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MAGAZINE FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

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Shoe' to
Drop -
Ernest
Corea.



Green Economy is
Not Always Green
- Global Plan of
Action Missing,
writes Richard
Johnson.

PLANET EARTH URGENTLY NEEDS



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Nuclear Abolition News and Analysis

Asia: Dangers of Extended Nuclear Deterrence

Nuclear Abolition News | IDN

By NEENA BHANDARI
IDN-InDepth NewsAnalysis

SYDNEY (IDN) - With India and Pakistan testing nuclear-capable ballistic missiles this April, close on the heels of North Korea's unsuccessful test launch of a long-range rocket, a new report by the Sydney-based [Lowy Institute for International Policy](#) says it is Asian strategic mistrust that is holding back nuclear disarmament. [P] [GERMAN](#) | [JAPANESE TEXT VERSION PDF](#)

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Threat of 'Nuclear Terror' Diverts Abolition Efforts

Nuclear Abolition News | IPS

By KEVIN P. CLEMENTS *

DUNEDIN, New Zealand (IPS) - President Barack Obama indicated in Prague in 2009 that he was interested in achieving a "world without nuclear weapons." Since that bold statement (which was one of the reasons for his Nobel peace prize) he has been persuaded by his foreign policy advisors and pressured by the Nuclear Weapons Laboratories to put nuclear abolition on hold and to focus instead on issues such as nuclear safety and nuclear security. [P] [JAPANESE TEXT PDF](#)

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Impassioned Plea for Averting War with Iran

Nuclear Abolition News | IDN

By RICHARD JOHNSON
IDN-InDepth NewsReport

LONDON (IDN) - Pax Christi, the International Catholic Movement for Peace, has made an impassioned plea for averting war with Iran. "Surely such a war would spell worldwide disaster, and it's up to movements like us to send a strong message against military aggression," [Pax Christi](#) said in an important document.

"A war with Iran, to which a military attack would inevitably lead, would be a disaster for the whole world and any talk of a pre-emptive attack must be challenged as illegal and immoral," it said indirectly referring to Israeli threats of an assault on Iran. [P] [JAPANESE TEXT PDF](#)

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The Paradox of the Nuclear Age

Nuclear Abolition News | IPS

By RONALD MCCOY*

KUALA LUMPUR (IPS) - Climate change and nuclear war are the two most serious threats to human security and planetary survival.

Governments are addressing the causes of climate change and the prevention of nuclear war, but political will to reduce greenhouse gases and eradicate nuclear weapons needs to be further strengthened.

Climate change is now visible and palpable, but the threat of nuclear war remains relatively abstract and unperceived among some complacent world leaders, despite the presence of thousands of nuclear weapons in a world that still resolves conflict by going to war. [P] [JAPANESE TEXT VERSION PDF](#)

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Seoul Summit Aims at Nuclear Safety Amidst Rising Threats

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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

BEYOND NUCLEAR NON-PROLIFERATION
A Monthly Newsletter for Strengthening Awareness of Nuclear Abolition

April 2011-March 2012

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In order to strengthen public awareness of the urgent need for nuclear abolition, the Tokyo-based Soka Gakkai International (SGI), a Buddhist association, and the Inter Press Service global news agency have initiated a media project which aims to help to shed light on the issue of nuclear abolition from the perspectives of civil society through the global media network of IPS and beyond.

As part of this project, IDN InDepthNews, the news analysis service of the Globalom Media group, in partnership with the Global Cooperation Council, has launched this special website.

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

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CONSIDER THIS

Vitriolic Attacks on American Women
By Ernest Corea 04

VIEWPOINT

Plea for a Contrarian View on Oil and Nukes
By James Stafford 06
A Tale of Two Coming Summits
By Dr Ian Anthony 08
Social Justice Put on the Backburner in Egypt
By Sharif Abdel Kouddous 10
What The Arab Spring Means For Freedom
By Megan Martin 12
For a Denuclearised Middle East
By Daikau Ikeda 13

NUKE ABOLITION

Impassioned Plea for Averting War with Iran
By Richard Johnson 14
Dangers of Extended Nuclear Deterrence in Asia
By Neena Bhandari 15
France's Fuzzy Face
By Julio Godoy 16

ASIA

Quietly China Increases Defence Spending
By Devinder Kumar 18
Nobody Bothers If a Tibetan Burns Himself
By R. S. Kalha 20

PLANET EARTH

Green Economy is Not Always Green
By Richard Johnson 22
'We Need Transformational Change'
By Daniel Mittler 24
Creating Resilient Agriculture
By Gordon Conway 25
Sustainable Energy for All is Possible
By Simon Trace 26
Poor Sanitation is a Costly Menace to Africa
By J C Suresh 28

WORLD BANK

Waiting For 'Other Shoe' To Drop
By Ernest Corea 29

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Vitriolic Attacks on American Women

By Ernest Corea*



WASHINGTON DC - America's commemoration of International Women's Day (March 8) took place while unseemly demonstrations of gender bias, misogyny, crude insults, and efforts to limit women's access to health care were trundling along as well.

In some public references, these have been bundled together as a "war on women." The description has a touch of hyperbole, although it also fails to capture some significant aspects of what has been going on – and keeps going on.

As a large number of indigent families are affected by the "war on women" it encompasses "class warfare." Many of these poor families are from minority groups, so the inevitable question will arise: to what extent does racial prejudice play a role? A strong element of partisan politics is at play as well.

Death Blow Strikes

An early shot was fired by the Susan G. Komen for the Cure (SGKCF) Foundation, an organization with a strong record of innovative programs supporting cancer research.

Planned Parenthood Federation (PPF) which also has an admirable record in support of women's health programs is a beneficiary of SGKCF grants. PPF is the major medical provider for 5 million women a year. Cancer screening is a critically important service provided by PPF clinics: Some 20 percent of American women would have visited a PPF clinic in their lifetime. Many poor women would have been excluded from cancer screening but for the services PPF provides.

Out of the blue, SGKCF announced that it would no longer provide grants to "organisations being investigated by local, state or federal authorities." Although the unexpected ban on grants was narrowly focused it was broad enough to encompass the work of Congressman Cliff Stearns of Florida who, without discernible provocation, had opened an inquiry into PPF programs. The inquiry provided SGKCF with a reason or excuse to impose its ban which excluded PPF clinics across the country from the funding which had supported its essential women's health programs. This was, in a very real sense, a death blow to the health of indigent women.

Public reaction was swift and unrelenting. Donors stepped up to offer funds that could partially compensate for what was lost by the ban. Cooperating organisations made it clear that their cooperation was not to be taken for granted. Individual protests cascaded. SGKCF bowed to the inevitable and withdrew the ban.

All-male Cast

The next encounter began with an ecclesiastical barrage. The Catholic hierarchy opposed a regulation planned by the Obama Administration requiring religious organisations and religion-based institutions (e.g. universities) to ensure that contraception was included in the health insurance programs they provided for their employees and students.

The arrangement was modified to place the responsibility on the insurance company concerned – and not the religion-based institution – for providing contraception to the insured who, lest we forget, pay part of the premiums for their coverage. At that point, Congressman Darrell Issa of California, chairman of the Oversight and Government Spending committee in the House of Representatives, convened an attention-catching hearing on the issues.

The first group of witnesses that Issa's committee convened was an all-male cast: five men including a celibate Catholic bishop. None of them, obviously, had experienced the joy and the burden of pregnancy and motherhood. None of them could testify with real-life knowledge and understanding.

Sandra Fluke, a law student from Washington's Georgetown University, a highly regarded Catholic institution of higher learning, offered to testify but Issa turned her down. He felt that her testimony would not be "appropriate." A woman as an "inappropriate witness" on women's health? That's a stretch, even for a Congressman.

Incensed, two representatives, Carolyn Maloney of New York and Eleanor Holmes Norton of Washington DC, walked out of the hearing, with Maloney shouting out the pertinent question: "What I want to know is, where are the women?" Maloney and others held a congressional forum and invited Fluke to be their featured speaker.

She spoke passionately on contraception issues including the needs of women who required contraceptive medication for the treatment of conditions – some of them serious, or potentially serious – unconnected with family planning. This is available only if prescribed by a qualified medical practitioner. ☺

*The writer has served as Sri Lanka's ambassador to Canada, Cuba, Mexico, and the USA. He was Chairman of the Commonwealth Select Committee on the media and development, Editor of the Ceylon 'Daily News' and the Ceylon 'Observer', and was for a time Features Editor and Foreign Affairs columnist of the Singapore 'Straits Times'. He is Global Editor of IDN-InDepthNews and a member of its editorial board as well as President of the Media Task Force of Global Cooperation Council.

Fluke recounted the experience of a fellow-student at Georgetown:

"For my friend and 20 percent of the women in her situation, she never got the insurance company to cover her prescription. Despite verifications of her illness from her doctor, her claim was denied repeatedly on the assumption that she really wanted birth control to prevent pregnancy. She's gay. So clearly polycystic ovarian syndrome was a much more urgent concern than accidental pregnancy for her.

"After months paying over \$100 out-of-pocket, she just couldn't afford her medication anymore, and she had to stop taking it. I learned about all of this when I walked out of a test and got a message from her that in the middle of the night in her final exam period she'd been in the emergency room. She'd been there all night in just terrible, excruciating pain. She wrote to me, 'It was so painful I woke up thinking I've been shot.'

"Without her taking the birth control medication, a massive cyst the size of a tennis ball had grown on her ovary. She had to have surgery to remove her entire ovary as a result."

There was more, but the point is made.

Beacon of Obscenity

For making this case, Fluke was insulted and humiliated on air by shock-jock Rush Limbaugh, a radio broadcaster who is said to have a following of several millions. He is a respected figure in Republican Party circles.

Limbaugh implied that Fluke required boundless access to contraception because she wanted to have unlimited sex, and that she wanted the taxpayers to pay for her sex by providing her with contraceptives. Based on this astounding charge, he called her a "slut" and a "prostitute." He claimed that her parents could not be proud of her.

Having explored the lower depths of repulsive speech, he decided to descend even further, suggesting that as compensation for experiencing taxpayer-funded sex, she should make sex videos and upload them so that taxpayers could view them. Limbaugh's inner sense of obscenity shone forth like a dry-wood blaze in a forest.

Subsequently, when the withdrawal of sponsoring advertising was rapidly climbing ever upwards, he apologised on air. The assumption that even the most disgusting, disgraceful, and destructive behavior can be wiped off the record by an apology makes no sense. An apology is indispensable, but does not eliminate the offending conduct or dilute its venomous intent. There is no legal plea, for instance, known as "not guilty by virtue of an apology."

Judicial Intemperance

Throughout her ordeal, Fluke conducted herself with the utmost dignity and self-control. President Obama, a legal scholar himself, phoned her to commiserate and say that her parents should be proud of her.

Not to be outdone by mere lay folk, a judge jumped into the maelstrom of vituperation. He attracted nationwide public attention when he shot out an email which directed a crude and

despicable insult at Ann Dunham, Obama's late mother. She died of cancer in 1995.

As reported by John S. Adams of the Great Falls Tribune, the subject line of an email sent to friends by Chief US District Judge of Montana Richard Cebull (with an emphasis on the bull?) was A MOM'S MEMORY. Cebull sent the email from his official courthouse email address on Feb. 20. The text reads as follow:

"Normally I don't send or forward a lot of these, but even by my standards, it was a bit touching. I want all of my friends to feel what I felt when I read this. Hope it touches your heart like it did mine.

"'A little boy said to his mother; 'Mommy, how come I'm black and you're white?'" the email joke reads. "His mother replied, 'Don't even go there Barack! From what I can remember about that party, you're lucky you don't bark!'" Cebull has since apologised to Obama.

Elsewhere, meanwhile, attempts to belittle women, curtail their rights, and reduce their access to health programs continue through innuendo, direct slight and proposed legislation. One such law would eliminate all federal funding for family planning programs. The liberal website MoveOn.org comments: "That would be family planning for humans. But Republican Dan Burton has a Bill to provide contraception for wild horses. You can't make this stuff up."

Consider This

That such developments take place in modern, innovative, science and technology oriented America, in the second decade of the 21st century, would be unbelievable if it were not true.

Every cloud, however ominous, is supposed to have a silver lining. So, consider this. The silver lining lies in the strong and continuing backlash against reprehensible language and conduct.

Many have spoken out, from Obama onwards. Some of the offending institutions and individuals involved continue to face the force of public wrath and the increasing rumble of internal breakdown. Sponsorship advertising has been withdrawn, resignations have occurred, events have had to be cancelled.

The most telling comment came in a 479-word letter from John J. DeGioia president of Georgetown University, to the Georgetown community. DeGioia said of Fluke: "one need not agree with her substantive position to support her right to respectful free expression.

"And yet, some of those who disagreed with her position — including Rush Limbaugh and commentators throughout the blogosphere and in various other media channels — responded with behavior that can only be described as misogynistic, vitriolic, and a misrepresentation of the position of our student."

DeGioia cautioned the student body that if the US allows "coarseness, anger — even hatred — to stand for civil discourse in America, we violate the sacred trust that has been handed down through the generations beginning with our Founders. The values that hold us together as a people require nothing less than eternal vigilance. This is our moment to stand for the values of civility in our engagement with one another.

Hope springs eternal. □

Plea for a Contrarian View on Oil and Nukes

By James Stafford*

Iran should be allowed nuclear weapons. China has no military ambitions in Asia. The U.S. should pay heed to Chinese sensitivities. Fukushima will not influence the nuclear energy prospects long term in the world. Alternative energy investments are a bad idea for investors. Barrack Obama is a "disappointing president". These are some of the salient points of an interview legendary Swiss investor Dr Marc Faber, the editor and publisher of the Gloom Boom & Doom Report, gave to Oilprice.com.



LONDON - As the world economy teeters on the brink and rising oil prices threaten to de-rail the delicate roots of recovery, well known investment commentator Marc Faber perceives a risk that these will go much higher, particularly "if trouble breaks out in the Middle East, or if there is a war".

Following are excerpts from the interview:

Question (Q): Obama is being pressured by the Democrats to use the Strategic Petroleum Reserve in order to flood the market with a large supply of oil in an attempt to drive down prices. . . . Do you think it's sensible advice to use the reserves now to lower short term prices or should Obama remain strong and only use the stockpile for what it was designed for?

Marc Faber (MF): I think selling down the reserves would be a useless strategy as one of the main reasons prices are rising is due to international tensions. It's possible for an increase in supplies to drive down the price a little bit. But in emerging economies like China and India, the demand continues to go up. Now, it may not go up every year by the same quantity it did in the last 3 years, because in the last 15 years, oil demand in China tripled, from 3 million barrels a day to 9 million barrels a day. So it's conceivable that in a recessionary environment in China, oil demand will not go up substantially for one or two years. But because the per capita consumption is so low in countries like China and India compared to say the U.S. and Japan and Western Europe, I think the trend will continue to increase.

Q: There's a great deal of political theater going on around the Keystone XL pipeline. Do you see the pipeline as being essential to U.S. energy security and something that has to be pushed through at some point?

MF: Yes, I think it would be important to have the pipeline. But as you say, there's a lot of political pressure and so forth. I think it would be very desirable for the U.S. to become energy self-sufficient. Some observers and forecasters say they can achieve this goal within ten years, due to advances in natural gas extraction. I don't believe it, but I have to respect the view of some experts.

Q: The media has been full of reports on the coming shale gas boom. Is it the energy savior we are hoping for?

MF: I doubt it. But as long as the market believes it, we have to translate every forecast and every view into investment opportunities. I think a lot of people believe in shale Gas's potential and so this may underpin some strength in equities and currencies. But as I said, I don't believe it.

Q: Do you think the shale boom could lead to a change in U.S. foreign policy priorities?

MF: Well, I don't really believe it. But as you know, Mr Obama has engaged in more foreign policy initiatives in Asia. For what, I'm not quite sure. The thinking in the U.S. is that China is a threat. Therefore, they have to increase their cooperation with Asian countries, such as India and the Philippines.

Personally, I think it's an ill-timed move, because I don't think that China has any military ambitions in Asia. But put yourself into the chair of China's leadership. What is the top priority? China obtains 95% of its oil from the Middle East. The top priority is to make sure that this oil continues to flow and that the supply is secure. So they have to secure the oil shipping lanes, from the Middle East, past the southern tip of India, through the Straits of Malacca, up the Vietnamese coast, into China.

Each time they do that or attempt to do that, America and it allies in Asia perceive it as a threat. So the tensions increase.

Q: You don't believe China has any military ambitions in Asia, but we're seeing quite a lot of tension in the South China Seas, especially the Spratly Islands and the energy resources located there. How do you see the situation playing out between China and its small neighbors in this region who all have a good claim on the resources?

MF: . . . China's a huge country. They have certain views about territories in Asia, and I think the U.S. would not react particularly positively if say China or Russia or any other nation had numerous military and naval bases, in the Caribbean or in the Pacific, and military bases in Canada and Mexico.

You have to look at the world from the perspective of the Chinese. I'm not saying that because I'm super-bull about China. On the contrary, I think the Chinese economy faces numerous problems. But I'm saying that if you put yourself into their position, a top priority is to secure a regular supply of oil, iron ore, and copper. If you look at the Kondratiev Cycle where Kondratiev said it's not a business cycle. It's a price cycle, and certain things happen during the downward wave, and certain things happen during the upward wave. ☺

*James Stafford is Editor of Oilprice.com. This article was originally published at: Oil, Alternatives, and Nuclear Weapons - An Interview with Marc Faber.

During the upward wave, we have rising commodity prices, which is a symptom of shortages. Then countries become more belligerent, because they begin to be concerned about the supply of commodities, and so tensions increase.

I'm not saying war will break out tomorrow. I'm just saying the conditions have improved.

Q: Aside from the South China Seas, where do you see the potential flash points in the world over resources?

MF: Well, I think a big potential flash point is obviously the Middle East and Central Asia, because neither Russia nor China wants permanent American military bases in Central Asia and to be encircled. The Chinese are encircled by the Americans in the Pacific with naval bases, plus the Americans have 11 aircraft carriers. The Chinese have just one. Plus, in the last 12 months, Mr. Obama has made initiatives to have India as a strategic ally. The result of this is that China, which always had good relationships with Pakistan, has strengthened their relationships with Pakistan. This of course has increased tensions in the region.

Renewable Energy

Q: Moving off fossil fuels, what role do you see renewable energy playing in the future? Do you think government should help innovation in this area?

MF: This is a very difficult question to answer. Basically, I'm convinced that, over time, to drill a hole in the ground in the Middle East or in other emerging economies and then bringing that oil through a pipeline onto a ship into the countries that consume oil is not an elegant solution to the energy problem. I think eventually this will go away. But in the meantime, alternative sources of energy are extremely expensive. Unless the oil price collapses to like \$50, most alternative sources of energy will not be profitable. If someone says to me, we need alternative sources of energy for security reasons, yes, I agree. But for profitability I doubt it.

Q: As an investor then, are there any renewable sectors you're bullish on? Or would you stay away from the space entirely?

MF: I would stay away from it.

Nuclear Energy

Q: Following the Fukushima disaster Japan has now shut down 54 nuclear power plants. The population's trust in nuclear energy has been shattered – but do you think this is only temporary and how would Japan make up the energy shortfall – as before Fukushima Japan met around a third of its energy demand with nuclear?

MF: Well, I guess they'll lean towards more natural gas and more oil so they can offset this shortfall of nuclear energy. Now I don't think that this will change the nuclear energy prospects long term in the world, because other countries like India and China will build their numerous nuclear energy plants. In the case of Japan, I think the power plants which had the problems were antiquated. In other words, they were not up to modern standards.

Iran and Nukes

Q: Iran has finally offered to resume talks about its nuclear program and has agreed to allow UN inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency to visit its Parchin military complex where a nuclear weapons program is suspected of being developed. How do you see events developing here and how can investors protect themselves from an escalation in this region?

MF: Well, if there are escalations, then obviously you have to be long, oil and gold. My sense is that the Iranians are playing the same game the Japanese played in the '70s and '80s. They always negotiated but never did anything about the changing balances – they just want to delay the hour of truth. Every day, I think the Iranians are getting closer to having nuclear weapons. I can understand why. The whole world is hostile towards Iran, and they are encircled.

In the west, France has nuclear weapons and Britain and the U.S., and their neighbor Israel, towards the west. Then in the east, India and Pakistan and of course China. So why shouldn't they have nuclear weapons?

Mind you, either there is all around abandonment of nuclear weapons by all the powers, or every country should be allowed to have them. We in the Western World, we have the misguided belief that we are there to judge which countries may have and which countries should not have nuclear weapons.

But maybe our view is wrong. My view is that if I were looking after Iran, for sure I would want to have nuclear weapons. For sure!

Q: I was looking through some of your previous interviews as well, and in one of them, you mentioned Barack Obama. You said he was by far one of the worst presidents that the U.S. has had, and that you still believe he'll be re-elected. In what ways do you think he is unsuitable as a president? I mean, are you fundamentally against his ideas and position on certain topics?

MF: I don't want to get into an overly political discussion, but I think that first of all, we have in the U.S. and elsewhere highly expansionary fiscal and monetary policies, but we have restrictive regulatory policies. In other words, Obamacare is a big problem for many medium sized and even large companies, because they don't know exactly how much it will cost them. That has retarded hirings of people.

Mr Obama has intervened into the economy massively, left, right, and center. Every government intervention has consequences. Just to give you an example, the U.S. government debt – I'm only speaking about the government debt, not the prime debt – has gone from essentially zero 200 years ago, to a trillion dollars in 1980.

By the year 2000, we were roughly at \$5 trillion. Now in 12 years, we've gone to close to \$16 trillion. That excludes the unfounded liabilities. Under Mr Obama, the fiscal deficit has exploded.

The big question is: Will we ever, in the U.S., have a fiscal deficit of less than \$1 trillion or \$1.5 trillion? I don't see it. Under Mr Obama, spending has gone up and tax revenue has gone down. Change, if there was any change under Mr Obama, it was for the worse. In my view, he's a very disappointing president. □



A Tale of Two Coming Summits

By Dr Ian Anthony*

NATO summit will be held in Chicago, in an election year. While it will be hard to find anyone willing to go on record as saying that the choice of location is intended to be a boost for President Obama, it's difficult to interpret it any other way. The NATO summit on May 20-21 will take place at the same time as a meeting of leaders of the most industrialized countries, the Group of Eight (G8). Perhaps unfortunately for NATO, both the agenda and the format of the G8 summit make it the more interesting and important of the meetings.

STOCKHOLM - The Chicago summit is, in some respects, a formality. As its purpose is to deliver on key decisions made at the 2010 Lisbon summit, the fact that it is being held at all amounts to business as usual for NATO. According to its own website, the summit will focus on three main themes: Afghanistan, the Alliance's territorial defence capabilities and 'strengthening NATO's network of partners across the globe'.

Unspoken tensions

There is no doubt that the NATO summit will produce declarations emphasizing solidarity. European countries may seek and will probably receive a strong signal of continued commitment to their security from the United States, whose approach to Europe is changing in light of recent analyses of the global security environment. This is particularly true since multiple speeches and

publications have emanated from high levels in Washington outlining a greater Pacific focus in US security priorities.

Nonetheless, the European NATO member states all understand that a trans-Atlantic forum in which they can discuss issues of military security and plan military cooperation is useful and necessary, and will continue to be so – quite possibly in perpetuity. Therefore, NATO rests on a very solid foundation. However, it is also clear that the statements in Chicago will defer decisions on, or elide discussion of, a number of matters.

In some cases this is because the outcome is, to a certain extent, out of the hands of the Alliance. If the matter was ever in doubt, it is certainly obvious by now that a stable and secure Afghanistan is not within the gift of NATO. While the desirability of partnerships will no doubt be underlined, clear guidance on who will partner with NATO and for what purpose is unlikely. ➡

*Dr Ian Anthony is the Research Coordinator at SIPRI and the Director of the SIPRI Programme on Arms Control, Disarmament and Non-proliferation. This article first appeared in the SIPRI website under the title 'A tale of two summits: the Group of Eight and NATO'. It is being republished by arrangement with the author.

NATO and Russia: heading for estrangement

The changing US view of the role of Europe looks like weakening commitment in the eyes of some Europeans, although it doesn't look that way to the US, which sees it as tailoring its commitment to the current circumstances. On the other hand, if President Putin's very clear long-term program for modernizing Russia works, this will have long-term impacts on European security priorities.

NATO and Russia appear to be heading towards a period of estrangement. The importance of one issue on which cooperation has been emphasized – logistic support to NATO operations in Afghanistan – is likely to recede. On issues such as missile defence, where positions are locked and appear mutually incompatible, there is likely to be either an agreement to disagree, or an effort to push the difficult underlying questions further into the background.

Moreover, efforts to address issues in the NATO–Russia forum would probably make matters worse rather than better. President Putin has made such a public issue of missile defence domestically that he would either have to explain to his Russian audience why he didn't push harder in direct talks with NATO or perform at the NATO summit in a way that would hardly build mutually confidence.

The potential implications of Russian military reform

Russia has been trying to stop the USA's Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) system since the 1990s and strongly opposed the US withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in 2001. It will no doubt keep trying, but with the United States, not NATO, as its preferred interlocutor.

Meanwhile NATO has no common or final view on the potential implications of Russian military reform, including the increase in its military expenditure by 9 per cent in real terms in 2011. Russian modernization may be a sign that Moscow is finally coming to grips with a corrupt and dysfunctional military establishment, but it could also be a future challenge for NATO to deal with.

All that the NATO member states seem willing to do is seek a degree of reassurance through their own actions but the Chicago summit is unlikely to explain the relationship between conventional forces, nuclear forces and missile defences in promoting defence and deterrence. Nothing bolder is anticipated than a statement to the effect that each of these types of weapon has a role to play.

What about the Group of Eight?

One recent problem for NATO has been how to explain its role in meeting new security challenges. Many of these are non-military in nature, and the Alliance has no obvious advantages compared to other organizations and forums when addressing them. In other cases, the role of military instruments in preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons is controversial within the Alliance.

Recent experience of addressing this issue within NATO offers no encouragement. The deep divisions created in the runup to



Chicago mounted police

The summit has been designated a National Special Security Event (NSSE) by the Department of Homeland Security. Final authority over law enforcement thus belongs to the Secret Service. The NSSE steering committee, which also includes representatives from the Chicago Police Department and has 24 subcommittees. Local security forces are being trained by an Illinois company called Controlled F.O.R.C.E., which specializes in subduing crowds. The city has signed a \$193,461 contract with Super Seer Corp. for the procurement of new face shields that are intended to protect police officers from liquids.

the war in Iraq have deterred any effort to engage NATO in the ongoing confrontation between many of the Allies and Iran over its nuclear ambitions.

Perhaps of greater interest is the question of how security issues will be discussed at the concurrent G8 summit, whose agenda demonstrates that security in the 21st century is not just a matter of reinvigorating alliances forged in the cold war. As a spokeswoman for the US National Security Council stated at the time of the announcement of the change of location for the G8 summit, '[t]here are a lot of political, economic and security issues that come together at the G8.'

The need for better political guidelines for action on global security

The change in location for the G8 summit from Chicago to Camp David could also facilitate a deeper and more rewarding discussion among the leaders than a NATO summit can accommodate. With almost 30 leaders present, a meaningful discussion among them on how complex 'political, economic and security issues' interact will certainly not be on the agenda at the NATO summit.

The holding of the G8 summit in a relatively secluded location may create an opportunity to go beyond the delivery of prepared texts leading to rehearsed joint statements. If such a format can provide better political guidelines for action on the big questions of global security then the G8 summit will have fulfilled its mandate.

Somewhat paradoxically, it might be that the G8 summit is also the place where some questions of relevance to NATO are also addressed. The willingness of the Russian President to travel to Chicago has been the focus of much discussion but the presence of Mr Putin at Camp David, and the nature of his participation, may offer a better indication of the prospects for finding common ground. □

Social Justice Put on the Backburner in Egypt

By Sharif Abdel Kouddous*

CAIRO - Egypt is teetering on the edge of an economic crisis. Cast adrift in a deepening political quagmire over the past fourteen months, the economy has now reached a critical juncture, as the country faces the pressing challenge of financing a large budget deficit as rapidly dwindling foreign currency reserves threaten to crack apart an already fragile situation.



A child balancing a tray of bread on his shoulder, which he has just bought from a bakery in Cairo. Credit: Nasser Nouri

Yet, more than a year after the launch of a revolution driven in large part by economic grievances, the budgetary and fiscal proposals being considered to secure external financial assistance are geared more towards furthering Mubarak-era policies than to promoting social justice.

The state deficit for the fiscal year that ends in June is expected to exceed 140 billion Egyptian pounds (\$23 billion), or about 8.7 percent of expected economic output, according to the Minister of Planning and International Cooperation. Meanwhile, the central bank's foreign reserves have been shrinking by roughly \$2 billion every month, precipitated by a sharp decline in tourism and foreign direct investment since the revolution began.

Over the past year, the government has used up more than \$20 billion to prop up the local currency. In February, foreign reserves stood at \$15.7 billion, enough for just three months of imports, and with it, the looming prospect of devaluation.

Egypt, like many developing countries, relies heavily on imports, including for staple items such as wheat. (Egypt is the world's largest importer of wheat, relying on foreign supplies for about 60 percent of domestic consumption). A currency devaluation would increase import prices across the board, severely deepening the recession and prolonging any economic recovery.

"The economic situation is dire but really the Achilles Heel comes with the balance of payment position and mainly with the fact that we don't have enough dollar reserves," says Amr Adly, the head of the Economic and Social Justice Unit at the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights.

In January, the military-appointed interim government formally requested a \$3.2 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The government says it needs \$11 billion to avoid a balance of payments crisis and signing a deal with the IMF is ex-

pected to open the door to aid packages from the United States, the European Union and the Gulf. The IMF requested the Egyptian government draw up an economic reform plan supported by political consensus in order to secure the loan.

"The IMF has become quite smart lately in the sense that they don't impose direct conditionality in order to give money," Adly says. "They ask the government to design the program and they have to accept it so they can release the tranches. So it is indirect conditionality because they won't give you the money unless they approve of the plan."

The Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of International Cooperation and the Central Bank drafted a reform program to present to the IMF, the details of which were not released publicly – although a copy was leaked to the media. While the plan's proposed policies are extremely vague – with few specifics and little in the way of proposed timetables – the document includes the classic phrase associated with IMF loans across the developing world: "structural adjustment," and with it, a slew of controversial economic amendments.

Aimed at slashing the budget deficit, the document proposes tax reforms to increase government revenues. While lacking any concrete details, it mentions amending income taxes by broadening the pool of tax paying citizens – echoing the policies of Mubarak's finance minister, Youssef Boutros-Ghali – with no proposals for a move towards progressive taxation.

Reforms to sales tax laws and the possibly of instituting a Value Added Tax are also mentioned. Sales taxes, while easier to implement from an administrative standpoint, are indirect and regressive by nature, targeting different sectors of society with the same taxes when they purchase goods, regardless of income level. In Egypt, where half the population lives below the poverty line and spends the biggest proportion of their income on basic goods, sales taxes place a higher burden on the poor majority.

The document also includes an element of energy subsidy reform – long a contentious subject within Egypt's government budget. Energy subsidies absorb a whopping 95 billion Egyptian pounds (\$15.8 billion) of Egypt's budget outlay, or roughly 20 percent. Beneficiaries span the board, from taxi drivers to multinational corporations – particularly those in energy-intensive industries like cement.

Yet the government's proposal for subsidy reform remains ill-defined and does not indicate which particular energy subsidies will be cut. Even if they were to target the 19 percent that goes to industry, as many have called for, no measures are outlined ➔

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to counter any attempts by corporations to pass the rising costs to the end-consumer. "In a word, the government reform plan is lousy," says Samer Atallah, assistant professor of economics at the American University in Cairo. "It's basically neoliberal economic policy that doesn't seem to get the new reality of Egypt."

Egypt's last IMF loan came in 1991 to help alleviate the country's \$35 billion foreign debt crisis. The government was forced to adopt a set of structural adjustment policies as a condition of the deal that laid the groundwork for a sweeping wave of privatizations throughout the next two decades. The farming sector was deregulated and a 10 percent sales tax was introduced, among other economic and financial reforms.

"These policies had an extreme adverse affect on the majority of Egyptians," Atallah says. "People talk about economic indicators that improved after these programs such as the budget deficit and the balance of payments but these measures don't reflect the daily lives of the majority of poor people in Egypt."

Negotiations surrounding the current IMF loan come at a time of growing political turmoil in Egypt and the signing of any agreement hangs in the balance. The powerful Muslim Brotherhood, which controls nearly half the seats in parliament though its political arm, the Freedom and Justice Party, has locked horns with the ruling military council in recent weeks after largely walking in lockstep with them for much of the past year.

The Brotherhood is pressing the generals to remove the military-appointed government, led by Prime Minister Kamal el-Ganzouri, and appoint a new one before the completion of the so-called transitional process in June. The group is also coming under fire for its dominance of the constituent assembly and, most recently, for reversing its previous pledge to field a presidential candidate.

The IMF has made clear that any agreement is conditional on broad political backing, which in practice means the support of the Brotherhood since it will likely lead the next government, whether it comes before or after the Supreme Council's scheduled handover of executive authority to a newly-elected president.

The Brotherhood has said it supports the request for an IMF loan but first wants the government to produce a more coherent plan. After meeting with an IMF delegation that arrived in Cairo for talks in mid-March, the Brotherhood issued a statement critical of the economic reform package as "general and vague" and said the government did not outline "how this loan will be used, or how it will be paid off."

Lack of Transparency

[. . .] The IMF deal has also come under heavy criticism for the complete lack of transparency that has surrounded the talks. "The fact is this economic reform program was never presented publicly and was never put up for a serious public debate," says Ahmad Shokr, a founding member of the Popular Campaign to Drop Egypt's Debt.

The Campaign monitored news reports regarding international commitments made by the post-Mubarak transitional government over the past year. It found at least \$8 billion in financial assistance had come into the country through various sources. "Where has all this money gone? What is it being used for?

Were there any conditions attached?" asks Shokr. "Now they want to go borrow an additional \$3.2 billion? That should be unacceptable."

The shroud of secrecy on economic affairs is nowhere more prevalent in Egypt than within the army, which maintains a sprawling business empire that accounts for between 15 to 40 percent of GDP. Utilizing a mass conscripted labor force, army divisions manufacture everything from television sets and off-road vehicles to bottled water and fertilizer.

Since Mubarak's ouster, which brought the military to power, the army has provided the ailing Egyptian government with no less than 12 billion Egyptian pounds (\$2 billion), including a \$1 billion loan to the Finance Ministry to prop up foreign reserves.

"We have an army that has a separate budget totally away from the control of civil government. It's beyond belief," Atallah says. "The way this was discussed in the public discourse was 'wow we should be grateful for the army that stepped in and helped our economy.' For God's sake this is our money!"

The ruling Supreme Council, and the successive governments it has appointed in the post-Mubarak transitional period have repeatedly laid the blame for Egypt's economic difficulties on the revolutionary protest movement and widespread labor strikes. While political protests have dwindled in number and frequency as of late, labor protests, primarily in the form of strikes, have continued unabated and have, in fact, increased in recent weeks as workers push for the revolution to tackle long-standing socio-economic grievances.

Yet the pressing issues the economy now faces – particularly the depletion of foreign reserves – are more likely the offspring of a badly mismanaged political transition that has forced the country into a fiscal cul-de-sac. Despite a major political upheaval compounded by economic troubles plaguing Europe – Egypt's main trading partner – the Egyptian economy grew by nearly two percent in 2011. Egypt's current economic woes are primarily confined to the super-structure – monetary issues like the budget deficit, balance of payments, inflation – rather than the infrastructure, which remains largely unchanged.

"The military council are the ones to blame, it's not about the revolution," Adly says. "They were the ones in control and they managed the political transition in a very stupid way, either deliberately or not."

Successive military-appointed governments, as well as the central bank, did little to mitigate the problem of foreign reserve depletion in the aftermath of Mubarak's ouster. Possible measures, like applying restraints on imports or restrictions on capital outflows (as much as \$12 billion was transferred abroad in 2011), were ignored. Meanwhile, an enduring climate of political instability has kept investors and various forms of financial assistance from re-injecting foreign currency into the economy.

By most accounts, the Egyptian economy will need of some kind of financial aid within the next few months to avoid a severe downturn. It remains unclear when or if an IMF loan will be signed or what economic reforms will be agreed upon by the Muslim Brotherhood. What is becoming clear is that signs point to a continuation and deepening of many of the same policies that stirred up last year's revolt. ▢

What The Arab Spring Means For Freedom

By Megan Martin*

WASHINGTON DC - Wielding mobile phones and computers, the young activists across the Middle East have altered the way the world approaches popular mobilization, social networks and Internet freedom.

The Internet can be a transformational force for societies and individuals, allowing for organization on a mass scale and the free flow of information. However, we must remember that the Internet and social media are tools that do not bring change themselves, but act as facilitators in spreading the ideas. The seminal use of social media as vehicles for change in the Arab Spring uprisings exemplifies the power of web-based communication and makes a strong case for Internet freedom.

Web-based communications have been used by young, tech literate activists across the Middle East for three core purposes: organization, exposure and leverage. Youth led efforts to organize social and political movements, expose the injustices of governments and leverage internal and external stakeholders acted as catalysts for uprisings which would have otherwise remained dormant.

Social networks allow for communication across geopolitical, cultural and linguistic barriers. This tool allowed the youth leaders of Egypt, the West Bank, Jordan, etc. to organize in revolutionary new ways by creating online communities of supporters and using those networks to bring people into the streets and rally international support for their cause.

As mobile devices and smart phones become increasingly common, protesters are able to gather at a moment's notice. This level of organization is made possible by near instant communication and a network of vigilant, tech literate devotees. Additionally, groups are able to develop, collaborate on and distribute content to a seemingly limitless audience. The ability of young activists to organize using technology has brought the nature of citizen action to a new level and given voice to previously unheard narratives.

Web-based communications, including blogs, YouTube and RSS allow for personal, unofficial or nongovernmental narratives to be exposed and widely consumed. Embedded in the nature of the Internet is the possibility to share multiple narratives through an array of platforms.

With the barrier to Internet access lowered each day, more people have the option to participate in self-expression via the web. However, the idea that everyone should have the ability to

share their opinion over the Internet has quickly become contentious. Citizen journalism and activists' blogs have exposed the atrocities perpetrated by otherwise opaque regimes. In these situations, the Internet poses an existential threat to the government's power to control a national narrative, but provides a space for free speech.

Predictably, civilians have been targeted and tracked by their governments for attending rallies, publishing anti-government content or posting footage of state perpetrated violence. Websites have been censored and attacked. Web access has been limited or debilitated. Clearly, social media and Internet based communications are tools that hold the potential to both help and harm.

The leverage young activist have is both domestic and international. Much like the Velvet Revolution when youth mobilized across all sectors of Czech society to protest Soviet rule, the young activists of the Arab Spring brought people from across age, religious and class barriers together under a single banner.

Exposure of governmental wrongdoing through online citizen journalism can pressure the international and domestic media to focus on particular important events. However, leverage can reach even further; the protests in Tahrir Square helped pressure the United States to reassess its support of Hosni Mubarak.

Recently, the United Nations Human Rights Committee affirmed that the protection guaranteed by International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) applies to online communication. This announcement confirms that bloggers have the same protections as journalists. Additionally, UN Special Rapporteur, Frank La Rue issued a report which states that Internet use has become an important means by which individuals can exercise their right to freedom of opinion and expression. Denying such a right is a violation of the ICCPR.

While the idea that unrestricted Internet as a basic human right is far from a reality, its use by a young generation of tech savvy Middle Eastern activists has put web-based social media communications at the center of the debate on freedom, democracy and change. □

*Megan Martin's specialty is ethnic identity and U.S. foreign policy in Eastern Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. She has a master's degree in politics from New York University. This piece is part of the series 'Youth, Civic Engagement and Democratic Processes.'

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Analysis on demand

For a Denuclearised Middle East

By Daiskau Ikeda*

TOKYO - In recent months, the dispute over the nature and intent of the Iranian nuclear development program has generated increasing tensions throughout the Middle East region. When I consider all that is at stake here, I am reminded of the words of the British historian Arnold Toynbee, who warned that the perils of the nuclear age constituted a "Gordian knot that has to be untied by patient fingers instead of being cut by the sword."

Amidst growing concerns that these tensions will erupt into armed conflict, I urge the political leadership in all relevant states to recognize that now is the time to muster the courage of restraint and seek the common ground from which the current impasse can be resolved. The use of military force or other forms of hard power can never produce a lasting solution. Even if it may seem possible to suppress a particular threat, what is left behind is an even more deadly legacy of anger and hatred.

It is a sad constant of international politics that as tensions rise so does the level of threat and invective that are exchanged. Recall how, when US President John F. Kennedy and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev met in Vienna at the height of the 1961 Berlin Crisis, the latter is recorded as saying, "Force will be met by force. If the US wants war, that is its problem. The calamities of a war will be shared equally."

But we must not lose sight of the fact that, if war breaks out, it is the untold numbers of ordinary citizens who will bear the brunt of the suffering. This is something that the generations who lived through the wars of the 20th century know from painful experience. In my case, I lost one of my older brothers in battle and we were burned out of our home twice. I retain vivid memories of leading my younger brother, still a young child, by the hand as we fled through the bombs of an air raid. Any use of weapons of mass destruction would magnify and make irreparable this death and mayhem to an unimaginable degree. Nuclear weapons, in particular, must be recognized as weapons of ultimate inhumanity.

In both the Berlin Crisis and the Cuban Missile Crisis of the following year, the leaders of the two superpowers finally stepped back from the brink of conflict. In the midst of unbearable tensions, they no doubt saw the devastation that awaited their failure to defuse the situation.

In our present-day situation, we know that a military strike against the nuclear facilities of Iran would be intensely destabilizing. Retaliation would be inevitable, and it is impossible to predict the repercussions in a region now undergoing sweeping political transformation.

Even though the dynamics of international politics seem locked in a spiral of threat and mistrust, we must not ignore the voices of the countless individuals living in the region who desire to see it freed from all nuclear weapons. These can be heard, for example, in research released by the Brookings Institute last December which found that, by a ratio of two to one, Israelis support an agreement that would make the Middle East a nuclear weapon free zone, including Iran and Israel.



Dr Ikeda with the late British historian Arnold Toynbee

The international conference scheduled for this year on establishing a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction is an attempt to respond to the aspirations of the region's peoples, and all efforts must be made to ensure its success. The elimination of all weapons of mass destruction from the region represents a path toward meeting the common security interests of both Iran and Israel and of the entire region. The efforts of Finland to host this conference have been laudable, and I hope that Japan, as a country that has experienced the use of nuclear weapons in war, will play a positive role in creating the conditions for dialogue.

President Kennedy, having dealt with two potentially apocalyptic crises, stated: "Our hopes must be tempered with the caution of history." To date, aspirations for a world without nuclear weapons have been fostered and forged through the unrelenting efforts of those who have met and surmounted the trials of crisis. The process that produced the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which established the first nuclear weapon free zone in a populated region, for example, was given new urgency by the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Despite cynical dismissals that such efforts were a waste of time, that there would never be agreement on such a treaty, the negotiators persisted. Today, all 33 states in Latin America and the Caribbean as well as the five declared nuclear-weapon states are parties to the Treaty of Tlatelolco.

In order to resolve the crisis currently hanging over the Middle East, there must be a renewed determination within international society never to abandon dialogue, a deepened conviction that what now seems impossible can indeed be made possible. No matter how daunting the present realities or how treacherous the path forward, we must remember that hope is fostered only through ceaseless, tenacious efforts for peace. [Copyright IPS Columnist Service] □

*Daisaku Ikeda is a Japanese Buddhist philosopher and peacebuilder and president of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI).

Impassioned Plea for Averting War with Iran

By Richard Johnson

LONDON - Pax Christi, the International Catholic Movement for Peace, has made an impassioned plea for averting war with Iran. "Surely such a war would spell worldwide disaster, and it's up to movements like us to send a strong message against military aggression," Pax Christi said in an important document.

"A war with Iran, to which a military attack would inevitably lead, would be a disaster for the whole world and any talk of a pre-emptive attack must be challenged as illegal and immoral," it said indirectly referring to Israeli threats of an assault on Iran.

Pax Christi calls for facing "the unresolved issue of Iran's civilian nuclear programme, to which it is entitled, and the fears that this will develop into a nuclear weapons programme, which would violate the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty" (NPT).

Significantly, the Catholic Peace Movement emphasizes that Iran is entitled to develop its civilian nuclear programme and takes into account fears that the civilian might turn into military with untoward implications.

However, Pax Christi points out that unlike North Korea, Iran has not withdrawn from the NPT. "But this is not an issue to be judged on its own," says the document released on March 13, 2012. "Signatories to that Treaty, which include Britain, promised to eliminate their own nuclear weapons" – a pledge that remains unfulfilled.

This applies to other nuclear weapons states as well, be these signatories or non-signatories to the NPT: the United States, France, India, Russia, China, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea.

Pax Christi recalls that in 1996 the International Court of Justice had ruled that there is an obligation on nuclear weapon states to negotiate the abolition of nuclear weapons and to bring such negotiations to a successful conclusion.

The ruling has in practice gone unnoticed. Pax Christi suggests the following as a way forward "in solidarity with the people of Iran and all peoples potentially threatened by nuclear weapons through accident, misunderstandings or deliberate use".

It calls upon the British government to lead by the best example by:

- Ceasing its preparation of a new generation of nuclear weapons. "Far from negotiating elimination of these weapons Britain is planning to build yet another generation of nuclear weapons to follow Trident, at a cost of billions of pounds which would be far better spent on the real needs of our people," notes Pax Christi.
- Showing the transparency it seeks in Iran with regard to allowing international inspections of our own nuclear plants and facilities.
- Lifting sanctions on Iran when there are signs of progress.
- Employing every diplomatic means both nationally and through the European Union and the United Nations to make the possession of nuclear weapons by any state illegal.
- Calling on Israel to officially admit to having a nuclear arsenal, the existence of which is beyond any doubt.

Pax Christi also wants Britain to work to demilitarise the region through a sustained programme of conventional and nuclear disarmament and in particular to create a Nuclear Weapons Free

Middle East. This is to be discussed at the forthcoming UN Middle East Nuclear Free Zone conference this year in Helsinki, which it urges all countries to support. Such a Zone will mean that nuclear-armed ships from other states do not patrol in the Middle East area.

- Supporting efforts to establish common regional structures that ensure the security needs of all states to build a common, sustainable security.

"The peace we seek cannot come from weaponry, but from a commitment to justice and nonviolent actions which recognise the dignity of every human person and all creation. We reject models of security that rely on fear, the demonisation of others or on the strength of arms – conventional and nuclear," Pax Christi said.

It affirmed the words of Archbishop Francis Chullikatt, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations speaking in 2011. "Proliferation is a real and serious challenge. However, non-proliferation efforts will only be effective if they are universal. The nuclear-weapon states must abide by their obligations to negotiate the total elimination of their own arsenals if they are to have any authenticity in holding the non-nuclear states to their commitments not to pursue nuclear weapons...."

The need for universal elimination of nuclear weapons was also stressed at the UN Disarmament Commission early April 2012. Wrapping up the Commission's general debate on April 5, Iran's Eshagh Al Habib urged this UN body to accord priority to the agenda item on nuclear disarmament as a "long-delayed part of its mandate".

"While there was no pretext to justify the position of nuclear weapons in the hands of any country, it was a source of grave concern that certain nuclear-weapon States still continued to allocate billions of dollars to develop new types of nuclear weapons, build nuclear weapons production facilities and replace such weapons," a summary of the debate says.

In that vein, Iran supported the proposal of the Non-Aligned Movement on the adoption of a legal framework for the total elimination of nuclear weapons by 2025, Al Habib said. It was important to start negotiations on a nuclear weapons convention and a universal and unconditionally binding instrument on negative security assurances to all non-nuclear-weapons States.

Meanwhile, noted the summary, despite the stated intentions by some nuclear-weapons States to reduce part of their nuclear-weapon stocks, limited bilateral and unilateral arms reductions were far below the expectations of the international community, and could never be a substitute for the obligations of those States to completely eliminate their nuclear weapons. □

Read full article: <http://www.global-perspectives.info/>

Dangers of Extended Nuclear Deterrence in Asia

By Neena Bhandari

SYDNEY - With India and Pakistan testing nuclear-capable ballistic missiles this April, close on the heels of North Korea's unsuccessful test launch of a long-range rocket, a new report by the Sydney-based Lowy Institute for International Policy says it is Asian strategic mistrust that is holding back nuclear disarmament.

According to Lowy's international security programme director Rory Medcalf, who is also principal editor of the report titled *Disarming Doubt: The Future of Extended Nuclear Deterrence in East Asia*, the nuclear disarmament push in Asia had stalled, owing to the region's tangle of strategic mistrust.

In particular, North Korea's continuing provocative nuclear and missile programmes, leaving Japan and South Korea looking to their defences; US allies unwilling to weaken the 'extended deterrence' umbrella under which they are defended by American nuclear weapons; China unwilling to cap the growth or modernisation of its nuclear arsenal; and the China-India-Pakistan triangle of mistrust and arms competition adding another major obstacle to nuclear arms control and disarmament in Asia.

Medcalf said this situation could be worsened if the high cost of conventional weapons ever drove a future US Administration to expand the role of nuclear armaments in America's strategic 'pivot' back to Asia.

Asia is steadily becoming increasingly militarised, as a result of rapid economic growth and strategic uncertainty. The International Institute for Strategic Studies in London said in March 2012 that arms spending by Asian nations will this year for the first time overtake that of European countries. China, Japan, India, South Korea and Australia accounted for more than 80 per cent of total Asian defence spending and Pakistan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam were all investing in improving air and naval capacities.

The Lowy report makes policy recommendations for governments to untangle Asia's nuclear dangers. Dr Sue Wareham, Member of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons' (ICAN) Management Committee in Australia, says: "The recommendations are a mixed bag. While there is recognition of the devastating consequences of any use of nuclear weapons, there does not appear to be enunciation of the logical goal of getting rid of the weapons."

"The recommendation that extended deterrence should be used only to counter existential threats perpetuates the myth that deterrence is a legitimate and effective way to prevent acts of aggression. If indeed it is legitimate to use weapons of mass destruction as a deterrent, then one needs to explain why deterrence is legitimate for the US and those under its umbrella to use, and for China, but not for North Korea. The unstated and unsustainable rule that some nations may have nuclear weapons but some must not have them appears to go unchallenged," Dr Wareham told IDN.

"The recommendations also appear to paint a US role in Asia as a necessary and stabilising factor that China must accept. From an Australian perspective however, one must recognise the growing

concern even in our own country at the negative signals being sent to Asia by our strong support for US military policy," she added.

The US President Barack Obama has called for further bilateral cuts to the US and Russian arsenals, including tactical weapons and warhead stockpiles, as well as issued a renewed invitation for China to commence a nuclear dialogue with the US.

Two-fold Challenge

Professor Andrew O'Neil, Director of the Griffith Asia Institute at Griffith University points out that the challenge in Asia with respect to progressing disarmament is two-fold. First, in stark contrast to Europe, "the region has no formal arms control arrangements and no history of any serious negotiation on reducing military forces generally, let alone reducing nuclear warhead and missile stockpiles."

"Second, the region now has five nuclear weapons states (US, China, India, Pakistan and DPRK), an increase of three since the end of the Cold War. All of Asia's nuclear weapons states have indicated that outstanding political issues/conflicts need to be resolved before they will embark on military/nuclear reductions, and China has made it very clear that it will not reduce its arsenal until the US and Russia reduce their respective warhead stockpiles to the level that China has (i.e. around 150-200 warheads)," Professor O'Neil said.

It is the fundamental security dilemma among regional states that is making real progress towards disarmament difficult. As Professor O'Neil, who is also Editor-in-chief of the *Australian Journal of International Affairs* says, "Extended deterrence will probably increase in importance as the US seeks to leverage its nuclear superiority in order to compensate for its creeping conventional vulnerabilities in relation to China and the increasing anxiety in Japan and South Korea about North Korea's growing arsenal".

The Lowy report acknowledges that the process of building trust, confidence and institutions to support regional stability will be difficult for many reasons, including history, territorial differences, nationalism, resource pressures and the changing strategic balance.

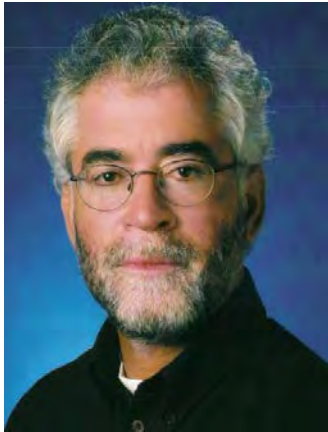
Dr Leonid A. Petrov, Lecturer in Korean Studies at the University of Sydney says: "To deal with Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) successfully we must remember and understand Cold War history and its consequences for the region. The reality of the inter-Korean conflict must be taken into account while engaging in dialogue or cooperation. The Korean War has never ended, and as long as regional powers help one side of the divided Korea and bully the other, the division of Korea will continue." □

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France's Fuzzy Face

By Julio Godoy

PARIS – If you ask the French ministry for foreign affairs about the country's position on a Middle East free of nuclear weapons, the spokesperson will surely refer you to the statements by the French ambassadors before the UN both in New York and Geneva, and will repeat that France supports the global application of the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT).



Indeed, France has since the mid 1990s officially supported the objectives of the resolutions adopted by the Review Conference of the Parties to the NPT, in particular those referring to the creation of a nuclear-weapons free zone (NWFZ) in the Middle East, and openly calls for the implementation of the conference's specific resolution of 1995.

But when it comes down to the facts, this apparently solid French position turns out to be a mere lip service to the cause of a NWFZ in the Middle East, in particular if the project questions Israel's nuclear weapons policy, and asks the Jewish state to subscribe to the mentioned resolution.

The French fuzzy face on freeing the Middle East of nuclear weapons became evident as late as May 2010, when the Israeli government of Benjamin Netanyahu called the bid for a NWFZ in the region "hypocritical" and "deeply flawed". At the time, the Israeli government was reacting to endorsement by the 189 country members of the NPT of an agreement to free the Middle East of all nuclear weapons.

Israel, which has not signed the NPT, dismissed the document as "ignore(ing) the realities of the Middle East and the real threats facing the region and the entire world. Given the distorted nature of this resolution, Israel will not be able to take part in its implementation."

France, a member of the UN Security Council and itself a nuclear power, did not react to the blunt Israeli rejection.

The double-faced French strategy had been already clear since at least 2005, when Francois Rivasseau, then French permanent representative to the UN conference on disarmament in Geneva, accused Iran of triggering "the proliferation crisis" with "its clandestine programme" during that year's review conference. On the same occasion, however, Rivasseau had simply called "desirable" that the conference "through dialogue, bring(s) India, Israel and Pakistan to come as close as possible to international standards for non-proliferation and export controls."

All these three countries possess a large nuclear weapons arsenal. That such dialogue never prevented Israel to pile at least 210 nuclear warheads – more than India and Pakistan together – seems to have gone unnoticed in the French government's bureaux.

It is then no surprise to find no French contribution worth a mention to the present debate on the Middle East, other than

repeating the condemnations of the alleged Iranian nuclear weapons programme. On November 9, 2011 foreign minister Alain Juppé said that the allegations formulated then by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) "increases France's deep concern with regard to Iran's nuclear programme."

Juppé added: "We must move to the next level with regard to increasing diplomatic pressure on Iran. If Iran refuses to meet the requests of the international community, and refuses all serious cooperation, we are ready to adopt, with the support of the international community, sanctions of an unprecedented scale."

Juppé never criticised the Israeli nuclear weapons policy or the Israeli rejection of a global summit on the NWFZ in the Middle East.

This double standard, which is typical for most of the European Union, has led foreign relations experts to question the wisdom and the honesty of the French policy on the matter.

As Jean-Marie Collin, director of the French bureau of Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament (PNND) says, "contrary to what (the government in) France would like us to believe, the agenda and debates on nuclear disarmament did not stop on May 2010, with the last reunion of the (review conference of the) NPT."

Collin recalled that both the UN and the civil society organisations "continue to carry forward their duties to reach a world free of nuclear weapons." Among other developments, Collin underlined the campaign for the Middle East, and in particular "the nomination of the Finnish mediator Jaakko Laajava, deputy minister of foreign affairs."

However, Collin pointed out that, for all its government's words, "France remains an outsider in the politics of nuclear disarmament."

While the government in Paris does not stand up to its words, French civil society groups show real concern of the likely proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, in particular of nuclear warheads, in the Middle East. The National Federation of former Deported, Prisoners of war, Members of the Resistance, and Patriots (FNDIRP, for its French name), a pacifist group, released this January a communiqué denouncing the Israeli preparations of war against Iran.

On the one hand, the FNDIRP recalled that Iran is signatory member of the NPT, and that it has repeatedly vowed to use nuclear technology for civil purposes alone. On the other hand, the group argued that an Israeli military intervention against Iran would trigger a war of "unforeseeable consequences" in the whole region.

Additionally, the group also called attention upon "the uncertain efficacy of such an attack" to stop the Iranian nuclear research programmes. ➡



French nuclear-powered aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle and the American nuclear-powered carrier USS Enterprise (left), carrying nuclear-capable fighter aircraft.

The FNDIRP also insisted on the need to fully implement the NPT in the Middle East and called the debates within the framework of the United Nations "a most useful enterprise." It urged Israel, Iran, and all other countries of the region "to implement, within the UN framework, the measures necessary . . . contributing to(ward) create(ing) a denuclearised zone in the Middle East, which would bring about peace and security for all the countries of the region."

Such appeals are likely to remain wishful thinking, prognosticate French and Swiss foreign affairs experts.

Analysts at the Centre for Security Studies (CSS) of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich are of the view that "structural factors render any prospect for (Middle East nuclear) disarmament premature."

In a paper programmatically titled "Nuclear Weapons in the Middle East: Here to stay", CSS expert Liviu Horovitz pointed out that "for Israel, the abolition of nuclear weapons appears neither necessary nor desirable." On the other hand, Horovitz said, "resolving Iran's nuclear file remains paramount, but a solution is not in sight."

For these two reasons, and considering other existing dynamics in the Middle East, Horovitz foresees that "the most plausible future regional developments are unlikely to encourage disarmament steps."

"More probable," Horovitz added, "holding the existing state of affairs will prove challenging enough."

In the paper, Horovitz recalls that the concept of NWFZs goes back to a Polish plan in the 1950s focused on Central Europe. "While this initiative was never finalised, five other zones have by now been negotiated," Horovitz said. "Within the Middle East,

after Israel's acquisition of nuclear weapons during the 1960s, regional actors led by Egypt and Iran endeavoured to increase their diplomatic leverage by calling for a NWFZ."

The present momentum for the creation of the NWFZ in the Middle East was given by the so called Action Plan adopted in 2010 by the review conference of the NPT. In this plan, the member states agreed to mandate the United Nations, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States to consult with countries in the region and convene a meeting in 2012 "on the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction."

Horovitz added that the present political schedule is bound to undermine the meeting, to take place in Finland. "Washington, concerned with this year's domestic presidential election, wants a short meeting involving the participation of all countries of the Middle East, comprising a broad exchange of views, and requiring consensus decisions, especially in regard to any follow-up actions," Horovitz cautioned.

Furthermore, Horovitz recalled that the next NPT review conference, due to take place in 2015 is not far away: it can give "spoilers, like Iran or Syria, a strong incentive and a unique opportunity to divert attention from their own NPT compliance issues. Thus, the best possible outcome appears to be a well-managed but inconsequential diplomatic event that successfully avoids additional hardening of positions and thus long-term harm to the broader regime."

Thus, Horovitz concluded, "it is safe to say that the expectations (for a NWFZ) are very low." □



hyperbolicdiarrhea.wordpress.comQuietly

Quietly China Increases Defence Spending

By Devinder Kumar

NEW DELHI - Amid little fanfare and just ahead of the opening of the National People's Congress (NPC), China announced its draft defence budget for 2012 on March 4. At 670.2 billion Yuan (US\$106.4 billion) it represents an 11.2 per cent increase from last year's budget figures of 602.6 billion Yuan.

Li Zhaoxing, spokesperson for the NPC, the country's highest legislative body, was quick to declare that the budget was 1.28 per cent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP), down from 1.33 per cent in 2008; and that the year-on-year increase of 11.2 per cent was much less than the 12.7 per cent increase from 2010.

Li also noted that China's budget was "reasonable and appropriate", and assured that "China is committed to the path of peaceful development and follows a national defence policy that is defensive in nature."

According to analysts, this was clearly an attempt to put to rest any fears that China may be raising the bar on its military spending with the intent of announcing its growing military prowess on the world stage. Reasserting China's peaceful intentions, Li concluded:

"The limited military strength of China is solely for safeguarding its national sovereignty and territorial integrity, and will not pose a threat to any country."

An assessment of the budget, however, seems to suggest otherwise, maintains an Issue Brief by the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA) in New Delhi. China's defence budget has seen a double digit increase over the last decade, in keeping with its quest to develop a military capable of fighting "local wars under conditions of informationalisation".

This was apparent in Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao's opening day address to the 11th NPC where he said that China must enhance its military ability to win "local wars" even as there were growing concerns over the country's assertiveness in the South China Sea, Indian Ocean Region, and in the Arunachal Pradesh border dispute with India.

Defending the budget allocation, Major General Luo Yuan, a researcher with the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) Military Science Academy, said that China has always maintained its defence spending at a "moderate and sufficient level". "Moderate" means China will not raise its military spending merely for the purpose of boosting scale, while "sufficient" means the

spending has to meet necessary demand for national defence, comments IDSA. Its analysts refer to the Xinhua, the official Chinese news agency, which said that the three implications of China's rising budget were "adherence to its central task – economic development", a display of the "government's confidence in coping with its ever more complicated exterior environment", and an "explicit message that China is adamant in maintaining the national security and global peace".

"Quite clearly, (this is) a veiled implication of intent to deal with security threats vigorously," avers an analysis by Brig Mandip Singh, Senior Fellow at the IDSA, and Lalit Kumar, a senior corporate executive and international management consultant.

Understanding the Defence Budget

According to the IDSA analysis, China's defence white papers have always linked the defence budget to its economy. "In a sense, it sanctifies the relationship between the PLA and the Chinese Communist Party (CPC) – clearly the PLA being subservient to the Party. The PLA does not break down its budget by individual service.

However, the Central Military Commission, four General Headquarters Departments, Navy, Air Force, Second Artillery, National Defence University, Academy of Military Sciences, and the National University of Defence Technology – known as "major commands" – all have their own budgets which are allocated from the overall defence budget.

China's defence budget covers the following categories:

- Personnel expenses, mainly covering salaries, insurance, food, clothing, and welfare benefits for officers, non-commissioned officers, and enlisted men as well as for civilian employees.
- Training and maintenance expenses, which cover troop training, institutional education, construction and maintenance of installations and facilities, and other expenses on routine consumables.
- Equipment expenses, covering research on, experimentation with, and procurement, maintenance, transportation, and storage, of weaponry and equipment.

The accurate percentages spent on each of these categories vary but are generally between 31 per cent and 36 per cent each, IDSA analysts say. In 2009, more than 96 per cent of the total budget was spent on the active force and just three per cent and one per cent on the militia and reserve force, respectively. These figures could serve as a guideline for the breakdown in the budget expenditures for the future, they add.

The process of making the budget is an annual, time-bound exercise. It has been called the "down-up-down" approach where the General Logistics Department (GLD) of the PLA first works with the Central Military Commission (CMC) and the Ministry of Finance to establish total expenditure targets, and then initiates a bidding system from the lower military region (MR) and district-level headquarters.

These are then put together to reach the final expenditure figures for the central defence budget. Once approved, these are then disseminated down to Military Region/district level.

What Does the Defence Budget Exclude?

Though the level of transparency in the Chinese defence budgets has been improving over the years, it is still not fully transpar-

ent, IDSA analysts say. But considering the fact that prior to 1998 China simply released an aggregate figure of total defence spending, the country has come a long way.

In fact, since 1998, China has been publishing biennial National Defence Papers which cover the defence budget in some detail; and since 2008, it submits a "Simplified Reporting Form" to the UN Secretary General, giving basic information about its military expenditure.

Willy Lam, a leading China expert at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, says that "funding for modernizing the country's military was not included in the published budget."

According to The Guardian, foreign defence experts say the budget may be 50 per cent higher as China excludes outlays for its nuclear missiles and other programmes.

A 2005 RAND report identifies those items not included more accurately: procurement of weapons from abroad, expenses for paramilitaries, nuclear weapons and strategic rocket programmes, state subsidies for the military-industrial complex, some military-related research and development, and extra-budget revenue.

Provincial governments also fund the PLA deployed within their provinces, IDSA analysts say. These include payments for the use of airbases and naval bases, which are not reflected in the defence budget. The other major exclusion in the Budget is the proceeds from the sale of weapons and equipment manufactured at the armament factories owned by the PLA.

Extra Budgetary Income

The IDSA analysis points out that sources of extra-budgetary income are many but difficult to evaluate as they vary from year to year. Besides, insufficient data precludes applying a standard factor for addition. This still remains in the realm of conjecture. Listed below are some inferences:

- Funds from Central/Provincial governments for mobilisation, conscription and demobilisation;
- Sale of land;
- Food produced and consumed by PLA units including their sale;
- Commercial guest houses, hotels, troop service centres and China XinXing Corporation, the largest commercial conglomerate of the General Logistics Department.

According to SIPRI, an analysis of military expenditure in the last decade suggests that China has increased its spending by a whopping 256 per cent in comparison to, say, India which has done so by 60 per cent. As a percentage of its GDP, China spends 2.2 per cent to India's 2.8 per cent, according to 2010 figures, but the per capita expenditure on defence for China is a whopping \$88 as compared to India's \$34 and Pakistan's \$31.

In a report, IHS Jane's stated that by 2015, China's defence budget will double from \$119.8 billion to \$238.2 billion, thus closing the gap with the US, which actually imposing cuts on its defence spending. Interestingly, the figure of 670.2 billion Yuan announced by NPC spokesperson at the press conference on March 4, 2012, is at variance with that placed before the NPC – reportedly 650.311 billion Yuan – endorsed by that body on March 14, 2012. □



Tibetan protester | gorkhacreed.com

Nobody Bothers If a Tibetan Burns Himself

By R. S. Kalha*

NEW DELHI - When most people in India saw Jamphel Yeshe, a young 27-year old Tibetan, setting himself on fire – on March 26, 2012 – to protest the arrival in India of the Chinese leader Hu Jintao, they could not but have pondered over the sad fate that has befallen a forgotten people.

Born in Tibet but living in India, Jamphel Yeshe was an activist with the Tibetan Youth Organisation who, before self-immolating, left a poignant and a heart rending hand written note. Yeshe wrote: "The fact that the Tibetan people are setting themselves on fire in this 21st Century is to let the world know about their suffering."

Yeshe is not alone in this regard; the number of Tibetan self-immolations in China has crossed over thirty. But is the world listening?

Predictably, as if on cue, the Chinese authorities put the blame on the Dalai Lama. The Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hong Lei accused the Dalai Lama of "masterminding" the series of self-immolations and blandly asserted that "the Dalai group is sparing no efforts to incite Tibetan independence activities by creating various troubles."

Predictably also, the Chinese officials "complimented" the Indian authorities for their "handling" of the situation. Apart from officials, not many in India would be enthused to receive such a compliment!

And yet the Chinese refuse to take a second look at what is actually causing such unrest in Tibet. Areas inhabited by Tibetans are under harsh security cover. Many new road check points have been built and they are manned by heavily armed Para-Military

Police wearing flak jackets and often carrying small fire extinguishers.

The Chinese have also instituted "monastic management" plans in order to control religious life. About 21,000 Chinese officials have been deployed to "befriend" Tibetan monks and dossiers have been created on most of the latter. Compliant clergy are rewarded with extra health care benefits, pensions, television sets and other facilities. In addition, over a million national flags and Mao portraits have been distributed; monasteries have to compulsorily hang Mao portraits. Such heavy handedness is causing great disaffection amongst the general Tibetan population.

The Tibetans are a gentle people. Before Buddhism arrived in Tibet from India during the 11th century, the Tibetans were animist by religion, savage by nature and revelled in military exploits. Buddhism changed all that for it preaches against killing any living being and the Tibetans, being avid followers of the Buddha, became gentle by nature. Soldiers faded away and Tibet thereafter never threatened anyone.

There is the Tibetan belief that Tibet is a special land protected by the Buddha. Tibet had a unique gentle civilisation that meant no harm to anyone. As the Tashi Lama was reported to have once said, ☺

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"We know nothing and we do nothing, but read and pray." Although Tibet's ethnic boundaries have often not been congruous with its political boundaries, Tibet is surrounded by two countries only; namely India and China.

Sadly for the Tibetans, apart from human rights activists, no country has spoken up for them or for their obvious suffering. When a Tunisian street vendor Mohamed Bouazizi self-immolated in Tunis on December 17, 2010, he actually helped launch the so-called "Arab Spring" which led to widespread changes in the Arab World.

Unfortunately for Jamphel Yeshe, nothing similar seems to have happened in Tibet. Even when the Chinese occupied Tibet in 1950 and the Tibetans took their case to the UN, no major country including Nehru's India supported their case. It took little El Salvador in far-away Latin America to sponsor a hearing for the Tibetans at the UN, but which eventually petered out. Led by the UK and India even the UN was disinclined to recommend any action.

While most are demonstrably anxious about the goings on in Syria and critical of the killings of innocent civilians there, as they are of the blood bath that followed the defeat of the LTTE in Sri Lanka, few if any are prepared to shed a tear for the hapless Tibetans. Even the UN Human Rights Council has failed to act and the UN Human Rights Commissioner, the South African Navi Pillay, so alert on the Syrian issue, has failed to notice any human rights violation.

The reasons are not far to seek. No one wishes to annoy the Chinese. The People's Republic of China is a permanent member of the UN Security Council. It is the second largest economy in the world after the United States.

The Chinese market is indeed a very valuable one. Its military power is growing steadily, as is its huge expenditure on defence. Recently the US was pushed into taking a review of its military posture to meet the growing Chinese military strength. The review, as approved by President Obama, underlines the fact that

the emergence of China as a military and economic power has indeed become a "contentious" issue. Unfortunately for the Chinese, they were bracketed in the same paragraph as the "threat" from Iran.

There is no doubt in the minds of US policy planners that in the long term, China's emergence as a regional power will have the "potential" to affect the US economy and security in a "variety of ways". While recognising that the two countries have a stake in the maintenance of peace and stability in East Asia and in building a "co-operative" relationship, the review demanded that China must "clarify its strategic intentions" in order to avoid friction in the region.

What was left unsaid was whether China would "co-operate" with the US as it pursues its policies in the region or adopt a strategic profile hostile to US interests. Perhaps that was the meaning of the phrase, "clarifying its strategic intentions". Thus it was clear that a dual track US policy has emerged from the review. The US will continue to work with China and at the same time keep a wary eye on its "intentions".

Meanwhile the unsaid US Administration policy would be that nothing should be done to unnecessarily rile the Chinese. To be fair, however, the US Senate has taken the lead and passed a bipartisan resolution that "mourns the death of Tibetans who have self-immolated and deplores repressive policies that target the Tibetans."

However, all is not lost for the Tibetans. With the evolution of the new media and social networking websites such as Twitter and Face book, the suffering of the Tibetans is now known worldwide. Millions all over the world who saw the self-immolation of Jamphel Yeshe could not but have failed to be moved at the gruesome sight and at the plight of the hapless Tibetans. As more such self-immolations take place, the revulsion for Chinese policies in Tibet will grow exponentially. It is time for the Chinese leadership to take note. □

While most are demonstrably anxious about the goings on in Syria and critical of the killings of innocent civilians there, as they are of the blood bath that followed the defeat of the LTTE in Sri Lanka, few if any are prepared to shed a tear for the hapless Tibetans. Even the UN Human Rights Council has failed to act and the UN Human Rights Commissioner, the South African Navi Pillay, so alert on the Syrian issue, has failed to notice any human rights violation.

Green Economy is Not Always Green

By Richard Johnson

GENEVA - The round of informal negotiations from April 23 to May 4 on the outcome document of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) failed to reach consensus on a global plan of action, titled "The Future We Want," to be adopted by a summit meeting of world leaders mid-June in Brazil.



Brazil's CURITIBA-Green City | Credit: UNEP

This is by no means surprising. The first round of talks on the so-called zero draft outcome document from March 19 to 27 in New York too saw a clear divide among developing and developed countries on several key areas.

These included the green economy, the institutional framework for sustainable development, sustainable development goals and the means of implementation.

According to Meena Raman, a senior advisor of The Third World Network, negotiations so far have shown that developed countries are opposed to proposals by the Group of 77 and China (G77), which contain specific references to the Rio principle 7 of "common but differentiated responsibilities" (CBDR) in several parts of the outcome document. They did not want that principle to be singled out and given particular emphasis, and preferred a general reference to all the Rio principles in the beginning of the outcome document.

The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development adopted at the June 1992 UN summit is the internationally agreed set of principles for sustainable development, and was the outcome of intense negotiations.

In response to the developed countries' resistance, the G77 reiterated that while it supported all the Rio principles, there was an appropriate place and context for the reference to the CBDR principle in specific parts of the draft outcome document.

The 206-page compilation text of the document that now includes proposals and amendments by Member States is comprised of five chapters: preamble/stage setting; renewing political commitment; green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication; institutional framework for sustainable development (IFSD); and framework for action and follow-up including Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and

means of implementation such as finance, access to and transfer of technology, and capacity building.

In a paper for the South Centre Bulletin, Meena Raman analyses some of the key areas of the divide among the Member States.

On the 'Green Economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication', the G77 proposed the insertion of several introductory paragraphs saying that these are necessary to address the context for the green economy.

The G77 wanted a reaffirmation "...that market-based growth strategies are insufficient by themselves to ensure equitable economic growth and to solve the problem of widespread poverty, to provide adequate health care, education, full employment and decent work for all and to reduce inequality and promote social development and inclusion."

The US, Canada, Japan and New Zealand in response wanted a positive tone expressed instead of having a negative start to the chapter, writes Raman.

The G77 proposals also called for reforms in global economic governance, including in the financial system and architecture and the need to continue to work towards a new international economic order.

These proposals were opposed by developed countries (the US, Canada, Japan, the European Union and New Zealand) who called for its deletion. The US said that these issues were "off topic" and that there was need to "maintain focus on sustainable development", a sentiment shared by the other developed countries.

The detailed proposal of the G77 in this regard is as follows, writes Raman:

"We reaffirm that the current major challenge for developing countries is the impact from the multiple crises affecting the world today, particularly the ongoing economic and financial crisis, as a result of the deficiency of the international financial system."

In this context, the G77 wanted a reaffirmation of "the urgent need to address the lack of proper regulation and monitoring of the financial sector, the overall lack of transparency and financial integrity, excessive risk taking, overleveraging and unsustainable patterns of consumption and production in developed countries."

A further proposal by G77 states:

"We are convinced that sustained and widespread prosperity will require major reforms in global economic governance, including the reform of the global financial system and architecture, along with the renewed commitment to sustainable development to balance material wealth improvements with the protection of the natural resources and ecosystems and to ensure equity and justice." ➡

The G77 also proposed that "sustainable development must remain our overarching goal." It further proposed that member states "...view green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication as one of the tools to achieving sustainable development. In this regard, we emphasize the need for each State to assess and consider related opportunities, challenges and risks as well as the means of implementation needed. It should foster integration of the three pillars of sustainable development and not be a rigid set of rules, but provide options for policy making."

The G77 further proposed: "Green economy policies in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication should be developed with respect to the right to development of each country while allowing for the eradication of poverty and hunger, the achievement of social equity while reducing inequalities, and reducing environmental degradation with a view to re-establish harmony with nature."

"At the same time, it is vital to promote sustainable development models in order to encourage changing the unsustainable consumption and production patterns. These efforts should be supported by an effective international cooperation through technology transfer, capacity building and financial resources on favourable terms, in accordance with the commitments made at the major United Nations Conferences and Summits on sustainable development."

The US and Japan wanted the "right to development" bracketed while the EU, New Zealand, Switzerland, US and Canada called for deletion of the last sentence in the above paragraph relating to international cooperation on technology transfer, capacity building and financial resources.

Another G77 proposal to address the challenges faced by developing countries in the adoption of green economy policies was also opposed by the EU, Japan, US, Switzerland and New Zealand.

The G77 proposed: "We acknowledge that developing countries are facing great challenges in eradicating poverty and achieving sustainable development. The adoption of green economy policies may result in risks, challenges and additional costs to the economies of developing countries."

Such challenges and risks should be duly considered by countries in accordance with their priorities and at their own pace. In this regard, developing countries' efforts should be supported by adequate means of implementation by developed countries, including new and additional financial, technical and technological assistance, such as the transfer of environmentally-sound and state of the art technology, as well as capacity building."

The G77 also made further proposals "...to recognise and respect the existence of different approaches, visions, models, policies and tools, sovereignly decided by each country, in order to achieve sustainable development and poverty eradication in an integrated manner including the three pillars."

It wanted to emphasize "that green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication should be in strict accordance with national objectives, social, economic, and environmental development policies and the attainment of internationally agreed sustainable development commitments, including the MDGs (Millennium Development Goals)."

The G77 further called for the "need to foster better understanding of the social, environmental and economic implications and impacts of green economy and for international support and cooperation, including of the UN system, to facilitate the achievement of sustainable development, through different nationally defined visions, models, policies, tools and approaches, including green economy, while recognizing that no one-size-fits-all solution to sustainable development."

On the issue of what the green economy policies must not do, the G77 wanted such policies not to:

(a) create trade barriers or any form of protectionism, unilateral measures or other border trade measures, consistent with principle 12 of the Rio Declaration on environment and development;

(b) generate conditionalities in the areas of financing, ODA (official development assistance) and other forms of international cooperation ;

(c) widen technology gaps or exacerbate technological dependence of developing countries on developed countries;

(d) restrict the policy space for developing countries to pursue their own paths to sustainable development, inter alia by imposing additional mandatory and/or legally binding commitments on developing countries;

(e) endanger the development of indigenous people and local communities, their cultural heritage and traditional knowledge, including those of minor ethnic groups;

(f) increase inequality and endanger the development and advancement of women, youth, children and disabled people;

(g) represent a pretext for developed countries to renege on past commitments;

(h) limit the livelihoods of small and subsistence farmers, fishermen and those working in small and medium enterprises and

(i) restrict productive activities in developing countries that are key for eradicating poverty.

Developed countries in general were not in favour of several of the proposals above and wanted their deletion, writes Raman.

The EU also proposed the establishment of "a global green economy roadmap, with deadlines for specific goals, objectives and concrete actions at the international level in a specific number of crosscutting and thematic areas." This proposal was not agreed to by Canada, the US, and New Zealand. □

"... green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication should be in strict accordance with national objectives, social, economic, and environmental development policies and the attainment of internationally agreed sustainable development commitments, including the MDGs (Millennium Development Goals)."

'We Need Transformational Change'

By Daniel Mittler*

BERLIN - Almost twenty years after the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro we know solutions are available and affordable, that investments in clean technologies are rising, that deforestation can be stopped, and food provided for all if governments have the will. We also know development in both North and South remains deeply unsustainable.



Today, a fair Green Economy is achievable, if governments and businesses act urgently – and if we change the way we govern resources globally. Promoting sustainable practices is essential. But, above all, governments must put a decisive end to unsustainable practises. An economy based on nuclear energy, oil and coal, genetic engineering,

toxic chemicals or the overexploitation of our forests and seas will never be green.

A fair green economy worth fighting for provides sustainable livelihoods for all while fully respecting ecological limits – our planetary boundaries. In such a truly Green Economy, the economy will be a mechanism to deliver societal goals, and economic growth as an end goal in and of itself will be abandoned.

The transformation we need is taking place too slowly, but the good news is, it is already proven. Brazil, for example, has shown that it is possible to cut deforestation rates through effective governance and good business practices:

Deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon has declined year on year; 2011 it was at its lowest ever level. But unless President Dilma vetoes it, Brazil will soon adopt changes to its Forest Code, the main law in Brazil that protects forests, that would allow an amnesty for past forest crimes and lead to an increase in deforestation. This is unacceptable.

To be a credible Rio Earth Summit host this year, President Dilma must veto the forest code changes. Brazil must decide whether it wants to be a leader on the path to sustainable prosperity by choosing zero deforestation, or wants to be known as a nation that showed that deforestation could be halted, but failed to do so purely to serve short term private interests.

The energy future we need is efficient and renewable. In Germany, 81% of all installed power capacity in the last decade was renewable! The Energy Revolution scenario Greenpeace has developed together with business partners shows that globally we can deliver energy to more people, especially the poor in developing countries, cut emissions by more than 80% by 2050 – and create more jobs doing so, by investing in energy efficiency and renewable energy instead of fossil fuels and nuclear power.

By implementing the Energy Revolution, governments can help businesses create 3.2 million more jobs by 2030 in the global power supply sector alone. In South Africa 149,000 direct jobs

could be created by 2030, 38,000 more than the current government's plan. That's the kind of decisive action, leading to wins for planet and the poor alike that Rio should deliver.

The future we need must put an end to overfishing and ensure that 40% of the world's oceans have been turned into marine reserves. At Rio, governments have the chance to finally get serious about protecting the High Seas, which are currently being plundered in Wild West style. They must launch immediate negotiations for a High Seas Biodiversity agreement (also known as an implementing agreement under UNCLOS).

Deforestation in Brazil or the over-exploitation of the High Seas are strong reminders that what we urgently need is better governance of the environment, globally. Governments must put the regulations in place that are needed for the public good and give the institutions tasked to implement these regulations the tools to do so. It's simple, but it does mean changing some fundamentals in the way we govern our planet.

As an urgent first step we need to upgrade the UN Environment Programme to specialized agency status. Sustainable development governance needs a global authority on the environment, which should have much enhanced implementation, compliance and enforcement mechanisms. To complement this, we need global rules on corporate accountability and liability.

At the Johannesburg Earth Summit in 2002, governments acknowledged the need for global rules for global corporations. At Rio 2012, they must agree the development of a global instrument that ensures full liability for any social or environmental damage global corporations cause. Corporations themselves must take full responsibility for their supply chains.

Now is also the time to create strong controls of financial markets and agree on new fiscal instruments, such as a Financial Transaction Tax, that can slow harmful speculation and deliver much needed finance for development and environmental protection.

Much needed money can also be found by agreeing on a phase-out of environmentally and socially harmful subsidies within this decade, including subsidies to fossil fuels, forest destruction, nuclear power, agrochemicals or overfishing.

Tinkering at the edges is not good enough, as the Global Sustainability Panel has stated. We need transformational change. Will Rio deliver?

*Daniel Mittler is Political Director of Greenpeace International. This article first appeared in unep.org under the title 'The Future We Need: fair, just, green, well-governed'. □

The future we need must put an end to overfishing and ensure that 40% of the world's oceans have been turned into marine reserves.

Creating Resilient Agriculture

By Gordon Conway*

LONDON - Food security is critical to the mission of Rio+20. The threats are numerous: repeated food price spikes; shortages of good-quality land and water; rising energy energy and fertiliser prices; and the consequences of climate change.

Already, somewhere between 900 million and a billion people are chronically hungry, and by 2050 agriculture will have to cope with these threats while feeding a growing population with changing dietary demands. This will require doubling food production, especially if we are to build up reserves for climatic extremes. To do this requires sustainable intensification – getting more from less – on a durable basis.

Farmers around the world will need to produce more food and other agricultural products on less land, with fewer pesticides and fertilisers, less water and lower outputs of greenhouse gases. This must be done on a large scale, and more cheaply than current farming methods allow. It will also have to be sustainable – that is, it must last. For this to happen, the intensification will have to be resilient.

The latest report of the expert Montpellier Panel, lays out a vision of agricultural growth for Sub-Saharan Africa that is resilient – able to withstand or recover from stresses and shocks. The report makes specific recommendations around resilient agriculture, resilient people and resilient markets.

Developing resilient agriculture will require technologies and practices that build on agro-ecological knowledge and enable smallholder farmers to counter environmental degradation and climate change in ways that maintain sustainable agricultural growth. Examples include various forms of mixed cropping that enable more efficient use and cycling of soil nutrients, conservation farming, microdosing of fertilisers and herbicides, and integrated pest management.

These are proven technologies that draw on ecological principles. Some build on traditional practices, with numerous examples working on a small scale. In Zambia, conservation farming, a system of minimum or no-till agriculture with crop rotations, has reduced water requirements by up to 30% and used new drought-tolerant hybrids to produce up to five tons of maize per hectare – five times the average yield for Sub-Saharan Africa.

The imperative now is scaling up such systems to reach more farmers.

Another solution is to increase the use of modern plant and animal breeding methods, including biotechnology. These have been successful in providing resistance to various pests of maize, sorghum, cowpeas, groundnuts and cotton; to diseases of maize, bananas and livestock. These methods can help build resilience rapidly. We need to combine them with biotechnology-based improvements in yield through improved photosynthesis, nitrogen uptake, resistance to drought and other impacts of climate change.

Agro-ecology and modern breeding methods are not mutually exclusive. Building appropriate, improved crop varieties into ecological agricultural systems can boost both productivity and resilience.

The Montpellier Panel report recommends that governments, the private sector, and non-governmental organisations work together to help develop resilient and sustainable intensification; combat land and water degradation; and build climate-smart agriculture, such as conservation farming.

These partnerships can also build the resilience of people by increasing the reach of successful nutrition interventions and building diverse livelihoods, especially by focusing on rural women and young people. The report particularly recommends taking part in the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) framework that aims to greatly reduce the number children with stunted growth, which stands at roughly 50 million in Sub-Saharan Africa alone.

The report also describes how to achieve resilient markets that enable farmers to increase production, take risks and generate income through innovation while ensuring food is available at an affordable price. Creating grain stores and opening up trade across Africa can reduce food price volatility. The continent also needs more private investments and public-private partnerships that will encourage increased production.

Developing agriculture with resilience depends on science, technology and innovation; but there are no silver bullets. We need strong political leadership. An example is Ghana, where agricultural GDP has risen by 5% each year for the past decade and the Millennium Development Goal of halving hunger by 2015 has already been achieved.

This is a crucial year. The sequence of G8, G20 and Rio+20 meetings provides a ready platform for the international community to coordinate policies and intensify investments. I am optimistic that agricultural development and food security will be priorities, and an agenda based on agricultural growth with resilience will be a key outcome. □



*Gordon Conway is Professor of International Development, The Agriculture for Impact Programme, Imperial College London. This article first appeared in Outreach, a multi-stakeholder publication on climate change and sustainable development produced by Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future.

Sustainable Energy for All is Possible

By Simon Trace*

RUGBY, UK - The Sustainable Energy for All (SE4All) initiative was launched in September 2011 by the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon. The three key objectives of the initiative, to be achieved by 2030, are:

- Ensuring universal access to modern energy services
- Doubling the global rate of improvement in energy efficiency
- Doubling the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix



For the past seven months, a High Level Group, nominated by the Secretary General, have been trying to convert the vision into a programme of action that could be endorsed and built upon at Rio+20 from June 20 to June 22, 2012. (The Group is co-chaired by Kandeh Yumkella, Chair of UN-Energy, and Director-General, United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO), and Charles Holliday, Chairman, Bank of America.)

To this end, a series of events have seen the initiative start to gather momentum, including a high level energy summit in Brussels (April 16, 2012) at which the President of the European Commission, Jose Manuel Barroso, announced the Commission's intention to support 500 million people getting access to modern energy supplies by 2030. The German Government added a pledge to finance the expansion of services to a further 100 million by the same date.

On April 27, the SE4All High Level Group met in the margins of the Clean Energy Ministerial meeting hosted in London by the UK Government. Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg and Secretary of State for International Development, Andrew Mitchell, addressed the group and made their own modest pledge of a further £25 to £50 million to support access to renewable energy supplies in the developing world.

The High Level Group also met with civil society for a consultation on the initiative on April 25, which was hosted by international NGOs Practical Action, ONE and Christian Aid. Six of the members, led by Helen Clark, ex-Prime Minister of New Zealand and current head of UNDP, met with around 60 representatives from environmental and development NGOs in London, to exchange views on the initiative and explore the role for civil society in the project.

There was almost universal agreement amongst the civil society organisations present that the goal of universal energy access is

progress in itself and that the initiative taken by the UN Secretary General to promote this – and the issues of renewables and energy efficiency – in the political agenda, is to be welcomed.

However, areas of concern for NGOs do remain. Among environmental NGOs, there is a sense that the goals for energy efficiency and renewables are not ambitious enough and may be out of line with the goal of keeping global warming within 2°C (although a forthcoming Global Energy Assessment report by the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis is expected to conclude that the three goals are consistent with a pathway towards 2°C, but would require further action between 2030 and 2050, such as the introduction of rigorous carbon pricing, to complete the job).

There is also an issue around the 'technology neutral' stance that the initiative has taken and whether the unintended consequence of this will be to allow contested technologies such as nuclear, biofuels and large scale hydropower to be promoted as sustainable alongside other, less controversial, technologies.

Finally, there is a sense amongst NGOs that the High Level Group has so far put too much emphasis on the role of large scale private sector actors. Whilst it is not disputed that without private capital and expertise the goals are unachievable, there is concern that the part of national governments, civil society and small scale social enterprises have not been given enough emphasis and that their voices have not been heard sufficiently to date. NGOs argue that without their fuller inclusion in the process, the long term success of the initiative is in doubt.

The panel accepted the notion that goals could be more ambitious and consultations more inclusive, but argued that the process to date had been dictated by the pace and politics necessary to try to force the issue onto the Rio+20 agenda, an outcome that is by no means assured.

The event concluded by looking at better mechanisms for the High Level Group to engage with civil society and national governments in the developing world, which were seen as a prerequisite for future progress. And, for some, the lack of clarity on the science behind the energy efficiency and renewables goals, together with the technology neutral stance, will remain an obstacle.

*Simon Trace is CEO of Practical Action, which uses technology to challenge poverty, working with poor women and men around the world. □

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Poor Sanitation is a Costly Menace to Africa

By J C Suresh

TORONTO - Poor sanitation is not only a menace to public health, but also a roadblock to sustainable development and a huge strain on financial resources, according to a new World Bank study. A report by the Bank's Water and Sanitation Program (WSP) finds that poor sanitation is causing a loss of US\$5.5 billion every year to 18 African countries.

That estimated loss in turn adds up to annual economic damages between 1 percent and 2.5 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Farmers around the world will need to produce more food and other agricultural products on less land, with fewer pesticides and fertilisers, less water and lower outputs of greenhouse gases.

This must be done on a large scale, and more cheaply than current farming methods allow. It will also have to be sustainable – that is, it must last. For this to happen, the intensification will have to be resilient.

WSP is a multi-donor partnership administered by the World Bank to support poor people in obtaining affordable, safe and sustainable access to water and sanitation services.

WSP's donors include Australia, Austria, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States, and the World Bank.

"The 18 African countries represented in this study account for 554 million people – that's more than half of Africa's population," says WSP Manager Jaehyang So. "This is powerful evidence for Ministers that their countries will not be able to grow sustainably without addressing these costs," adds So.

The study surveyed Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Kenya, Republic of Congo, Liberia, Madagascar, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia

Titled Economic Impacts of Poor Sanitation in Africa, the report found that a lion's share of the costs to production comes from annual premature deaths, including children under the age of five, due to diarrheal disease. Nearly 90 percent of these deaths are directly attributable to poor water, sanitation, and hygiene.

Other significant costs were productivity losses from poor sanitation, and time lost through the practice of open defecation.

The significance of the report lies in the fact that traditionally, sanitation has not received the priority it deserves. It has not been widely recognized how good sanitation policies and practices can underpin socio-economic development and environmental protection.

This study provides an estimation of economic impacts on populations without access to improved sanitation in order to provide information on the losses to society of the current sanitation situation. While not all these economic impacts can be immediately recovered from improved sanitation practices, the report provides a perspective on the short- and longer-term economic gains that are available to countries through a range of policies to mitigate these impacts.

"Adverse impacts of inadequate sanitation that are likely to be significant, but difficult and expensive to estimate, include the costs of epidemic outbreaks; losses in trade and tourism revenue;

impact of unsafe excreta disposal on water resources; and the long-term effects of poor sanitation on early childhood development," said the World Bank in a press release on April 16, 2012.

The Africa country reports, part of the Economics of Sanitation Initiative (ESI) launched initially in East Asia in 2007, also found that open defecation alone accounts for almost US\$2 billion in annual losses in the 18 countries.

Lacking alternatives, more than 114 million people still defecate in the open in the 18 countries surveyed; this is about half the number of people on the continent who have no latrine at all and almost 24 percent of the total population in the countries surveyed.

Eliminating the practice of open defecation in these countries would require about 23 million toilets to be built and used, according to the report. Open defecation costs more per person than any other type of unimproved sanitation. Time lost to finding a discrete location to use the toilet accounted for almost US\$500 million in economic losses. Women shoulder a huge proportion of this cost as they spend additional time accompanying young children or sick or elderly relatives.

Human dignity

"Water and sanitation go hand-in-hand with human dignity. Our study finds that the heaviest burden of poor sanitation falls on poor people," says Jamal Saghir, World Bank Director for Sustainable Development in the Africa Region. "These findings make an irresistible case for greater investment in sanitation while removing the barriers to better sanitation services. Now is the time to tackle this urgent development priority once and for all."

In most countries, current investments in sanitation are less than 0.1 percent of GDP. Only five of the 18 African countries surveyed invest between 0.1 percent and 0.5 percent of GDP in sanitation. Although African countries committed to increase their budgetary allocations for sanitation to at least 0.5 percent of GDP (eThekweni Declaration, 2008), none of the 18 countries surveyed has reached that target yet.

The study follows release of a separate WSP report on April 15 that said Pakistan loses US\$5.7 billion annually from poor sanitation; and of a WHO/UN-Water report that says while access to water, sanitation and hygiene has considerably improved globally, services coverage could slip behind if adequate resources are not secured to sustain routine operations.

It also comes ahead of the biannual high-level meeting of the Sanitation and Water for All partnership at the Spring Meetings of the IMF and World Bank, where Finance and Water Sector Ministers aim to identify steps to improve the use of existing funds and mobilize new resources for water and sanitation. ➡



The World Bank Group is the largest external financier (US\$7.5 billion in fiscal year 2011) in water supply and sanitation, irrigation and drainage, water resources management, and other

water-related sectors, and provides strong advisory and analytical support to client countries.

Results of Economics of Sanitation Initiative

Following are key findings country-wise.

Benin:

Poor sanitation costs Benin US\$ 104 million per year. This amount is equivalent to US\$ 12 per person per year in Benin, or 1.5% of GDP. Each person practicing open defecation spends almost 2.5 days a year to find a secluded spot to defecate, leading to significant economic losses of US\$21 million

Burkina Faso:

Burkina Faso loses US\$ 171 million per year due to poor sanitation. This amount is equivalent to US\$ 11 per person in Burkina Faso per year or 2% of GDP.

Central African Republic:

The Central African Republic loses US\$ 26 million per year due to poor sanitation. This amount is equivalent to US\$ 5.5 per person per year in Central African Republic, or 1.2% of GDP.

Chad:

Chad loses US\$ 156 million per year due to poor sanitation. This amount is equivalent to US\$ 15 per person in Chad, or 2.1% of national GDP.

Democratic Republic of Congo:

The Democratic Republic of Congo loses US\$ 208 million per year due to poor sanitation. This amount is equivalent to US\$ 3 per person per year in the DRC, or 1.6% of GDP.

The Republic of Congo:

The Republic of Congo loses US\$ 144 million per year due to poor sanitation. This amount is equivalent to US\$ 35.8 per person per year in the Republic of Congo, or 1.1% of national GDP.

Ghana:

Poor sanitation costs Ghana US\$ 290 million. This sum is the equivalent of US\$ 12 per person in Ghana per year or 1.6% of the national GDP.

Kenya:

Poor sanitation costs Kenya US\$ 324 million per year. This sum is the equivalent of US\$ 8 per person in Kenya per year or 0.9% of the national GDP.

Liberia:

Liberia loses US\$ 17.5 million per year due to poor sanitation. This amount is equivalent to US\$ 4.9 per person per year in Liberia per year or 2.0% of the national GDP.

Madagascar:

Madagascar loses US\$ 103 million per year due to poor sanitation. This amount is equivalent to US\$ 5 per person per year in Madagascar, or 1% of GDP.

Mauritania:

Mauritania loses US\$ 41 million per year due to poor sanitation. This amount is equivalent to 13.1 USD per person per year in Mauritania, or 1.2% of GDP.

Mozambique:

Poor sanitation costs Mozambique US\$ 124 million per year. This sum is the equivalent of US\$ 6 per person in Mozambique per year or 1.2% of the national GDP.

Niger:

The Niger loses US\$ 148 million per year due to poor sanitation. This amount is equivalent to US\$ 10 per person per year in Niger, or 2.4% of GDP.

Nigeria:

Poor sanitation costs Nigeria US\$ 3 billion per year. This sum is the equivalent of US\$ 20 per person in Nigeria per year or 1.3% of the national GDP.

Rwanda:

Poor sanitation costs Rwanda US\$ 54 million per year. This sum is the equivalent of US\$ 5 per person in Rwanda per year or 0.9% of the national GDP.

Tanzania:

Poor sanitation costs Tanzania US\$ 206 million each year. This sum is the equivalent of US\$ 5 per person in Tanzania per year or 1% of the national GDP.

Uganda:

Uganda loses US\$ 177 million per year due to poor sanitation. This amount is the equivalent of US\$5.5 per person in Uganda per year or 1.1% of the national GDP.

Zambia:

Zambia loses US\$ 194 million per year due to poor sanitation. This amount is the equivalent of US\$16.4 per person in Zambia per year or 1.3% of the national GDP. □

The Africa country reports, part of the Economics of Sanitation Initiative (ESI) launched initially in East Asia in 2007, also found that open defecation alone accounts for almost US\$2 billion in annual losses in the 18 countries.

Waiting For 'Other Shoe' To Drop

By Ernest Corea

WASHINGTON DC - When will the “other shoe” drop? And how? Will it create a reverberating, equanimity shattering thud? Or will it drop with the muted thump of a toddler’s soft toy falling on a plush rug?

With the election process at the World Bank (the Bank) completed, and Dr. Jim Yong Kim, president of Dartmouth College, confirmed as the institution’s twelfth president, questions like these are now likely to be running through the minds of the Bank’s professional staff. These are the men and women on whose efforts the effectiveness of the Bank depends.

They have lived through many changes, and most of them soldier on, adapting to “new directions” that new presidents have launched. Some have been at the Bank long enough to know that many new presidents feel a compulsive urge to impose structural change on the Bank, even if such change does not always seem to be essential or even necessary.

Some are convinced that they know more about development than any new president brings to his job. Kim is no doubt aware of how the Bank has evolved, and he has a few months in which to decide how best to meld his own experience and expertise with those of the Bank.

Meanwhile, there is an important item of unfinished business which the international community needs to consider before the new presidency begins: paying appropriate tribute to current president Robert Zoellick for having rescued the Bank from staff demoralization and institutional decline.

Off the Wall

Zoellick’s predecessor was Paul Wolfowitz who reportedly fared well at the US State Department’s Policy Planning Office, and as ambassador to Indonesia. Much has been written and said about Wolfowitz being the first to suggest a focus on Iraq after the 9/11 attacks on the US.

His first recorded mention of the need to go after Iraq was during a meeting at the presidential retreat, Camp David, shortly after the attacks. His views on Iraq turned out to be almost all off the wall. His nomination by Bush for the Bank’s presidency when John Wolfensohn’s term was drawing to a close was met with skepticism but not with outright hostility.

Shortly after he assumed office, however, disquiet grew over his “dating relationship” with a Bank staff member. Some staff felt that as a matter of propriety, he should not have accepted Bush’s nomination. Others argued that the Bank’s board of executive directors had let the institution down by reaffirming the nomination although a cloud of “conflict of interest” loomed over it. The disquiet grew close to calamitous when he engaged himself in securing a secondment to the State Department for his dating partner on terms that were considered extraordinarily favorable to her.

A group of highly respected former senior Bank officials, almost all vice presidents, signed a document suggesting that he should

leave. The Bank’s board representing its entire membership was said to be grappling with how best to arrange his departure. Staff morale plummeted, and some Bank vice presidents went from office to office urging staff to remain steadfast and patient because “this too shall pass.”

Not a Dog

Faced with mounting hostility, Wolfowitz did what so many Washingtonians do in such circumstances. No, he did not buy a dog, a course of action recommended by a past US president to officials in Washington in search of a friend. Wolfowitz hired a lawyer. Following much to-ing and fro-ing, Wolfowitz was gone, after two years in office. Reuters news agency reported with British delicacy that Wolfowitz resigned “after a protracted battle over his stewardship, prompted by his involvement in a high-paying promotion for his companion.”

The Bank was jubilant but in disarray. Into this situation came Robert Zoellick, nominated by Bush and accepted without delay by the Bank. Zoellick had served both in public service and in the corporate sector. Early on in his stewardship, Zoellick laid down six priorities for the Bank’s operations to be effective: helping to overcome poverty and spur sustainable growth in the poorest countries, especially in Africa; addressing the special challenges of states coming out of conflict; developing a competitive menu of “development solutions” for middle income countries, involving customized services as well as finance; playing a more active role with regional and global “public goods” on issues crossing national borders, including climate change, HIV/Aids, malaria, and aid for trade; supporting those advancing development and opportunity in the Arab world; and fostering a “knowledge and learning” agenda across the World Bank Group to support its role as a “brains trust” of applied experience.

Much will be written and said in the future about the significance – or lack of it – of these priorities, and of the extent to which they guided the Bank and its operations under Zoellick’s leadership. This much is already clear. Quite apart from his prescriptions for development and for Bank operations, he put the stamp of his own integrity on the Bank in such a manner as to rescue it from the low point it had reached when he began his term in office. The international community is obliged to take note of and respond to this reality. ➔



Picture above: Dr. Jim Yong Kim, President-elect of the World Bank Group



Cover of The Dartmouth, March 2, 2009, Global Health Leader Jim Yong Kim is Dartmouth's 17th President

Weighting for Votes

Come July 1, 2012, Kim will assume duties as the first Bank president of Korean ethnicity – but will do so as an American. This is the compromise that the Obama Administration offered the World Bank in response to increasing discontent over the informal arrangement under which the Bank presidency goes to an American and the parallel position of Managing Director at the International Monetary Fund (the Fund) is awarded to a nominee from Europe.

The arrangement is kept alive not by some mythical respect for unwritten agreements among “ladies and gentlemen” but by the weighted voting patterns established at both the Bank and the Fund from their inception.

The current systems of appointment will change when voting arrangements are brought into the 21st century, with provision for periodic future changes that should be consistent with the changing circumstances of member nations.

The system of one-nation-one-vote was introduced into the United Nations family as a reflection of Western political practice. More recently, many UN institutions have adopted the process of decision making by consensus: the broadest possible convergence of views in the middle ground between contending positions. Both are superior to a system of weighted voting.

Some stirrings towards change might have been felt with the emergence of something approaching competition at the recently concluded election of Kim. As the Nigerian contender Finance Minister Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala told a BBC interviewer who asked whether she was disappointed at Kim's election:

“Absolutely not. Actually, if you are here with us in Abuja, we are celebrating. And many young people all over the continent

and older people are celebrating, congratulatory messages are pouring in. Why? Because we feel we've won important victories. The first victory is that we have made this process competitive....

“We will continue to push for an open merit based and transparent process as was promised by the Development Committee of the World Bank and the G20 two years ago.... we should not be fixated on the geography of where the person comes from.

“We should be fixated on the talent they bring to doing the job. There is no reason why an American should not lead. But by the same token, there is no reason why a Nigerian should not lead if they are the best qualified.”

Kim's interest in major health issues, his real-life experience in this field, and his sense of caring for those excluded from good public health facilities are well known and widely acknowledged. Does this suggest that he will steer the Bank towards an overwhelming emphasis on health issues? That would be counter-productive.

Several aspects of his public life suggest that he is not a one-note player. In addition to being a public health enthusiast and expert, he is a respected academic, an innovator, an experienced manager with a commitment to diversity, a capacity for “thinking outside the box” (pardon the cliché), and a leader who has faith in his colleagues as well in the intended beneficiaries of the programs he has managed.

As Fred Hiatt, editor of the Washington Post's editorial page describes it: “The mission of the World Bank is to help lift people out of poverty, and Kim will be the first bank leader who has dedicated most of his professional life to working with and for the world's poor.

“With another pioneering physician-anthropologist, Dr. Paul Farmer, Kim established an organization dedicated to treating poor people in Haiti, Peru, Rwanda and beyond. The founding principle of Partners in Health was that everyone is entitled to first-class health care, no matter where they live or how poor they are.

“The significance of Partners was that it didn't just declare that as a principle: Farmer and Kim proved, in the face of many doubters and over the course of many years of hard work, that first-class health care can be delivered, respectfully, in the poorest precincts of the poorest countries.

One of its key innovations was to enlist the poor themselves into the health system, training community workers to make sure, for example, that patients take their TB or AIDS medicines every day.

“Kim, winner of the MacArthur Genius fellowship in 2003, showed that the Partners method could scale up when, as an executive at the World Health Organization from 2003 through 2005, he helped vastly expand the number of people in Africa receiving treatment for AIDS. Now he will get a chance to scale up another notch.” Or maybe several notches.

In his youth, Kim played quarterback for his high school's football team (the North American version, not soccer). As the team's quarterback, a major responsibility was to help move the ball forward until it touched down at its desired goal – while thwarting the opposing side. That's a talent that will help him as Bank president. □

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By Melissa Moskowitz*
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By R. S. Kalha*
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The Global Cooperation Council has launched a special website as part of a media project of Inter Press Service news agency and Soka Gakkai International (SGI), a Buddhist association based in Tokyo.

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Some personalities who have been interviewed, have contributed their views or whose views have been incorporated in articles as part of this project are:

 Daisaku Ikeda	 Sergio Duarte	 Tibor Tóth	 J. Dhanapala
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Japan Responding Creatively to Crisis
The human spirit has a truly remarkable capacity - the ability to generate hope from the most devastating of crises. This ability to create value can be seen in the response to the earthquake that struck Japan on March 11, writes Daisaku Ikeda, a Japanese Buddhist philosopher and peacebuilder and president of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI), in a column for IPS.

'Abolish Nukes in the Middle East and Beyond'
As 'people power' topples one Arab regime after another, confronting the international community with an unprecedented volatile situation, an eminent Buddhist leader is urging the

Global Cooperation Council has set up a **Media Task Force** in order to strengthen its media network, with veteran journalist and Sri Lanka diplomat, **Ernest Corea** as president.

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