarian relief or military response.

[Consumerism is 'eating the future'](#)

We're a gloomy lot, with many of us insisting that there's nothing we can do personally about global warming, or that the human race is over-running the planet like a plague.

But according to leading ecologists speaking this week in Albuquerque at the annual meeting of the Ecological Society of America, few of us realise that the main cause of the current environmental crisis is human nature.

More specifically, all we're doing is what all other creatures have ever done to survive, expanding into whatever territory is available and using up whatever resources are available, just like a bacterial culture growing in a Petri dish till all the nutrients are used up. What happens then, of course, is that the bugs then die in a sea of their own waste.

[Libyans bid for Shell sites](#)

LIBYA's national oil company and two billionaire Indian brothers are among the contenders to buy Britain's second-largest oil refinery.

Shell's Stanlow complex near Ellesmere Port, Cheshire, produces a sixth of the UK's petrol and is the oil giant's only refinery in Britain. However, the company has put it up for sale as it tries to rein in its huge cost base and struggles with the effects of an oil price that is half the level of the historic high hit last year.

[Saudi Arabia's buying power](#)

Recently-released statistics point out to exceptional economic results in Saudi Arabia in 2008 on the back of firm oil prices.

For instance, the gross domestic product (GDP) in current prices grew by a hefty 22 per cent on the back of exceptional rise of oil prices in the first seven months of the year. GDP in current prices or market exchange rate include effects of oil price rise but exclude inflationary pressures. Oil prices reached a record \$147 per barrel in July 2008. However, oil prices dropped in the last five months of the year in the aftermath of the global financial crisis and the collapse of the subprime market in the US.

[Oil spill tarnishes French nature reserve](#)

MARSEILLE, France (AFP) – Experts on Sunday will begin taking stock of the impact of an oil spill from a pipeline that runs through a nature reserve in the south of France, officials said Saturday.

Some 4,000 cubic metres of crude oil spilled from the pipeline that runs from Fos-sur-Mer, northwest of the French Mediterranean port of Marseille, to Karlsruhe, Germany via the Coussoulis de Crau reserve.

[Bold Soil-Mapping Venture Seen as Crucial to Efforts on Climate, Agriculture](#)

Long left in the dust by their peers in climate research, a small group of soil scientists is spearheading an effort to apply rigorous computer analysis to the ground beneath our feet.

Their goal: to produce a digital soil map of the entire world.

[Thomas Homer-Dixon: The enticements of green carrots](#) - *Nudging people with environmental incentives may work better than imposing costs and penalties*

We Canadians like to think we are green, but when it comes to protecting the environment, we are among the world's worst actors. Whether the metric is carbon output per capita, toxic waste emissions or protection of endangered species, Canada regularly ranks near the bottom of the list of similarly wealthy countries.

If our economy's incentives start pulling in the same direction as our ethical impulses, Canadians can do better. At present, they are pulling in opposite directions.

[A more positive Pacific solution](#)

At a Lowy Institute forum in Brisbane he said Vanuatu's 220,000 people had been largely unaffected by the global financial crisis - because they did not belong to the modern economy. About 80 per cent live in the traditional village economy, while even the rest - including his Port Vila constituents - rely on tradition and kinship for food, work exchanges and dispute settlement.

The traditional economies in PNG, the Solomons and Vanuatu had expanded to cope with some of the highest population growth anywhere, and provided food and shelter (if not modern medicines to fight malaria) where the modern economy collapsed altogether, as in Bougainville during its civil war.

"We must make deliberate efforts to maintain the traditional economy where it exists in the Pacific and ensure that it remains as our buffer in the uncertain global economy into the future," Regenvanu said. It had to be somehow entered into economic statistics, and its supports like traditional land tenure maintained.

[Saving the planet, one block, one small project at a time](#)

ON A WINTRY day in January, Dave Reid loaded some 700 pounds of freshly harvested organic vegetables into the cabin of his 27-foot sailboat in Sequim Bay, hoisted his sails and rode an outgoing tide into the Strait of Juan de Fuca, bound for Seattle. Over the next two days, Reid sailed on quirky winds, dodged state ferries, scooted past Chinese container ships and even encountered a mammoth Trident submarine before eventually docking at Shilshole Bay. That's where his customers showed up to collect their allotments of herbs and greens.

In an economy that usually rewards speed and efficiency, Reid's carbon-free voyage gives new meaning to tilting at windmills. It took 36 hours to make a trip a small truck could have accomplished in two hours. And his 700 pounds amounted to a minuscule percentage of the food consumed in Seattle that day.

[Other Countries Ink Deals for Oil Drilling Off Florida Keys](#)

While the debate about drilling off the coast of Florida continues in Washington and the

state Legislature, several international companies are getting started on projects that could bring oil rigs within 60 miles of the Keys by year's end.

Companies from nations like Norway, Spain, India, China, Russia and Brazil have signed exploration agreements with Cuba and the Bahamas that could mean drilling south of Key West this year, and 120 miles east of the Keys in the Cay Sal area of the Bahamas in fewer than two years.

[Chris Cook: Energy ETFs Not To Blame](#)

I'd say that speculators are to blame, but it depends on how you define "speculator." I don't regard the exchange-traded funds as speculators; I believe the real speculators are the middlemen who buy oil and sell it for profit, or who act as market makers in the derivatives markets with the view of making profits. Now, there's nothing wrong with either of those things, but it is inherently a speculative activity.

[Power rationing affects sluggish Kenya economy](#)

Kenya's sluggish economy has suffered a new setback as the country went into a power rationing mode, analysts said, citing the impact of similar action nine years ago.

Day-long power rationing announced on Tuesday started yesterday with the small and medium enterprises (SMEs), the country's growth engine, hit hardest because they were excluded from a reprieve scheme that was announced by the government.

[Kuwait becomes net gas importer](#)

Kuwait's first cargo of liquefied natural gas (LNG) has arrived at its terminal, making the oil-rich state a net importer of gas. The country's decision to turn to LNG, a costly source of fuel, is a result of a severe gas supply crunch that has led to a shortage of electricity and made power cuts a fixture of summer months.

[Reality Pricks Corn Ethanol's Bubble](#)

Cost and carbon have chopped down the high hopes America's Midwest had for growing the nation off climate-changing foreign oil.

[Not Recycling, and Proud of It](#)

America's still-undecided policy on nuclear waste means the spent rods just keep a-piling up.

[Bill McKibben: Beyond Radical](#) - *What conservatives could bring to the climate conversation*

Many libertarians—and much of the larger conservative movement—have let down the intellectual process by refusing to engage on the most important issue of our time, and it's making it much harder to solve the problem. I don't mean, of course, that they haven't opposed action on climate change—the think tanks and websites at the center of organized conservatism have done that successfully for twenty years. But it's been only by the disgracefully anti-intellectual tactic of denying that there's a real problem.

Libertarians, for instance, have always insisted that they're more rational than the rest of us, weighed down as we are by religious superstition or other forms of sentimentality. Their magazine, after all, is called *Reason*. But *Reason* and its ideological cousin the Cato Institute have spent twenty years plumping for any global warming skeptic they can find or fund—their position, apparently, is that the atmospheric chemists and physicists who, by application of the scientific process, have reached broad consensus that we are warming the Earth have somehow managed to screw up the math. It's embarrassing to read—no argument is too absurd or too trivial. It is completely un*Reasonable*.

[Climate Change Activist Bill McKibben and Bat Specialist Al Hicks to Speak in Newcomb](#)

Bill McKibben, acclaimed author of *The End of Nature*, has been rallying support from around the world to speak as one planet and call for a fair global climate treaty. Wildlife biologist Al Hicks is racing against the clock working with other scientists to prevent the extinction of bats in the Northeast. McKibben will be the keynote speaker at the annual meeting of the Adirondack Chapter of The Nature Conservancy and the Adirondack Land Trust on Saturday, August 15, at the Newcomb Central School in Newcomb, NY. Hicks's lecture, *The End of Bats in the Northeast?*, is one of three field trip/educational opportunities being offered before the meeting formally kicks off at 1:00.

[Wham! So Much for Energy Liberalization](#)

Ah, the 1980s. It was a time when our phones had to be plugged into the walls. It was an era of bad music, big hair and a shrinking role for government in energy markets. Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan introduced the free market to the energy market and they ran off in a (mostly) happy embrace.

Whether you think this development was brilliant or dastardly doesn't really matter now because that era is ending—quickly.

[Alaska: Gas shortage stirs pols](#)

Alaska political leaders are seizing on what's fast becoming a burning issue: the potential

for electric power or heating outages this winter in the state's population center as supplies of Cook Inlet natural gas tighten.

"Woe unto the policymaker who didn't do something," said state Sen. Hollis French, an Anchorage Democrat who is calling for a Strategic Gas Initiative.

[Why grow your own food?](#)

OVER the next several years food prices will increase sharply. These coming price increases are as unavoidable and inevitable as an increase in the price of oil.

In fact the price we pay for food is interestingly and inextricably linked to the oil price, and this article will not only show how the two have become inseparably intertwined but how they cannot do anything other than escalate.

[Bill Gross's Solar Breakthrough](#)

"We are producing the lowest cost solar electrons in the history of the world," Bill Gross is telling me. "Nobody's ever done it. Nobody's close."

Bill Gross is nothing if not an enthusiast, which makes him a great salesman for whatever it is he happens to be selling. A lifelong entrepreneur, a longtime evangelist for solar energy and the CEO of eSolar, a Google-funded startup that designs and develops concentrating solar power (CSP) projects at utility scale, Gross is one of the most interesting business people I've known.

[UK: Councils accused of ignoring biogas](#)

Find out if your council is about to waste your waste in favour of incinerators with our interactive map.

[How America might invent the future](#)

Modern humans may impatiently look forward to their robot servants and flying cars of the future, but true lessons about innovation come from the past. And history suggests that making a great leaps forward in science and technology requires much more than lone genius. Cooperation, financing and hard work are at the core of progress.

[Is a 4-day workweek inevitable? Utah cuts energy use 13%](#)

Closing Utah state offices on Fridays has resulted in a 13 percent reduction in energy use according to an internal analysis of the nation's most expansive four-day workweek program.

Since last August, about 17,000 of the state's 24,000 executive branch employees have been working 10 hours a day, four days a week in an effort to reduce energy consumption and cut utility costs....

The state estimates that, collectively, employees will save between \$5 million and \$6 million annually by not commuting on Fridays and the initiative will cut greenhouse gas emissions by more than 12,000 metric tons.

[Review: What Will Life Be Like In the US When Gas Costs \\$20 Per Gallon?](#)

Not to suggest the subject or Steiner's argument aren't serious. Both are. But before offering modest praise and a modest critique, we have to say that we kept imagining a conversation involving some combination of the agent, editor and publisher prior to the book being written that really stressed how important it was to make this a positive book—after all, everybody is sick of downers like Jim Kunstler talking about oil crashes. And since negative scary arguments apparently just make people retreat deeper into their cocoons of denial where their only sustenance is crime dramas and celebrity blogs, it's important to keep it happy. We're serious: HAPPY! Thus sentences like this one in the introduction: "The future will be exhilarating."

[Military plans anti-sub exercises in Arctic](#)

Just a month after two nuclear-powered Russian subs cracked through sea ice near the North Pole to test-fire two long-range missiles, the Canadian military will conduct "anti-submarine warfare" exercises during its annual Arctic sovereignty operation, which began this week near Baffin Island.

The massive training mission, involving some 700 personnel from the Canadian Forces and a host of federal and territorial agencies, will also feature a simulated security emergency involving a "suspected downed unmanned aerial vehicle."

[New oil field discovered in Inner Mongolia](#)

An oil field with about 140 million tons of high-quality reserve has been discovered in northern China's Inner Mongolia autonomous region.

[Brazil to raise stake in Petrobras](#)

Brazil's government plans to boost its stake by the coming year in state-run Petrobras,

which is partly owned by private investors, by offering new oilfields in exchange for company shares, a source said.

[Electric roadster maker making money](#)

NEW YORK (CNNMoney.com) -- Tesla Motors turned profitable for the first time in July, when the electric car manufacturer shipped a record 109 vehicles, the company said Friday.

A surge in sales and reduced manufacturing costs of Tesla's Roadster 2 sports car helped boost the company to \$1 million in earnings and \$20 million in revenue.

[Driving Out of Germany, to Pollute Another Day](#)

FRANKFURT — When the German government developed its pioneering cash-for-clunkers program, it neglected one small detail: making sure the clunkers no longer clunked.

Police investigators have concluded that the alluring premise of the program — providing generous incentives to people who replace aging, pollutant-spewing vehicles with environmentally friendly models — is being undermined as cars that were supposed to have been junked are finding their way to markets in Africa and Eastern Europe.

Up to 50,000 clunkers have whistled past the automotive graveyard in Germany and found new life elsewhere, according to Ronald Schulze, an expert with the Association of Criminal Investigators, a professional group of police sleuths. Experienced thieves, he said in an interview on Friday, discovered “a market opportunity.”

[Journalist to discuss ‘peak oil’](#)

Former Minnesota journalist Brian Kaller will discuss how to live well in a worsening economy with less energy in two events today and Wednesday in Minneapolis and St. Paul.

Kaller has written for a number of years about “peak oil,” the point at which global energy resources begin to decline, and related issues such as climate change and the global economy.

[Localism and Economic Liberalism: A prolix pontification and an open forum](#)

Alas, the enduring unholy marriage of capital and power, to which we have tacitly

submitted, if not offered hearty obeisance, has so enervated our communities, so completely desiccated our intermediary institutions, that rebuilding the sort of social capital that restraining the vicious side of liberal economics requires is, notwithstanding climactic upheavals (C'monnnnnnn, Peak Oil!), simply impossible to expect to have happen except on a extremely local, piecemeal scale. (And perhaps this isn't all bad?)

[The Search For Green Power On And Off Of The Grid](#)

Hundreds of utilities around the country — and a growing number of companies — are offering customers a chance to buy green power. These programs are especially popular with businesses, which use them to promote their environmental consciousness. Packaging for all kinds of products now includes claims that producers use renewable power. But where does the power come from?

[On the Fairway, New Lessons in Saving Water](#)

State governments are turning to golf courses, long seen as water guzzlers, for tips on conservation.

[Turkish Dam Loses European Creditors](#)

Defenders of archeology and the rights of Kurdish villagers may have trumped Turkey's quest to build a massive hydroelectric dam.

In July, German, Swiss and Austrian creditors backed out of the \$1.7 billion Ilisu dam project amid a flurry of protests.

[Divine assistance meets global warming](#)

Villagers from deeply Roman Catholic south Switzerland have for centuries offered a sacred vow to God to protect them from the advancing ice mass of the Great Aletsch Glacier.

Global warming is making them want to reverse their prayers, and the Alpine faithful are seeking the permission of the Pope.

[Mountain Critter A Candidate For Endangered List](#)

The American pika could become the first animal in the continental U.S. listed under the Endangered Species Act because of climate change. The cute relative of the rabbit lives in the mountain West, and researchers say warmer temperatures put it at risk for

extinction.

If the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service decides to list the pika, that could prompt new restrictions on the activities that create greenhouse gases.

[NY governor signs order setting emissions goal](#)

ALBANY, N.Y. — New York Gov. David Paterson signed an executive order Thursday that sets a statewide goal of cutting greenhouse gas emissions by mid-century to 80 percent below the 1990 levels.

A new council representing various state agencies is to examine the economic impacts and prepare a plan by September of next year for reaching the target levels. Under Paterson's order, emissions in the state would be reduced to 55 million tons by 2050.

[A Pacific island chain with real energy incentive](#)

Tuvalu is a nation of nine islands and atolls halfway between Australia and Hawaii. Some 12,000 people live there. The highest point in its 10 square miles of land is 14.7 feet above sea level. Most land is less than 3.2 feet above the high tide mark. After the Maldives, it's the country with the lowest elevation in the world. And it's quite worried by the rising seas predicted to accompany a warmer world.

The encroaching ocean has already claimed some smaller islands. Saltwater seeping up through the ground has made growing crops in some areas difficult. Many have begun referring to Tuvaluans as some of the world's first climate refugees.

[Geoengineering schemes under scrutiny](#): *Researchers divided over the wisdom of climate manipulation*

Geoengineering — the deliberate manipulation of climate to counteract global warming — might not be taking off just yet, but the push to fund more research into it is increasing.



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