



Drumbeat: December 26, 2011

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[Oil interests push China into Sudanese mire](#)

China, which gets nearly a third of its imported crude oil from Africa, has invested billions of dollars in the past 15 years to pump crude from this war-scarred land. But the division of what until five months ago was a united country has pushed Beijing into a political minefield in defence of its assets.

China's involvement revolves largely around the interests of a single company, China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), a state-owned giant that has dragged the usually risk-averse Chinese diplomats into one of Africa's most poisonous feuds.

CNPC straddles both sides of a murderously volatile fault line: between Muslim Arabs in the north and black, often Christian Africans in the south.

Most of the oil lies in the landlocked south, but the only way to get it to market is through Chinese-built pipelines that pass through the north to a Chinese-built terminal on the Red Sea.

[Global oil demand to remain stable in 2012](#)

ABU DHABI - The UAE Energy Minister Mohammad bin Dha'en Al Hamili on Sunday said that world oil demand in 2012 will be similar to this year's level.

"Economic growth will also be more or less the same as this year," Al Hamili said.

[Libyan Crude Output Exceeds 1 Million Barrels a Day: Persian Gulf Oil](#)

Iraqi crude oil production jumped to the highest level in at least 20 years, or more than 3 million barrels a day, said Hussain al-Shahristani, deputy prime minister for energy affairs.

Libya, holder of Africa's biggest crude reserves, is now pumping "more than a million" barrels a day as its industry recovers from months of conflict, said the Nuri Berruien, chairman of its state-run National Oil Corp.

[UAE's Dec oil output at 2.6m bpd Join our daily free Newsletter](#)

(MENAFN) UAE's Minister of Energy, Mohammad Bin Dha'en Al Hameli, said that in the current month, the country's oil output reached around 2.6 million barrels per day (bpd) on average, reported Gulf News.

[Iran likely to export gasoline next year](#)

(MENAFN) Iran's oil minister, Rostam Qasemi, said that following the reduction in local gasoline consumption after implementing the Subsidy Reform Plan in December 2010, next year, Iran might start exporting gasoline, reported Tehran News.

[GCC oil ministers pass unified oil strategy and media plan](#)

(MENAFN - Emirates News Agency (WAM)) GCC oil and gas ministers recommended today approval of unified mining law as a guide for three years.

The recommendation, issued by the ministers at the end of 30th meeting of the GCC petroleum cooperation committee here today, gave the competent authority in each member state the right to prepare its executive regulation.

[Canada should look to Asia as gas-export market](#)

Mr. Brikho, 53, is a Lebanese-born, Swedish-trained engineer with a travel schedule that would crush lesser mortals. He landed in Calgary recently to talk about the changing U.S. energy landscape and what it means for price-challenged Canadian natural gas in 2012 and beyond.

[Russia, Ukraine look to avert New Year gas row](#)

MOSCOW (Reuters) - Ukraine and Russia will renew gas talks on Jan. 15, Russia's Gazprom said on Monday, as they strive to avert a standoff over pricing, which in the past has led to supply cuts and gas shortages in Europe during New Year holidays.

Both countries have pledged to ensure steady gas flows to the Europe Union, which relies on Russia for one quarter of its gas supplies, despite differences over pricing and the ownership of Ukraine's strategic gas pipeline system.

[Gazprom links South Stream to Ukraine gas talks-reports](#)

(Reuters) - Gazprom's chief executive officer said on Monday that the implementation of the South Stream underwater gas pipeline project hinges on gas talks with Ukraine, Russian domestic newswires said.

[Turkey, Azerbaijan agree on a gas pipeline](#)

(MENAFN) Turkey and Azerbaijan agreed to set up a consortium to build a pipeline to ship natural gas from Shah Deniz field to Europe via Anatolia, Bloomberg reported.

[Afghanistan cabinet OKs oil deal with China's CNPC](#)

(Reuters) - Afghanistan's cabinet cleared the way for the war-torn state to sign a contract with China's state-owned oil giant China National Petroleum Corp (CNPC) for the development of oil blocks in the Amu Darya basin, the Afghan president's office said on Monday.

[Storm hits Norway gas plants, gas exports reduced](#)

OSLO (Reuters) - A powerful North Sea storm knocked off power at two key gas installations in Norway in the night between Sunday and Monday, curtailing gas exports to the rest of Europe.

The plant processing gas from Royal Dutch Shell 's giant offshore Ormen Lange field, which can provide some 20 percent of Britain's gas demand, was shut on Monday while the Kollsnes plant further down the coast appeared to be restarting operations after sustaining two shutdowns overnight.

[China's 1st deepwater surveyor to scour South China Sea](#)

(Reuters) - China will soon put its first deepwater survey vessel into use in the South China Sea, an official with China Oilfield Services Ltd (COSL) said, part of an effort by the world's top energy consumer to tap its underexplored deep waters.

[U.S. Prepares for a Curtailed Relationship With Pakistan](#)

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan — With the United States facing the reality that its broad security partnership with Pakistan is over, American officials are seeking to salvage a more limited counterterrorism alliance that they acknowledge will complicate their ability to launch attacks against extremists and move supplies into Afghanistan.

The United States will be forced to restrict drone strikes, limit the number of its spies and soldiers on the ground and spend more to transport supplies through Pakistan to allied troops in Afghanistan, American and Pakistani officials said. United States aid to Pakistan will also be reduced sharply, they said.

[U.S. Promises to Help Nigeria Find Bombers Who Killed Dozens on Christmas](#)

The U.S. promised to help Nigeria find those responsible for a wave of Christmas Day bombings that killed dozens in the oil-rich African nation.

“We have been in contact with Nigerian officials about what appear to be terrorist acts and pledge to assist them in bringing those responsible to justice,” according to a statement by White House Press Secretary Jay Carney.

[Five Killed in Latest Baghdad Bombing](#)

BAGHDAD — A suicide bomber driving a car packed with explosives attacked a checkpoint in front of the Iraqi Interior Ministry on Monday morning, killing five, wounding 39 and roiling a country unsettled by a political crisis and a wave of deadly bombings just days ago.

[Arab League observers expected in Syria on Monday](#)

(CNN) -- Dozens of Arab League observers were expected to arrive Monday in Syria amid reports of raging violence, despite the government's agreement to end a brutal crackdown.

In recent weeks, the government has increased attacks that left scores dead, including many in the flashpoint city of Homs, opposition groups say.

[Iraqi political parties seek to resolve crisis](#)

(Reuters) - Iraqi lawmakers tried on Sunday to negotiate an end to the country's worst political crisis in a year after Shi'ite Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki sought his Sunni vice president's arrest on charges he ran an assassination squad.

[Is the Arab Spring failing its people?](#)

Abu Dhabi (CNN) – This time last year a match was lit by a fruit vendor in Tunis which sparked a wildfire spreading throughout the region. Countries big, Egypt, and small, Tunisia, have witnessed wholesale change and the toppling of governments.

But at the one year mark, those on the ground here in the region are asking a simple question: Are we better off today than we were before the Arab Spring? People talk of a “The New Middle East” with a mixture of both optimism and despair, from Bahrain to Yemen.

[A Village in Revolt Could Be a Harbinger for China](#)

BEIJING — China’s state-run media have had a field day this autumn with Occupy Wall Street, spinning an almost daily morality play about capitalism gone amok and an American government unable or unwilling to aid the victims of a rapacious elite.

Occupy Wukan is another matter entirely. The state press has been all but mute on why 13,000 Chinese citizens, furious over repeated rip-offs by their village elite, sent their leaders fleeing to safety and repulsed efforts by the police to retake Wukan. But the village takeover can be ignored only at Beijing’s peril: There are at least 625,000 potential Wukans across China, all small, locally run villages that frequently suffer the sorts of injustices that prompted the outburst this month in Wukan.

[Shell Says Oil From Bonga Facility Leak ‘Continues to Thin’](#)

Royal Dutch Shell Plc (RDSA) said oil that leaked from its 200,000 barrel-a-day Bonga field in Nigeria “continues to thin.”

“Surveillance and aerial photos show the spill is breaking up into patches surrounded by clear water,” Shell said in a statement on its website. “The spill remains offshore. We continue to monitor its movement using satellite imagery and vessels in the zone.”

[Shell spots ‘third-party’ spill near Bonga leak](#)

Shell has said a “third-party” vessel spilled oil near where one of its floating production, storage and offloading (FPSO) units spilled around 40,000 barrels of oil off Nigeria last week.

[Fracking Opens Fissures Among States as Drillers Face Many Rules](#)

A boom in gas production using hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, has led to a patchwork of local drilling standards. Now, several states are revising or formulating rules, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is studying the effects of fracking on drinking water and weighing nationwide regulations.

[Genkai No. 4 reactor shut down; only 6 reactors now operating in Japan](#)

SAGA — Kyushu Electric Power Co said Monday that it has shut down the No. 4 reactor at its Genkai nuclear power plant in Saga Prefecture for routine inspection. The shutdown now leaves Japan with only six of its 54 nuclear power plants in service.

Kyushu Electric said the reactor, which was shut down on Sunday night, provided around 40% of the electricity in Kyushu. Homes and businesses in the area have been asked to reduce their power consumption by 5% between now and Feb 3.

[Report Condemns Japan's Response to Nuclear Accident](#)

TOKYO — From inspectors who abandoned the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant as it succumbed to disaster to a delay in disclosing radiation leaks, Japan's response to the nuclear accident caused by the March tsunami fell tragically short, a government-appointed investigative panel said on Monday.

The problems, which the panel said had exacerbated the extent of the disaster, were outlined in a 500-page interim report detailing an investigation into Japan's response to the calamitous events that unfolded at the Fukushima plant after the March 11 quake and tsunami knocked out all of the site's power.

[Toyota launches world's most fuel-efficient hybrid](#)

TOKYO: Toyota Motor Corp on Monday launched the world's most fuel-efficient hybrid car, as the company looks to fight off competition from pure electric vehicles.

The compact car, dubbed 'Aqua' in Japan and the 'Prius C' overseas, has a listed fuel efficiency of 35.4 km/litre (83.3 mpg), beating the current top Prius, which gets 32 km/litre.

[U.S. Bus Riders Surge as Free Wi-Fi Beats Driving](#)

Higher gasoline costs make driving a car more expensive at the same time as buses offer access to free Wi-Fi and cheaper fares than on planes and trains, Schwieterman said. Once viewed as a last resort in the U.S., bus travel is now attracting more affluent riders, students and women traveling alone, he said.

"Bus travel is suddenly cool," Schwieterman said. "There's a fatigue over driving combined with a revitalized image of the bus."

[A123 Says Batteries for Fisker Have Potential Safety Issue](#)

A123 Systems Inc. (AONE), the maker of batteries for electric vehicles, said it found a "potential safety issue" in batteries it supplies to Fisker Automotive Inc.

[Portland Plan: City must prepare for potential economic shocks](#)

Despite its commendable emphasis on equity and its many innovative, aspirational goals for education, the local economy and neighborhoods, the plan falls short for us in the 99 percent in some fundamental ways.

Notably, the plan assumes economic growth.

But growth is far from guaranteed. In a recent city-sponsored talk, energy expert Richard Heinberg joined the National Intelligence Council, environmental economists and retired Wall Street and government insiders in predicting a future characterized by declining tax revenues, persistent high unemployment, falling household income, increased demand for social services, higher energy costs and continued financial system instability.

[Resilience: The Next Big Word for 2012](#)

Watch for another word, which is hardly new, to gain traction during 2012. If that Mayan prediction that the world will end—almost end—rings true, this word will surge in use and popularity at the perfect time. And mercifully, it will not be “occupy.”

Resilience is a word that captures much of what has occurred over this past year: the Arab Spring; the anger that has boiled over into first the Tea Party and then the Occupy movements; strapped municipal budgets; and coping with an onslaught of natural and man-made disasters around the world. Whether we are talking about economic resilience, political resilience or social resilience, the R word captures what many at the grassroots are facing at a volatile time.

[Total ‘Doubling Down’ on Solar Energy, Raises Stake in SunPower](#)

(Bloomberg) -- Total SA, Europe’s third-largest oil producer, raised its bet on solar energy by boosting its stake in SunPower Corp. and selling its renewable energy development unit to the U.S. company.

[Killing Environmentalism to Save It: Two Greens Call for ‘Postenvironmentalism’](#)

Environmentalism, like politics in general, is depressingly polarized these days. On one side, alarmists like the activist Bill McKibben, climatologist James Hansen and blogger Joe Romm warn that if we don’t cut way back on fossil fuels—now!—civilization may collapse. On the other side, deniers, including most of the current GOP candidates for president, won’t even accept a causal link between surging carbon emissions and warmer temperatures.

[Are Climate Change Reporters an Endangered Species?](#)

A recent report called "Poles Apart: the International Reporting of Climate Scepticism" released by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at Oxford University (RISJ) gave us good reason to believe that those of us in the UK and the U.S. could be getting a different view of the climate debate than the rest of the world.

[Famine early warning system gives Africa a chance to prepare](#)

US government system, using ground sensors and satellite imagery, helped to predict this year's drought in Horn of Africa, allowing aid groups and governments to prepare relief.

[The colder war: U.S., Russia and others are vying for control of Santa's back yard](#)

The Arctic region — covering more than 30 million square kilometers and stretching around the territorial borders of Canada, Denmark (via Greenland), Norway, Russia and the United States by way of the Alaskan coastline — is transforming before our eyes. And not just because the ice is melting. It's increasingly the site of military posturing, and the United States isn't keeping up with the rest of the world.



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