



Drumbeat: March 1, 2010

Posted by [Leanan](#) on March 1, 2010 - 9:16am

Topic: [Miscellaneous](#)

[Niall Ferguson - Complexity and Collapse: Empires on the Edge of Chaos](#)

What if history is not cyclical and slow moving but arrhythmic -- at times almost stationary, but also capable of accelerating suddenly, like a sports car? What if collapse does not arrive over a number of centuries but comes suddenly, like a thief in the night?

Great powers and empires are, I would suggest, complex systems, made up of a very large number of interacting components that are asymmetrically organized, which means their construction more resembles a termite hill than an Egyptian pyramid. They operate somewhere between order and disorder -- on "the edge of chaos," in the phrase of the computer scientist Christopher Langton. Such systems can appear to operate quite stably for some time; they seem to be in equilibrium but are, in fact, constantly adapting. But there comes a moment when complex systems "go critical." A very small trigger can set off a "phase transition" from a benign equilibrium to a crisis -- a single grain of sand causes a whole pile to collapse, or a butterfly flaps its wings in the Amazon and brings about a hurricane in southeastern England.

se supply for planned refineries.

Ali al-Naimi, oil minister in the biggest Arab economy, agreed to raise crude supply to India to 40 million tons a year, or about 770,000 barrels a day, from 25.5 million tons a year, at a meeting today with counterpart Murli Deora, India's Oil Ministry said in a statement on its Web site.

[Bangalore: Power cuts short-circuit India's Silicon Valley](#)

Frequent power blackouts are taking a toll on the confidence of India's Silicon Valley. Bangalore, which fetched Rs 68,500-crore foreign exchange for the country last year, is reeling under frequent unscheduled power cuts - sometimes lasting 3-4 hours. This has not only infuriated small-scale enterprises but also the 1,800-company strong IT/ITes sector in the IT city. According to estimates by the Federation of Karnataka Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FKCCI), the power cuts are resulting the IT hub's industrial belt losing around Rs 400 crore a day.

Bangalore requires 33 million units (mu) per day but it is currently receiving only around 30 mu. The demand may increase by another 2 mu per day during the summer months. So the worst is probably yet to come.

[Ukraine Cuts Electricity Exports to 3 EU Nations](#)

KIEV, Ukraine — Ukraine says it has cut off electricity exports to EU nations Hungary, Romania and Slovakia, for at least a month due to a coal shortage.

[Malta: Fenech insists growth, not protests, is solution for higher tariffs](#)

Finance Minister Tonio Fenech said today that oil prices were expected to continue to rise, and the government was helping the economy to deal with them.

[Spring Is Coming](#)

The experts say very little about coal and natural gas - because they are cheap. When or if coal and gas were priced at the same dollars-per-unit energy rate as oil costing \$80 a barrel, their price would be about \$14 per million BTU for gas, and \$400 a ton for energy coal, which to be sure would revolutionize the outlook for green energy.

Simply because oil is already out of the price box, it has an almost mystical impact on political leaders of importer countries, and the battalions of hungry consumers they lead. Without oil and its intrigue, shadowy and mysterious wars in far-off lands, political coups and putsches to install better-performing 'democrats' in exporter countries, and the exciting Madoff-style merry-go-round of oil trading, life would be slower and dimmer.

When or if other fossil energy sources, which with oil supply 85% of world energy at this time, cost as much as oil we could fear that coal wars and gas wars would join today's oil wars.

[The importance of envisioning “community”](#)

Presently most of us are like deer in the headlights, watching with both excitement and horror the approaching social, economic, ecological “collapse”, with each of us envisioning both our worst fears and our best hopes (like many did with Obama). In lieu of direct action, or in addition to it, many of us spend a lot of our time “envisioning”. How will this collapse play out, and what is the timing? What are the possibilities of change? What exactly are the changes that need to happen? Like the deer, we know we should bolt (act), but which way, when? It is all so confusing.

[No Third Runway campaigners defend community](#)

COMMUNITY activists from the group Transition Heathrow moved into an abandoned

market garden in Sipson today.

Around 20 people "swooped" on the land in Sipson around lunchtime today.

After securing the site, the group immediately informed their new neighbours and local residents of their intention to reopen the old market garden for the benefit of the local community.

The 'Grow Heathrow' project aims to encourage and support locally grown produce in an area that once had some of the most fertile soils in Britain. Transition Heathrow has launched the project to highlight the need for a community controlled food supply in order to remain resilient to the impacts of peak oil and climate change.

[ExxonMobil's Spending Exceeds Cash Flow in 2009](#)

Exxon Mobil Corp.'s spending exceeded its cash flow in 2009, drawing down one of the oil industry's largest treasure troves in a year of weak energy prices.

The Texas oil giant received \$29.9 billion in cash from operations and asset sales last year while spending \$53.12 billion in capital investments and money given to investors via dividends and share buybacks. Exxon's cash reserves -- padded by years of booming energy prices -- shrank to \$10.7 billion at the end of 2009 from \$31.4 billion at the close of 2008, according to an annual filing Friday with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

[To Nuke or Not to Nuke](#)

Minnesota and seven other states currently outlaw new nuclear energy production: Wisconsin, Illinois, California, Hawaii, and three coal states, West Virginia, Kentucky and Montana (which also lacks sufficient water for nuclear cooling).

The Minnesota legislature passed a moratorium on new nuclear power plants in 1994. A new nuclear power plant would take at least 10 years to bring online and cost \$12-billion or more. Within 10 years the price for solar photovoltaics will come down while nuclear power costs will rise. Nuclear will be the most expensive form of electricity to generate, therefore the most profitable for utility investors. At this time nuclear energy is 17-cents per kilowatt hour while efficiency costs two-cents/kw according to Bill Grant from the Isaac Walton League's Midwest Chapter.

[Rulings Restrict Clean Water Act, Foiling E.P.A.](#)

Thousands of the nation's largest water polluters are outside the Clean Water Act's reach because the Supreme Court has left uncertain which waterways are protected by that law, according to interviews with regulators.

As a result, some businesses are declaring that the law no longer applies to them. And pollution rates are rising.

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[Oil falls back below \\$80 as dollar strengthens](#)

Oil prices lost early gains Monday to retreat below \$80 a barrel, as the effects of a rising dollar offset the strength in other commodities markets, such as copper, and increases in equities.

[Saudi Arabia Lowers March LPG Prices as Heating Demand Falls](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Saudi Arabian Oil Co., the largest supplier of liquefied petroleum gas to Asia, lowered prices for cargoes loading in March as the end of the Northern Hemisphere winter cuts demand for heating fuel.

[Pakistan Lowers Domestic Oil Prices in Line With Global Costs](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Pakistan lowered domestic fuel prices by as much as 4 percent in line with international crude rates, the Islamabad-based Oil & Gas Regulatory Authority said in a statement.

The government decreased the price of gasoline by 1 percent to 70.57 rupees (83 cents) a liter. Light diesel oil prices were lowered by 3 percent to 59.47 rupees, according to the regulator's statement on its Web site.

[Korea, Japan Yet to Get More Diesel Orders From Chile](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Asian oil refiners that can make ultra-low sulfur diesel used in Chile have yet to receive any spot purchase orders even as the Latin American country sought to boost imports following an 8.8-magnitude earthquake.

Chile, the fourth-largest oil consumer in South and Central America, plans to buy diesel from overseas after closing the bigger two of its three refineries, according to state-owned Empresa Nacional del Petroleo. The country, which imports about 20 percent of its fuel needs, has enough diesel supply for 10 days' consumption and gasoline for two weeks, the company known as ENAP said Feb. 27 in an e-mailed statement.

[Kuwait sees \\$9 bln China refinery deal by year-end](#)

DUBAI (Reuters) - Kuwait expects to receive approval to develop a \$9 billion refinery in China by the end of the year, a Kuwaiti oil executive said on Monday.

In remarks carried by state news agency KUNA, Kuwait Petroleum Corp's (KPC) chief executive Saad Al-Shuwaib said the project's investors were still hoping to commission the 300,000 barrels per day (bpd) refinery by 2013.

[Mol Says Earnings May More Than Double Through 2012](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Mol Nyrta, Hungary's largest oil company, is seeking to more than double profit in three years by raising crude output and making its refineries more efficient.

[Aramco steps up gas chase](#)

Drilling for oil in top oil exporter Saudi Arabia in 2010 is expected to remain the same as last year, industry sources said, but state oil giant Aramco would increase gas drilling activities.

[Saudi Aramco seeks bids for Red Sea seismic survey](#)

KHOBAR, Saudi Arabia (Reuters) - At least three companies are bidding for a seismic survey in the Red Sea for state oil giant Saudi Aramco, industry sources said on Monday.

...Aramco is planning to start drilling in deeper offshore frontiers in 2012, Aramco's chief executive Khalid al-Falih said in November.

[Shell to Sell Assets to Fund \\$28 Billion Spending, FT Reports](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Royal Dutch Shell Plc is selling assets including fields in the North Sea and its European liquefied petroleum gas business to help finance its \$28 billion capital spending program this year, the Financial Times said, citing unidentified people involved in the proposed transactions.

[TNK-BP 2009 reserves rise, income falls](#)

MOSCOW (Reuters) - Russia's third-biggest oil and gas producer TNK-BP said it replenished its hydrocarbon reserves in 2009 due to new discoveries and a rise in oil prices while its full-year net income fell 5.7 percent.

TNK-BP, half-owned by BP, said on Monday that under the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission's methodology, which uses the year-end spot price and applies to the economic life of a field, reserves rose in 2009 to 8.6 billion barrels from 8.1 billion in 2008.

[More people apply for energy assistance to help with heating](#)

A record number of U.S. households are applying for help to pay home heating bills with 17 states fielding application requests that are up more than 20% from last year, the National Energy Assistance Directors' Association says.

Almost 9 million U.S. households are expected to need help paying winter energy bills. That's up 15% from the record-setting 7.7 million last year, the association says.

[Fla. deadliest state for walkers, cyclists](#)

MIAMI, Florida — Florida is the deadliest state in the U.S. for pedestrians — and bicyclists don't fare any better.

In 2008, the most recent year for which federal statistics are available, 11.1% of pedestrians and 17.4% of bicyclists killed in the U.S. died in the Sunshine State, which has 6% of the nation's population.

[Kunstler: Winter Mind Games](#)

I am confident in the "emergent," self-organizing capabilities of human societies. We are

now faced with the task of emergently re-organizing medicine downward to the community clinic level -- and sooner or later probably toward a simple, straightforward pay-as-you-go in cash basis with doctors you know, with all the bureaucratic barnacles scraped away. Like a lot of other things in the years ahead -- education, retail trade, transport, even banking -- medicine is likely to be much less dazzling than the way it is practiced today. But when all is said and done we'll still possess the germ theory of illness and the recipe for lidocaine and a few other things that will make existence tolerable.

[Sumitomo, IFC to Advise Indonesia on Energy Finance](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Sumitomo Mitsui Financial Group Inc. agreed with the World Bank and the U.S. Agency for International Development to advise Indonesia on funding renewable energy projects as the country plans to boost power generation.

[A stink in Central California over converting cow manure to electricity](#)

Air-quality rules in the region leave dairy farmers facing costly changes to generators used to burn methane to produce power. Some have put their renewable-energy plans on hold.

[AGL May Build Wind Farm on Revised Clean-Energy Plan](#)

(Bloomberg) -- AGL Energy Ltd., Australia's largest electricity retailer, said it expects to build the A\$800 million (\$719 million) Macarthur wind farm after the government revised a plan to spur renewable energy investment.

[How do you convince people of global warming in a snowstorm?](#)

"Gloomy unemployment numbers, public frustration with Washington, attacks on climate science, and mobilized opposition to national climate legislation represent a 'perfect storm' of events that have lowered public concerns about global warming even among the alarmed," says Anthony Leiserowitz, director of the Yale Project on Climate Change.

[China eyeing perks of ice-free Arctic: study](#)

STOCKHOLM (AFP) – China has started exploring how to reap economic and strategic benefits from the ice melting at the Arctic with global warming, a Stockholm research institute said Monday.

Chinese officials have so far had been cautious in expressing interest in the region for fear of causing alarm among the five countries bordering the Arctic, the Stockholm

International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) said.

"The prospect of the Arctic being navigable during summer months, leading to both shorter shipping routes and access to untapped energy resources, has impelled the Chinese government to allocate more resources to Arctic research," SIPRI researcher Linda Jakobson said.



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