



Drumbeat: March 23, 2011

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[A global energy war looms](#)

As you can see, demand in China, India and other emerging markets soars, but there is also quite considerable growth from advanced economies too. The big picture is that with an additional one billion cars on the road, demand for oil would grow 110pc to more than 190 million barrels per day. Total demand for energy would rise by a similar order of magnitude, doubling the amount of carbon in the atmosphere to more than three and a half times the amount climate change scientists think would keep temperatures at safe levels.

It scarcely needs saying that regardless of the environmental consequences, energy industries would struggle to cope, and more likely would find it impossible. We may or may not already be perilously close to peak oil – or maximum productive capacity – but nobody believes the industry could produce double what it does at the moment, however clever it becomes in tapping previously uncommercial or inaccessible reserves.

[Oil near \\$105 as traders eye Middle East upheaval](#)

SINGAPORE – Oil prices hung near \$105 a barrel Wednesday in Asia as violent uprisings in the Middle East kept traders nervous about possible crude supply disruptions.

[Spiraling gas prices causing “economic emergency,” says Hinchey](#)

KINGSTON, NY – Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-Hurley) wants to put a stop to price gougers and financial speculators who he said are the culprits in the drastically increasing prices of gas in recent weeks.

He is calling on immediate action to halt the problem and relieve those who are struggling with already meager budgets.

[Middle East unrest will likely drive nitrogen fertilizer costs higher](#)

Middle East unrest could drive nitrogen fertilizer costs up to 2008 levels, according to a Texas AgriLife Research expert. Warm-season grasses used for livestock production in

much of Texas and the South are dependent upon large amounts of nitrogen fertilizer.

[Airlines, cabs, shuttles raise prices](#)

Travelers to Europe this year are discovering unwelcome ride-alongs: new and heftier surcharges for flights and cruises. They may even pay more to get to their U.S. gateway airport. Blame the rising price of oil, driven by widening world demand and Mideast turmoil, for much of this pain.

[Gasoline Shipping Profit Seen Rising 24% After Earthquake](#)

Profit from shipping gasoline to the U.S. from Europe in the second quarter will rise 24 percent as disruptions to Japanese imports divert cargoes across the Atlantic, increasing demand for vessels.

[Oil, Grains Will Be Top Commodity Gainers in 2011, Barclays Capital Says](#)

Crude oil and grains will be the top commodity performers this year as investors bet on supply disruptions, a Barclays Capital survey showed.

Twenty-eight percent of more than 100 investors polled this month said oil will gain the most this year, followed by corn and wheat, Barclays Capital said. Gold, which rose 30 percent last year, may be “losing its shine” and was ranked the worst performer for 2011 after natural gas, the bank said.

[Russia set to profit from Libya, Japan crises](#)

Only a year ago, Russia's dominance as a global energy supplier was threatened by low gas prices and a reputation as an unreliable trade partner. But with the world now shaken by Japan's natural disasters and uprisings across the Middle East, the country is back at the heart of the market -- and cashing in.

[Russia to double oil exports to Japan after quake](#)

A senior Cabinet official says Russia will double its oil exports to Japan to 18 million tons this year to help its neighbor through the aftermath of the devastating earthquake and tsunami.

[Poland breaks ground on gas terminal to lessen dependence on Russia](#)

Warsaw - Poland broke ground Wednesday on a gas terminal on the Baltic Sea aimed at diversifying energy sources and lessening the country's reliance on Russian gas.

[Putin visits Serbia for talks on natural gas pipeline to transport gas from Russia to Europe](#)

BELGRADE, Serbia — Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin has arrived in Serbia for talks focusing on economic issues and energy — including construction of the South Stream pipeline to transport Russian natural gas to Europe.

[How Oil Wealth Undercuts Democracy in Libya](#)

Even as the United States and its allies press their military campaign against forces loyal to the longtime dictator Muammar el-Qaddafi, economic indicators suggest that helping Libyan rebels will neither reduce oppression nor result in democracy for Libya.

Libya's oil reserves are among the largest and most valuable in the world, and that alone is a big obstacle to democracy. Leaders of oil-rich countries almost always enjoy rich economic rewards, and there's an endless supply of factions that would, no doubt, like to have those rewards for themselves.

[Allies Prepare to Attack Qaddafi's Ground Forces, Debate Command Structure](#)

The U.S. and its allies are preparing to direct more attacks against Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi's ground forces, as the coalition tries to resolve disputes over who will take over command.

[Libyan forces intensify shelling of rebels in east](#)

AJDABIYA, Libya — Moammar Gadhafi's forces intensified the shelling of rebel positions outside a strategic eastern city Wednesday as they fought to prevent the opposition from taking advantage of the 5-day-old international air campaign to regroup in the east.

[Air strikes silence Gaddafi guns at besieged city](#)

TRIPOLI (Reuters) — Western warplanes silenced Muammar Gaddafi's artillery and tanks besieging rebel-held Misrata in western Libya on Wednesday after a U.S. admiral warned his armor was the next target.

Breathing defiance, Gaddafi earlier said Western powers who carried out a fourth night of air strikes on Libya to protect civilians under a U.N. mandate were "a bunch of fascists who will end up in the dustbin of history."

[Germany calls for oil, gas embargo against Libya](#)

Germany is calling for the European Union to impose a full oil and gas embargo this week on Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi's regime.

Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle said Tuesday that no one knows how long fighting in Libya will last and it is important to make sure Gadhafi can't get his hands on fresh money.

[Libya strikes complicate Pentagon budget strain](#)

The United States is now fighting in three conflicts -- Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya -- while struggling under a huge budget deficit and national debt. The Pentagon also has plans to cut \$78 billion in defense spending over five years.

[6 dead in new clashes in southern Syria city](#)

DARAA, Syria – New violence in a restive southern Syrian city killed as many as six people early Wednesday, making it the deadliest single day since anti-government protests inspired by uprisings across the Arab world reached this country last week, an activist said.

[BP raising game on risk](#)

BP is taking steps to proactively manage and minimize risk across its operations in response to the Macondo oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico last year, chief executive Bob Dudley said in the UK supermajor's annual Sustainability Report.

[ConocoPhillips Plans To Sell Additional \\$5 Billion To \\$10 Billion Of Assets](#)

ConocoPhillips (COP) unveiled plans to sell an additional \$5 billion to \$10 billion in non-core assets over the next two years as the oil producer and refiner continues efforts to improve its balance sheet.

[Blindsided by Ferocity Unleashed by a Fault: "Nobody expected magnitude 9"](#)

On a map of Japan that shows seismic hazards, the area around the prefecture of Fukushima is colored in green, signifying a fairly low risk, and yellow, denoting a fairly high one.

But since Japan sits on the collision of several tectonic plates, almost all of the country lies in an earthquake-risk zone. Most scientists expected the next whopper to strike the higher-risk areas southwest of Fukushima, which are marked in orange and red.

"Compared to the rest of Japan, it looks pretty safe," said Christopher H. Scholz, a

seismologist at the Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory at Columbia University, referring to the area hit worst by the quake on March 11. "If you were going to site a nuclear reactor, you would base it on a map like this."

[Japan's Chubu Elec delays nuclear reactor construction](#)

TOKYO (Reuters) - Japan's Chubu Electric Power Co said it will delay building a sixth nuclear reactor at its Hamaoka plant 200 km (125 miles) southwest of Tokyo by one year, until 2016, as it reviews safety and power supply plans after this month's quake and tsunami in northeast Japan.

[Japan earthquake: Crisis may force up cost of UK nuclear](#)

The chief executive of RWE Npower has warned that it could be forced to delay plans to build UK plants, especially if any major safety changes prompted by Japan's atomic disaster push up the cost of reactors.

[Fuel storage and safety issues vexed Japan plant](#)

TOKYO // When the massive tsunami smacked into Fukushima Daiichi, the nuclear power plant was stacked high with more uranium than it was originally designed to hold and had repeatedly missed mandatory safety checks over the past decade.

The Fukushima plant that has spun into partial meltdown and spewed out plumes of radiation had become a growing depot for spent fuel in a way the American engineers who designed the reactors 50 years earlier had never envisioned, according to company documents and outside experts.

[Spent nuclear fuel throughout US stored by state](#)

Tons of highly-radioactive spent fuel are being stored at U.S. nuclear reactor sites. The Associated Press analyzed state-by-state data that nuclear power plants voluntarily report annually to the Nuclear Energy Institute, an industry and lobbying group. The NEI would not make available the amount of spent fuel at individual power plants. Here is a breakdown, by tons, in spent fuel pools, in dry cask storage and total for individual states.

[Japan aluminium outlook clouded by power shortages](#)

(Reuters) - Japan's aluminium industry may see only relatively modest production disruptions from power outages in eastern Japan after this month's devastating earthquake, since much of its capacity is in the undamaged west, but demand could shrink from key customers in harder-hit sectors such as autos.

[Radiation, Once Free, Can Follow Tricky Path](#)

Experts hesitate to predict where the radiation will go. Once radioactive elements that can harm health are released into the outdoors, their travel patterns are as mercurial as the weather and as complicated as the food chains and biochemical pathways along which they move.

[Concern in Tokyo over radiation in tap water](#)

TOKYO – A spike in radiation levels in Tokyo tap water spurred new fears about food safety Wednesday as rising black smoke forced another evacuation of workers trying to stabilize Japan's radiation-leaking nuclear plant.

Radiation has seeped into vegetables, raw milk, the water supply and seawater since a magnitude-9 quake and killer tsunami crippled the Fukushima Dai-ichi power plant nearly two weeks ago. Broccoli was added to a list of tainted vegetables, and U.S. officials announced a block on Japanese dairy and other produce from the region.

[Do not phase out nuclear power – yet](#)

The ongoing Japanese nuclear crisis underscores yet again the risks inherent in this essential energy source. But it should not divert nations from using or pursuing nuclear power to generate electricity, given the threat from climate change, the health hazards of fossil fuels, and the undeveloped state of renewable energy. Instead, the events at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant should turn more attention to ensuring that nuclear power plants meet the highest standards of safety and protection against natural disasters.

[Japan's Nuclear Crisis Causes Run on Radiation Detectors](#)

SAN FRANCISCO — Since Japan's nuclear crisis started, Tim Flanegin's phone has barely stopped ringing with orders for Geiger counters, the radiation detectors, to the point that he has no more in stock.

[Atomic Cleanup Cost Goes to Japan's Taxpayers, May Spur Liability Shift](#)

Japan's taxpayer, not the nuclear industry, will cover most of the cleanup cost from the worst accident since Chernobyl, a financial rescue that may spur moves by other nations to make companies assume more liability.

[Nuclear Power Loses Support in New Poll](#)

What had been growing acceptance of nuclear power in the United States has eroded sharply in the wake of the nuclear crisis in Japan, with support for building nuclear power plants dropping slightly lower than it was immediately after the accident at the Three Mile Island plant in 1979, according to a CBS News poll released on Tuesday evening.

[Shell Says Japan Nuclear Accident to Support Long-Term Global Gas Demand](#)

Royal Dutch Shell Plc (RDSA), Europe's largest oil company, said Japan's nuclear accident will support world natural gas demand in the longer term.

[Nuclear Industry in Russia Sells Safety, Taught by Chernobyl](#)

Opportunistic or not, in recent years the Russian nuclear industry has profited handsomely by selling reactors abroad, mostly to developing countries. That includes China and India — whose insatiable energy appetites are keeping them wedded to nuclear power, despite their vows to proceed even more cautiously in light of Japan's disaster.

And though Fukushima Daiichi provides a new opportunity to stress the message, Rosatom has long been marketing its reactors as safe — not despite Chernobyl, but because of it.

[China to Build Nuclear Plant Using Fourth-Generation Technology in April](#)

China will start building a nuclear power plant next month using fourth-generation technology that may be less susceptible to meltdown than Japan's damaged Fukushima Dai-Ichi plant.

[Dangers of Leaving No Resident Behind](#)

When the Three Mile Island nuclear generating station along the Susquehanna River seemed on the verge of a full meltdown in March 1979, Gov. Richard L. Thornburgh of Pennsylvania asked a trusted aide to make sure that the evacuation plans for the surrounding counties would work.

The aide came back ashen faced. Dauphin County, on the eastern shore of the river, planned to send its populace west to safety over the Harvey Taylor Bridge.

“All well and good,” Mr. Thornburgh said in a recent speech, “except for the fact that Cumberland County on the west shore of the river had adopted an evacuation plan that would funnel all exiting traffic eastbound over — you guessed it — the same Harvey Taylor Bridge.”

Nearly 250,000 people would have been sent in opposite directions over the same narrow bridge.

[Oil Spill in South Atlantic Threatens Endangered Penguins](#)

A major spill of heavy crude oil from a wrecked freighter has coated an estimated 20,000 endangered penguins on a remote South Atlantic island chain, the local authorities and environmental groups said Tuesday.

[Natural Gas and Clean Water](#)

Interior Secretary Ken Salazar told a House subcommittee recently that a drilling technique known as hydraulic fracturing could be the “Achilles’ heel” that kills the natural gas industry. Like many others, Mr. Salazar sees natural gas, which America has in great abundance, as cleaner and more climate-friendly than coal or oil and a useful transition to alternative fuels. But he also fears, as we do, that public support for drilling will diminish unless the industry and its state and federal regulators do a better job of making sure the gas does no harm to drinking water.

[Natural Gas Now Viewed as Safer Bet](#)

Natural gas may be having its day, as its rival energy sources come under a cloud.

The serious problems at the nuclear power plant in Japan have raised new doubts about the safety of nuclear energy. New exploration has yet to resume in the Gulf of Mexico after last year’s blowout of a BP oil well. And coal plants have been under a shadow because of their contribution to global warming.

Meanwhile, natural gas has overcome two of its biggest hurdles — volatile prices and questionable supplies. In large part because of new discoveries in the United States and abroad that have significantly increased known reserves, natural gas prices have been relatively low in the last two years.

[Zones set up to boost the remoter regions](#)

Saudi Arabia hopes to bring economic development to remote regions that have been left out of the kingdom’s petroleum-fuelled growth with newly exploited mineral resources.

[Interesting Prospects for Lithium Batteries](#)

In an article published almost three years ago, I argued that three factors may determine the adoption of lithium-ion (Li-ion) batteries, namely: oil prices, technological development, and resistance to change.

[Idle Land Finds a Purpose as Farms for Solar Power](#)

PISCATAWAY, N.J. — Since the economic downturn, residents and businesses have been looking for ways to use real estate that may no longer appeal to mall developers or home builders. One option is to build solar energy farms, where thousands of solar panels convert the sun's energy into electricity.

[Regulatory flux blamed for canceled wind farm](#)

Supporters of renewable energy say a We Energies wind farm now under construction might be the last big wind project built in the state in the near future after a Chicago developer canceled a big project near Green Bay.

[Kenya biofuel project opposed](#)

NAIROBI (AFP) – Environmental groups Wednesday protested an expansive project to grow jatropha in Kenya for biofuels, arguing that such production would emit more carbon than fossil fuels.

[New studies raise doubts about greenness of biomass](#)

Burning tree trimmings, scrap lumber and other plant material to generate electricity has enjoyed wide political support at least in part because of the belief that it doesn't contribute excess greenhouse gases to the atmosphere. But new studies have some people questioning the merits of such biomass power.

[Is nature trying to tell us something?](#)

Was it not just last summer that BP's engineers were working desperately around the clock to find a way to plug a three month leak from the explosion of the Deepwater Horizon rig that spilled 205 million gallons of crude oil into the Gulf of Mexico? Now, engineers and plant operators are braving potentially lethal radiation to avert a catastrophe in the crippled Fukushima nuclear power station in Japan.

[There's No Such Thing as Ethical Oil \(or Nuclear Power\)](#)

After the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico and now the nuclear meltdown at the Fukushima reactors in Japan, it should be clear that oil and nuclear power are not benign forces in our world. Both are toxic, dirty, and insecure forms of energy. It is thus astonishing that the Canadian energy industry proposes combining the two.

[The Tipping Point](#)

The conclusion I drew from our conversation was that the reason his message - and indeed the whole message of the peak oil/conservation set - was failing to resonate was because it had failed to articulate a benefit to the individual that was as compelling and comfortable as that of the consumption machine.

Then I started to get really depressed. Because really, how would any kind of message about reducing, living within our means, and consuming less gain any kind of traction without appealing to one's sense of the greater good - a sense fewer and fewer people seem to have?

['For us to survive and thrive in a new century, we must peaceably dismantle the United States of Empire'](#)

Here's a question I hear asked more and more by friends and neighbors in the Green Mountains of Vermont: How might we in Vermont create a more sustainable world for ourselves, and for our children, and for our children's children, in a 21st century Age of Limits?

[Are we ready for power rationing?](#)

As Julia Gillard works on her carbon tax and New Zealand operates its own Emissions Trading Scheme, we had better be prepared for a Brave New World of power cuts that renewable energy promises to bring.

[Judge Halts California Emissions Plan](#)

SAN FRANCISCO (Reuters) — California did not adequately consider alternatives to its plan to create a cap-and-trade market for carbon emissions, a judge ruled on Monday, a setback for the most aggressive effort by a state to combat climate change.

[Hundreds rally against Australian carbon tax](#)

CANBERRA, Australia—More than 1,000 Australians protested government plans to tax industrial polluters for the carbon dioxide they release into the atmosphere on Wednesday in a grass-roots challenge to the country's bid to cut its greenhouse gas emissions.

Most of the protesters outside Parliament House were over 60 years old and many said they had never before taken part in a public demonstration. They argue the tax will add to their household bills and damage the economy.

[Carbon tax will benefit rural Australia: Sustainable Energy Assoc](#)

While rallies have been held around Australia against the carbon tax, about 400 people turned up a climate change rally in Perth to support it.

[Carbon price a 'test of Australia's democracy'](#)

The Federal Government's climate change adviser, Professor Ross Garnaut, says putting a price on carbon will be a "test of Australia's democracy".

Professor Garnaut has released the seventh of eight updates to his 2008 report on climate change, this time focusing on technology.



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