



Drumbeat: September 21, 2011

Posted by Leanan on September 21, 2011 - 9:37am

The Peak Oil Crisis: The German Army Report

Last year two military planning organizations went public with studies predicting that serious consequences from oil depletion will befall us shortly. In the U.S. the Joint Forces Command concluded, without saying how they arrived at their dates, that by 2012 surplus oil production capacity could entirely disappear and that by 2015 the global shortfall in oil production could be as much as 10 million b/d. Later in the year a draft of a German army study, which went into greater detail in analyzing the consequences of peaking world oil production, was leaked to the press. The German study which was released recently is unique for the frankness with which it explores the dire consequences which may be in store for us.

Venezuela has proposed \$1 billion compensation for Exxon

(Reuters) - Venezuela has proposed paying Exxon Mobil Corp. \$1 billion in compensation for the nationalization of its assets in 2007, much less than the U.S. oil giant wanted, the energy minister said on Wednesday.

Enbridge to ration space on three lines in October

(Reuters) - Enbridge Inc said on Wednesday it would ration space on three lines on its massive export system for October due to high nominations and capacity restrictions.

"The Quest" for Energy Security: The Search for More Oil and Its Alternatives

Mottanai: it's a Japanese term that translates as "too precious to waste." It's the philosophy that guides the island nation's approach to natural resources like energy, and it has become particularly important as the meltdowns at Fukushima have resulted in roughly 25 percent of Japanese electricity supply disappearing as other nuclear reactors remain shutdown.

It is also the antithesis in many ways of the American approach to energy, whether that is electricity, fossil fuels or renewables. We want, in the words applied to nuclear power once upon a time, energy to be "too cheap to meter." And, regardless of whether it actually is, we treat it as such.

The Quest: Energy, Security, and the Remaking of the Modern World

What does an energy transition look like?

Energy historians and policy analysts have struggled with this question since the 1970s. Will we know when we are in a transition away from fossil fuels?

If a transition goes on for decades, what will be the final tipping point?

<u>A Rich History and a Strange Reticence</u>

In the 1950s, a cantankerous earth scientist named Marion King Hubbert rose to prominence at Shell Oil and later at the U.S. Geological Survey. Hubbert was an unforgettable human being -- one colleague called him "the most difficult person I ever worked with" -- who loathed politicians and economists, looked forward to the collapse of American democracy, and thought technocrats such as himself should rule the world. He was also undeniably brilliant.

<u>Peak Oil and Faith Based Energy Debates</u>

As for me, I find these sorts of muddled, often faith based dustups utterly exasperating. Peak oil types tend to assume that stagnant global production over the past half decade is, in itself, evidence that oil production is headed for decline, when in reality, it doesn't predict anything by itself. (They also tend to throw in some Hubbert peak theory, but that doesn't really work once you pay attention to economics.) They also tend to assume that any decline will be economically disastrous, when there's actually very little analysis of what it would really imply. On the other side, those who are convinced that peak oil is nonsense tend too often to resort to a similar sort of slippery logic: people predicted peaks in the past, but they were wrong; ergo, they are wrong this time too. Peak oil proponents didn't realize that innovation would deliver more oil in the past; therefore, it will also deliver more oil in the future. Peak oil opponents also seem to claim that since the peak oilers have mangled their economics, the opposite of whatever they predict is what will actually happen. Not exactly sound logic.

Daniel Yergin's The Quest garners mixed reviews

Peak oil, climate change, alternative energy – it's all there in Daniel Yergin's latest, *The Quest*. A follow-up to the Pulitzer prize-winning *The Prize*, the book begins where its predecessor left off. Those unfamiliar with the historian-turned consultant's work ought to check out an opinion piece he wrote Saturday in the *Wall Street Journal*. (Warning to peak theorists: the patriarch of the movement, M. King Hubbert, takes a licking).

Oil historian: Plenty of oil, risk in energy outlook

WASHINGTON -- When Daniel Yergin published "The Prize," an 873-page exhaustive historical narrative about oil, in 1991, it changed how policymakers and academics alike thought about energy. His new book "The Quest," published Tuesday, is likely to do the same.

In Search Of Carbon Copies

Never mind the feel-good clichés—"The Quest" reveals there are severe limitations to wind and solar power, and to electric cars too.

Steve LeVine - Book review: Daniel Yergin's 'The Quest'

The Quest lacks the magisterial quality of the original, a meticulously researched, groundbreaking history that chronicled how the major events of the 20th century -- both world wars, for instance -- pivoted on oil, and delivered deeply etched personality portraits of those who counted. *The Quest* by comparison is a primer, based largely on other people's books and articles, and does not attempt to tackle history on a similar scale, nor to introduce the actors in three dimensions.

"The Quest" questioned: Yergin wrong on peak oil

Yergin tells a version of this story about Hubbert's prediction in his book, but doesn't give Hubbert much credit for predicting the date of the peak. "Hubbert got the date right, but his projection on oil supply was far off," Yergin writes on page 236.

But the numbers he states in the book unfairly make Hubbert's prediction sound worse than it was. Yergin's argument is undermined by his own company, CERA, in their 2006 report "Why the Peak Oil Theory Falls Down." Here's a graph from that report, comparing Hubbert's prediction (made in 1956) and what actually happened.

Yergin's "Quest" takes broad look at energy resources

(Reuters) - Every president since Nixon has advocated energy independence. Energy expert Daniel Yergin does not. In fact, he doesn't think that it would make the United States any more secure.

Daniel Yergin Examines America's 'Quest' For Energy

A television ad running in upstate New York has been warning residents that the state's water supply is headed for ruin.

"New York tap water has always been the best in the world," it says. "In places where gas companies are already using a dangerous process called fracking, like Pennsylvania, the water is cloudy and full of toxic chemicals."

Yergin is half-right about oil, but other half is what matters

In "There Will Be Oil" (September 17, WSJ, Page C1), Daniel Yergin concludes that a peak in global oil production is "nowhere in sight." By focusing on the timing of such a peak, however, he dangerously distracts attention from the monumental challenges facing the oil and gas industry today, and the new energy and economic reality the world has entered. With demand for oil and all forms of energy continuing to rise exponentially —including rapid growth in China, India, and other developing countries—and huge uncertainty whether fossil fuels can keep pace—the most foolish course of action would be business as usual.

<u>Kjell Aleklett: There will be peak oil</u>

When Yergin discusses oil production he not describing actual production but rather the production volume that the oil companies consider maximally possible. Using these numbers is a clever way to lull readers into a false sense of security but the numbers are almost impossible to confirm. Actual oil production in 2010 was 82.1 Mb/d (according to the BP Statistical Review of World Energy) but Yergin gives the number 92 Mb/d and that means that he believes that the spare capacity is 10 Mb/d. Thus, the fact that Yergin describes production for 2030 at 110 Mb/d means that, in reality, actual production can be much lower.

Hubbert's Peak or Yergin's Plateau?

One other point worth mentioning: Hubbert's work was derived from the "hard-rock" mining industry, which searches for minerals such as gold, silver and platinum. A key difference between these precious metal resources and hydrocarbons. Au, Ag and Pt are *elements*; they occupy boxes on the Periodic Table.

Unlike elements, natural gas and oil *can* be created from other substances by alchemy (or, really, by chemical engineering). Gas and liquids can be manufactured from related compounds found in nature, such as coal, tar sands or kerogen. Economics also control the degree to which these technologies expand the effective oil and gas resource base.

Mexico to hand out stiffer prison terms for fuel theft

Mexico City - The lower house of Mexico's Congress approved reforms to the Federal Criminal Code and the Federal Criminal Procedure Code that would increase to 18 years the maximum prison term for those convicted of stealing petroleum or its derivatives from state-owned Petroleos Mexicanos, or Pemex.

Saudi gas shortage and Iran gas price hikes

The gas shortage in the Middle East, especially Saudi Arabia, has been well documented with the situation expected to ease in the longer term once investments in new processing plants have been completed.

Gas station owners in Egypt deny responsibility for supply shortage

A group of 30 Cairo gas station owners demonstrated Sunday in front of Misr Petroleum, demanding proper allocation of gas and oil resources, fair commission and a change of the company's management.

Some in Egypt have experienced a shortage of supply at a number of gas stations this past week. Earlier this month, South Sinai saw a fuel crisis that paralyzed Dahab, Nueweiba and Sharm El-Sheikh.

<u>Massive Mine in Canada</u>

The size of this property is mind-boggling. To put it into perspective, the Alberta Black Shale Project is almost the size of Rhode Island.

It's so big, in fact, that it can supply America's nuclear industry, military technologies, electric car market, and renewable energy sectors forever!

Are we all rogue traders now?

We have become a society reliant on expert forecasts. In the field of energy, many forecasters make fancy livings pretending to know the future supply and price of various energy sources, especially fossil fuels, projecting sometimes decades into the future. Not wanting to rely on outsiders, governments routinely hire their own experts to make energy forecasts for them. And, policymakers and managers everywhere in society make fateful decisions based on those forecasts *without knowing how uncertain they are*.

Richard Heinberg: Peak oil as a thermostat

Here's a metaphor that may help in explaining why high oil prices are choking off economic growth for the U.S., and to a lesser extent the rest of the world as well. Think of the oil price as the mercury in a thermostat. As the economy heats up, the mercury expands (oil prices go up). This shuts off the furnace (the factors of production and consumption in the economy that make it grow). As the economy cools, demand for oil contracts and oil prices decline. But with oil now cheap, the factors of production kick in again; this causes oil prices to be bid up, and high prices once again choke off growth.

The rise of urban farming

Greg Peterson's 1950s tract home looks like any other house on his block in Phoenix, with one notable difference: Practically everything in his yard is edible. More than 70 fruit trees reach for the sky. Chickens patrol for bugs in the yard. Late summer tomatoes, okra, and herbs such as basil and oregano punch fragrance into the air. Rain and gray water are harvested for watering, and solar panels on his house convert the sun's rays into energy.

Don't be afraid, the Earth's seven billionth arrival is good for humanity

Look at our track record. We created the means for extracting and transforming mineral resources. We created cities, workplaces and homes on the back of those resources. Every decade that passes, as a species, we have managed to get more and more stuff from fewer resources and create new resources along the way.

The fact that more and more of us can live on Earth — while living conditions continue, in the main, to improve — suggests that people are the solution, not the problem. So we should welcome the seven billionth arrival, not fear her.

Collapse: Why Nobody Is Listening

There are several reasons why talk of systemic collapse doesn't get much response these days, but one clue to the puzzle may be the fact that "survivalist" Web sites still do very well. The image of Man Alone with his AK-47 and his lifetime supply of pork-andbeans has little relation to reality: a loner can never defeat a mob, and all it takes is one bullet to end that sort of battle. At best, the story of Man Alone is true only as allegory. Nevertheless, there's a question, and there's an answer, even if the two somehow don't match.

OPEC's \$1 Trillion Cash Quiets Poor on Longest Ever \$100 Oil

Saudi Arabia will spend \$43 billion on its poorer citizens and religious institutions. Kuwaitis are getting free food for a year. Civil servants in Algeria received a 34 percent pay rise. Desert cities in the United Arab Emirates may soon enjoy uninterrupted electricity.

Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries members are poised to earn an unprecedented \$1 trillion this year, according to the U.S. Energy Department, as the group's benchmark oil measure exceeded \$100 a barrel for the longest period ever. They are promising to plow record amounts into public and social programs after prodemocracy movements overthrew rulers in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya and spread to Yemen and Syria.

Unlike past booms, when Abu Dhabi bought English soccer club Manchester City and Qatar acquired a stake in luxury carmaker Porsche SE, Gulf nations pledged \$150 billion in additional spending this year on their citizens. They will need to keep U.S. benchmark West Texas Intermediate crude oil at more than \$80 a barrel to afford their promises, according to Bank of America Corp.

<u>Oil Slides in New York on Speculation Demand to Falter; Brent Erases Drop</u>

Oil fell in New York as investors bet that rising U.S. fuel stockpiles are a signal of waning demand, while supplies from the Middle East and Africa grow. Brent crude in London widened its premium over U.S. futures.

New York oil slipped as much as 1.3 percent after the American Petroleum Institute said yesterday crude and gasoline supplies increased last week. A separate Energy Department report today is forecast to show inventories declined. Libya's Arabian Gulf Oil Co. said it will be ready to export crude within a week.

Stuart Staniford: Peak Oil Per Capita

If you were wondering why things have never been the same after the 1970s energy crises - now you know. On the other hand, if you've been panicking that peak oil means the imminent end of civilization - settle down. In a per-person sense it happened decades ago and we've been living in the aftermath ever since. Peak oil is a slow squeeze.

India Government Said to Consider Almost Doubling ONGC's Fuel Subsidy Bill

Oil & Natural Gas Corp., India's biggest energy explorer, may be forced to double the amount it pays to support fuel sales at below-market prices, two people with direct knowledge of the matter said. The shares fell.

Iran says oil prices unlikely to rise soon

(Reuters) - Iran is not happy with current oil prices but does not expect them to rise soon because the market is balanced, the deputy head of the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) told Reuters on Wednesday.

"Crude prices are not satisfactory but... we are not expecting them to rise in the near future... In October, the crude market will be balanced," NIOC deputy chief, Mohsen Qamsari, said.

Apache to buy North Sea fields from Exxon

HOUSTON (AP) — Apache Corp. said Wednesday it will buy oil and natural gas fields from Exxon Mobil Corp. for \$1.75 billion in cash.

The Houston independent energy company said the fields are in the North Sea, where much of the oil and gas is delivered to Europe. The fields hold 68 million barrels of oil equivalent and currently produce about 19,000 barrels of oil and 58 million cubic feet of

Cheapest Gas Brings Boon for Kirby Shipping Dow Chemicals: Freight Markets

The world's cheapest natural gas means Kirby Corp. barges are making more trips along the Mississippi River and Quality Distribution Inc. tanker trucks are rolling along America's highways more frequently.

Ohio Governor Prepares Energy and Environment Plans for His Newly Gas-Rich State

The nation's fourth-largest carbon dioxide-emitting state is about to get a new energy policy that its governor says could be a model for the entire country.

This week, industry representatives, state officials, academics and environmentalists are gathering in Ohio to craft a new energy plan for the state that will culminate in a major energy proposal from Gov. John Kasich (R) by next spring.

Japan LNG, Thermal Coal Imports Rise to Record in August; Oil Imports Gain

Japan's imports of liquefied natural gas and thermal coal rose to a record in August because of low utilization rates at nuclear power plants.

The nation's LNG imports climbed 18.2 percent from a year earlier to 7.55 million metric tons, while thermal-coal imports increased 7.1 percent to 10 million tons, according to data released today by the Ministry of Finance.

<u>German gas trading growth seen slowing - report</u>

FRANKFURT (Reuters) - German gas trading volumes are on track to see more growth this year but at a lower rate after a rapid expansion in recent years triggered by liberalisation, a pan-European study by British consultancy Prospex said in a report on Wednesday.

Asian demand to pull LNG east, price convergence uncertain

SINGAPORE (Reuters) - Booming Asian demand for liquefied natural gas will draw supplies east from Qatar and the United States, but the prospects of prices falling for the region remain uncertain.

Asian LNG imports are expected to reach 152 million tonnes this year, according to one analyst's estimate, which would be a 15 percent increase on 2010. By 2020, it could jump to nearly 225 million tonnes.

Russian plaintiffs raise BP claim to \$4.9 bln

(Reuters) - Minority shareholders in TNK-BP, the Russian oil firm half-owned by BP, have increased their claim for damages over the British major's attempt to ally with Rosneft to 154.3 billion roubles (\$4.9 billion) from 87.1 billion.

<u>Oil historian Daniel Yergin: Plenty of oil, risk in energy outlook</u>

"The Quest" covers everything from the peak oil theory, which holds that the world's oil production is in or near a permanent decline, to renewable and alternative sources of energy. It took Yergin five years to write it, and even in that time frame much changed in the energy sector.

In that five years, oil prices surged, Wall Street began treating oil contracts as prize investments, new technology boosted natural gas production from shale oil, and crude oil produced from ultra-deep drilling in the Gulf of Mexico began supplanting imported oil from the Middle East. And of course, there's demand from China.

Visions of an Age When Oil Isn't King

Mr. Yergin is back with a sequel to "The Prize." It is called "The Quest: Energy, Security, and the Remaking of the Modern World," and, if anything, it's an even better book. It is searching, impartial and alarmingly up to date. (Events like the partial meltdowns at the Fukushima nuclear complex in Japan, the political upheavals in Egypt and Libya, and the killing of Osama bin Laden, all from this year, are combed into his arguments.) Mr. Yergin brooks no cant about climate-change denial, and lingers on the topic of cleaner future fuels. Our heads may be buried in our sleek laptops and gadgets, his masterly book announces, but our toes are still soaking in dirty, morally contaminated oil.

More thoughts on peak oil

Even in the absence of these facts, there's a real problem with Yergin's line of argument for the question at hand, and it troubles me because I have seen the same argument raised almost every time someone takes the skeptic's position on the question of peak oil. Suppose I was trying to convince you that you are a mortal being, and your counterargument was, "but that's what you said in 2005, and I didn't die then! You said it again in 2007 and 2009, and each time you were wrong. Why should I believe you this time?"

Perhaps acknowledging one's own mortality is a similar proposition to embracing the possibility that global oil production need not continue to rise forever.

Peaks and spikes

I'd just note that the phenomenon of peak oil is unlikely to manifest itself as a sudden sharp decline in supply. What you're more likely to see in a climate of more or less steady demand growth is supply that first tracks demand, then lags demand as the peak approaches while still growing.

Syrian forces kill 3, face challenge from defectors

AMMAN (Reuters) - Syrian forces killed at least three civilians in military operations in central and northwestern regions on Wednesday, residents said, following an upsurge of attacks on the army by defectors sheltering in rural areas.

Libya Forming Cabinet Amid Struggle to Take Holdout Towns

(Bloomberg) -- Libya's new rulers extended talks to form a government while their troops fought to oust Muammar Qaddafi's loyalists from Bani Walid and Sirte.

Get Libyan oil flowing, says Opec

The most critical part of Libya's rebuilding effort for now is reviving oil production, says the head of Opec.

U.S. trails China in securing South Sudan oil business

The United States is trailing China in the race for business in the new nation of South Sudan, despite leading the international effort to help South Sudan become an independent nation after decades of guerrilla war, says Princeton Lyman, the U.S. special envoy to Sudan.

<u>Oil-sands workers press MPs to oppose 'wrongheaded' Keystone pipeline</u>

The union that represents many of the workers in Alberta's oil patch will be on Parliament Hill on Thursday to ask politicians to oppose a pipeline that will carry bitumen to the southern United States for processing.

Coal's Terrible Forecast

There are many unfortunate outcomes to Peak Oil. One of the more serious is the world's transition back to coal. Expensive BTU from crude oil has influenced the energy adoption pathway of the Developing World for ten years now, pushing the five billion

people in the Non-OECD towards coal. My work has documented this shift for some time. But, I have paid less attention here at Gregor.us to the effect this paradigmatic change will have on our climate.

Indian Officials Said to Lift Curbs on Coal Mining in Dense Forest Areas

A group of Indian ministers agreed to allow companies to seek approval to mine coal in some dense forest areas, overturning an environment ministry ban, according to two government officials.

Shell may face new Alaska battle

Environmental groups are considering a challenge to a set of permits issued to Royal Dutch Shell this week for oil drilling projects off the coast of Alaska, reports have said.

ConocoPhillips sets up 2nd China oil spill fund

SHANGHAI (AP) — ConocoPhillips plans a new fund to address environmental problems in China's Bohai Bay, following harsh criticism from marine authorities and environmentalists over oil spills in the heavily polluted sea.

BP Says It Didn't Hide Information About Gulf Well Blowout

BP Plc (BP) said it didn't hide information about a possibly dangerous condition in the Macondo oil well before or after it blew out in April 2010, killing 11 people and triggering the biggest U.S. offshore oil spill.

BP personnel determined that a sand layer above the target zone was water-bearing rather than a gas-containing "hydrocarbon zone" and provided supporting data to its well partners before the blowout, the company said yesterday in a court filing. BP investigators reported publicly after the explosion that this may have been gascontaining sand, while determining it wasn't a cause of the incident, the company said.

Typhoon pounds Japan, heads for crippled nuclear plant

(Reuters) - A powerful typhoon struck Japan on Wednesday, pummeling the Tokyo area with heavy rain, disrupting public transportation and leaving four people dead, and it was headed towards the tsunami-crippled Fukushima nuclear plant.

Facing budget squeeze, RIPTA bus service seeks support

PROVIDENCE — With the state's transit agency besieged both here and in Washington,

D.C., more than 100 supporters turned out in the rain Tuesday to defend Rhode Island's bus system.

The Rhode Island Public Transit Authority is struggling to cover a projected \$4.6million budget deficit, while Congress is considering legislation that could more than double the existing deficit.

<u>GM to share electric car technology with the Chinese</u>

DETROIT — Under pressure from the Beijing government General Motors has agreed to provide access to its proprietary electric vehicle technology to its lead Chinese partner.

The move is raising numerous concerns, critics contending that China is, for one thing, using unfair pressure to gain access to technologies that will later be used by its own domestic manufacturers to compete with foreign brands like GM.

Ex-President Clinton: Green movement needs money

NEW YORK (AP) — Former President Bill Clinton said Tuesday that the success of the alternative energy movement is hampered by a lack of financing. His comments came as world leaders attending his annual philanthropic conference expressed fears about rising seas.

Obama \$8 Billion Solar 'Betamax' Undercut as China Backs Rival Technology

The U.S. government's \$8 billion bet on solar energy that would pave the deserts with mirrors risks following the Betamax into the technological wilderness because of Chinese backing for a cheaper system.

China takes over as US solar power firms fail

China's solar power firms are emerging as the industry's dominant force after the collapse of foreign competitors, but the new market leaders are already struggling with low prices and overcapacity.

JinkoSolar Aims to Resume Output After Pollution Closes Plant

JinkoSolar Holding Co. said it's working to resume production at a solar cell plant in eastern China as local authorities detained villagers for taking part in the violent protests over pollution that shut the factory.

"We've blocked the polluted river and are cleaning up the water," Chief Financial Officer

Zhang Longgen said in a phone interview yesterday. "We are still investigating the incident and expect to complete it soon."

Tax Plan to Turn Old Buildings 'Green' Finds Favor

A business consortium that includes Lockheed Martin and Barclays bank plans to invest as much as \$650 million over the next few years to slash the energy consumption of buildings in the Miami and Sacramento areas. It is the most ambitious effort yet to jump-start a national market for energy upgrades that many people believe could eventually be worth billions.

Focusing mainly on commercial property at first, the group plans to exploit a new tax arrangement that allows property owners to upgrade their buildings at no upfront cost, typically cutting their energy use and their utility bills by a third. The building owners would pay for the upgrades over five to 20 years through surcharges on their property-tax bills, but that would be less than the savings.

Superefficient Home With Big Ambitions, Built by Students on a Hoboken Lot

The compact, shoe-box-shaped mystery building is named Empowerhouse, and it is a superefficient, solar-powered house that will compete in the Solar Decathlon, an event sponsored by the Energy Department that will open on Friday on the National Mall in Washington. It was designed and built by architecture and engineering students from Parsons The New School for Design, the Stevens Institute of Technology and the Milano School of International Affairs, Management and Urban Policy.

Michigan changing food stamp eligibility rules

Those with assets of more than \$5,000 in bank accounts or some types of property would no longer be eligible for food assistance. Other assets that would count against the cap include vehicles with market values of more than \$15,000 and second homes, depending on how much is owed on the properties.

Some assets, such as primary residences and 401k accounts, would not be considered for determining food assistance eligibility.

Got Cheap Milk?

Why ditching your fancy, organic, locavore lifestyle is good for the world's poor.

Of Beach Sand, 'War' and Carbon

"Government policy, particularly in America, is frozen," he said. "And yet, we don't just have a global-warming problem. We actually have an energy crisis looming. Demand for oil could exceed supply within this decade. For all the global-warming skeptics in America, at the very least they should be thinking energy dependency, their dependence on Mideast oil. They should be scrambling to join forces with the globalwarming people to get on top of the problem."

What exactly does he prescribe? In a nutshell, he wants businesses to make investments that cut their carbon footprint.

Weaving 'Climate' Into 'Corporate'

A new report finds more evidence that climate change is gradually moving to the center of corporate strategy. Virtually every big company in the world now pays at least lip service to sustainability, and many of them are starting to take real action to reduce their environmental footprint. The new report from the Carbon Disclosure Project finds that for the first time, a majority of companies in the United States responding to the group's survey "now integrate climate change into core business strategy."

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