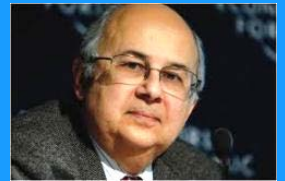


Egypt is once more doing things its own unique way. The revolution of January 25, 2011 did not deliver on its promises. On-going developments are in continuing revolution. No coup, writes Ismail Serageldin



RESPONSIBLE MEDIA IS PREREQUISITE FOR A GENUINE DEMOCRACY



**“I would like the press to tell the truth
about what matters.” - Noam Chomsky**



TOWARD A NUCLEAR FREE WORLD



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Nuclear Abolition News and Analysis

Obama Magic is Gone – Caution Outweighs Zeal

Nuclear Abolition News | IDN

By RAMESH JAURA*

BERLIN (IDN) - President Barack Obama's commitment four years ago "to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons" reverberated across the globe generating hope that humankind will not be annihilated by a sheer flash of light. On June 19 in Berlin he sought to build on the iconic Prague speech. But there was no magic filling the air.

The reason, Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) General Secretary Kate Hudson wrote on June 28 in her [blog](#): "... despite Obama's apparent continued commitment to the goal of global abolition, he did not quite take us to the dizzy heights of hope and emotion stirred by his Prague speech in 2009." [P] [JAPANESE TEXT PDF](#)

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Nuclear Non-Proliferation

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Nuclear Deterrence Works in Indo-Pak Ties

Nuclear Abolition News | IDN

By A. VINOD KUMAR*



NEW DELHI (IDN | [IDSA](#)) - For over two decades, a dominant section of western analysts harped on the volatilities of the India and Pakistan nuclear dyad, often overselling the 'South Asia as a nuclear flashpoint' axiom, and portending a potential nuclear flare-up in every major stand-off between the two countries. The turbulence in the sub-continent propelled such presages, with one crisis after another billowing towards serious confrontations, but eventually easing out on all occasions.

While the optimists described this as evidence of nuclear deterrence gradually consolidating in this dyad, the pessimists saw in it the ingredients of instability that could lead to a nuclear conflict.

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PREPARATORY COMMISSION

UN Downplays Health Effects of Nuclear Radiation

Nuclear Abolition News | IPS

By GEORGE GAO

UNITED NATIONS (IPS) - The United Nations has come under criticism from medical experts and members of civil society for what these critics consider inaccurate statements about the effects of lingering radioactivity on local populations.

Scientists and doctors met with top U.N. officials last week to discuss the effects of radioactivity in Japan and Ukraine, and the U.N. has enlisted several of its agencies, including the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the U.N. Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (UNSCEAR), to address the matter.

In May, [UNSCEAR stated](#) that radiation exposure following the 2011 Fukushima-Daichii nuclear disaster in Japan poses "no immediate health risks" and that long-term health risks are "unlikely." [P] [JAPANESE TEXT VERSION PDF](#)

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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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NEWS ANALYSIS

Another Run At Ending Global Hunger

By Ernest Corea*

WASHINGTON DC - Yet another high-level panel has designed yet another “roadmap” to universal prosperity and a hunger-free world – by 2030. A new set of goals is likely to replace the current Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). “Once again, the goalposts of development are being moved instead of the goals being met,” says a jaded observer of international affairs.



The panel was created by UN Secretary General Ban-Ki Moon. Its co-chairs were Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and British Prime Minister David Cameron.

The panel’s proposals are part of the verbal effervescence that will be noticeable as the inter-

national community’s attention turns to thoughts of how to proceed after the 2015 deadline for the attainment of the current MDGs has been reached.

The Associated Press (AP) quoted the panel as saying: “Our vision and our responsibility are to end extreme poverty in all its forms in the context of sustainable development and to have in place the building blocks of sustained prosperity for all.” Goals to be met along the way include “ensuring food security, sustainable energy and sustainable natural resource management; creating jobs and promoting economic growth and good governance; achieving gender equality and ensuring stable and peaceful societies.”

The panel added: “After 2015 we should move from reducing to ending extreme poverty, in all its forms. We should ensure that no person – regardless of ethnicity, gender, geography, disability, race or other status – is denied universal human rights and basic economic opportunities..... We can be the first generation in human history to end hunger and ensure that every person achieves a basic standard of wellbeing. There can be no excuses. This is a universal agenda, for which everyone must accept their proper share of responsibility.”

Brave new words, for a brave new world. Ah, so.

**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 a member of the Editorial Advisory Board of IDN-InDepthNews and a member of its editorial board as well as President of the Media Task Force of Global Cooperation Council.*

These and other proposals will be discussed and dissected at the UN General Assembly sessions later this year. Other proposals are also likely to surface as 2015 draws closer.

So, given the significance of the issues covered and the importance of the correctives suggested, here’s a quiz question on the new proposals: Will they produce (a) a giant global yawn (b) a harvest of words (c) a combined and effective global assault on the world’s inequities and their universal product, hardship? Readers may craft their own answers.

Meanwhile, the MDGs themselves, with two-years-and-a-bit of existence left, are expected to get another public airing at the forthcoming Conference of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) which will be held in Rome, June 15-22. Much of the conference agenda is connected with aspects of the MDGs. Specifically, a key agenda item will deal directly with the overall subject of sustainable food security. Discussion will encompass environmental aspects of production and productivity.

To encapsulate for the benefit of readers who might have forgotten the details, the MDGs are eight goals that UN Member States are committed to achieve by the year 2015. The UN Millennium Declaration, signed in September 2000, enjoins world leaders to combat poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation, and discrimination against women. The MDGs are derived from this Declaration. Each MDG has targets set for 2015 and indicators to monitor progress from 1990 levels.

The entire strategy of setting common development goals for countries in different stages of development has been criticized as being unrealistic. Supporters of the MDG approach argue, however, that without tools for measurement, progress towards development will continue to be hopelessly uneven and in some cases even non-existent. The incentive to do better may be lost.

Moreover, the MDGs create a backdrop against which advocacy can be carried out in support of other goals that might not be directly part of development but which seriously affect development. High on this list would be corruption.

Half Full

For the sake of the world’s poor and hungry – the wretched of the earth as Frantz Fanon called them – people of goodwill would have hoped that considerably more progress

would have been made than is talked about now. Some progress has in fact been made, however, and anybody committed to a “half full” and not a “half empty” approach would note this, with some degree of satisfaction.

Cuba, whose economic difficulties following changes in the former Soviet Union received much adverse comment, is one of 16 countries that have fulfilled an important task relating to what can accurately be described as the “food security MDG”: halving hunger.

The importance of meeting this goal has been emphasized by the targets attached to it. These are:

Target No. 1 – Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than one dollar a day.

Target No. 2 – Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people.

Target No. 3 – Halve between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger

The other 15 who have met the “halve hunger” goal are Armenia, Azerbaijan, Chile, Fiji, Georgia, Ghana, Guyana, Nicaragua, Peru, Samoa, Sao Tome and Principe, Thailand, Uruguay, Venezuela and Vietnam. Their achievements will be acknowledged and they will each receive a Certificate of Recognition at the FAO Conference.

Representatives of all these countries will no doubt be elated, as well they should be. Although he is in poor health and does not call the shots in his nation, for Cuba’s Fidel Castro there will no doubt be special joy in this development.

During his years of authority, Castro was perennially interested in food security issues both at home and abroad. Castro will be pleased at his country’s achievement not only because of this but also because his words of wisdom uttered close to two decades ago will be formally adopted as policy by FAO at its June conference. In deference to Castro’s interest in food security issues, his contribution to Cuba fulfilling a key task of the “food security MDG”, and his prescience, FAO’s Director-General Graziano de Silva sent him a “heads up” on this in a personal letter of commendation in April.

Views Vindicated

So, consider this: At the time of the FAO World Food Summit of 1996, Castro urged that total eradication of hunger, and not a halfway approach, was imperative. He was, some observers said at the time, outraged that the food summit was satisfied with adopting a tepid approach to ending hunger. In his letter of congratulations to Castro and the Cuban people Graziano reminds him of this: “They say that in the press conference that followed the summit you said that even if the target (halving hunger) were achieved we would not know what to say to the other half of humanity if it would not be freed from the scourge of hunger. “

With Castro’s foresight on the record, Graziano writes, sharing a point of triumph with Castro and offering him the ultimate vindication: “I have the great pleasure to inform

you that the decision of its members and for the first time in its history, the FAO Conference to be held next June in Rome, take the total eradication of hunger as the number one goal of our organisation.”

The proposed approach is similar to what Ismail Serageldin, currently the Director of Egypt’s showpiece Bibliotheca Alexandrina, articulated as chairman of the Consultative Group on Agricultural Research (CGIAR).

Pointing out that slavery was abolished under the leadership of abolitionists, he urged that a group of New Abolitionists was required to combine their efforts on ending all hunger. Nobody will quarrel with the goal of eradicating global hunger, but what is the appropriate path towards that goal?

Broad Impact

Agriculture, primarily recognized as a source of food, is also an important aspect of development, overall. The agricultural dollar spreads across the countryside creating wealth as it moves. This, of course, has an impact on income, health and nutrition, education, the environment, and empowerment.

Re-emphasising agriculture so that it helps to meet the goal of universal food security while also serving as a catalyst of development involves a range of issues including productivity, crop diversity, natural resources management, biodiversity protection, capacity building, institution strengthening, national laws and policies, and international trade. Effective agricultural research, to strengthen and expand agricultural knowledge, the basis of new technologies, is essential. Supporting agricultural research, it has been said is like putting money in the hands of the poor.

The tasks of agricultural research are more complex than at the time of the green revolution. Agricultural knowledge has grown and so has knowledge about agriculture. The ecological imprint of agriculture is so great that the late Nobel laureate Norman Borlaug called for a “blue revolution” that will combine “water-use productivity” with “land-use productivity

To achieve these goals, the world needs broad and effective partnerships – involving farmers, civil society, researchers, policymakers, and politicians -- committed to reinvigorating sustainable agriculture. Some South-South partnerships exist. Brazil’s Agricultural Research Corporation (EMBRAPA) is a leader in this field. India’s Department of Agricultural Research and Education, Ministry of Agriculture (DARE), as well as several private research foundations, collaborate with partners in the neighboring region and also in Africa. China has similar programs, with an emphasis on collaboration with African partners.

Strong national research organizations in the South could serve as research hubs, creating networks of collaboration to create and share knowledge and research-based technologies for agricultural development. If the need to move ahead from theory to practice is ignored – if the poor remain forever condemned to a harvest of words, and no more – the results over the long term will be human tragedy. [IDN | June 6, 2013] □

PERSPECTIVES

New Wave Of 'Truedeomania' Or Maybe Not

By Ernest Corea*

WASHINGTON DC - "We don't do dynasties," a Canadian friend said quite huffily, when asked about the likelihood of Justin Trudeau, the son of the late Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, and Margaret Trudeau, being voted into office as the country's next prime minister.



Credit: justin.ca

Or, as Canadian author Bruce McCall wrote recently in the New York Times: "There are no Kennedys or Bushes in Canadian politics, let alone anything like the successive Kims: Il-sung, Jong-il and Jong-un. We have no shortage of dimwits and blowhards in high office, but ours have never run in families.

"Maybe the idea of a dynasty is just too gaudy, too overreaching for a culture that can't help sounding modest even when it tries to brag - which explains why Canadian show-offs are almost inevitably banished to the United States." (McCall lives in the US.)

Canadians are famously/notoriously low-keyed - with some strident exceptions - and the very idea of a political dynasty throwing down its roots there seems out of sync with the Canadian character. Canada has, in fact, sometimes even found it difficult to assert its national identity, despite its strong record as a caring, innovative, and prosperous nation.

A Canadian actor noted, for instance, that when Canadians travel beyond their shores and speak English, they are asked: "Are you from America?" So they quickly switch to French and are asked: "Are you Belgian?" Nevertheless, the emergence of a "new" Trudeau as the leader of the once

triumphant Liberal Party, now occupying a lowly third place in Canada's Parliament, appears to have given Canadian right-wing activists some serious rumbling in their intestines.

On to Leadership

Justin Trudeau, born on Christmas Day in 1971 has been a Member of Parliament (MP) from 2008. Officially, within the Liberal Party's parliamentary caucus, he has been the party's parliamentary "critic" (in effect, Minister-in-waiting) dealing with a variety of national issues including citizenship and immigration, education, the environment, national unity, youth affairs, and sport.

He was considered something of a "rock star" on the Liberal side of the aisle, and was active in outreach to the media as well as in the arts. His political lineage was firmly established as his father was a prime minister who was known as a towering figure both at home and abroad, and his maternal grandfather James Sinclair was a Cabinet Minister in the government of Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent.

His parliamentary career has coincided with something of an eclipse in the life of the Liberal Party. Its political clout has receded in recent years, and it gave the appearance of

having become the happy hunting ground of mediocrities seeking leadership roles. Justin Trudeau's ascension to the party's leadership could reverse that trend.

As the party sank lower and lower in influence and popularity, political commentators repeatedly predicted that his peers would at some point throw the leadership ball to Justin Trudeau. This happened on April 14, 2013, when he was elected leader of the Liberal Party, securing 80 percent of the vote, with five contenders ranged against him. This was 45 years after the mantle of leadership was bestowed on his father, Pierre Trudeau,

Hope and Change

Right-wing critics have pounced on the "new" Trudeau. .

He was too young and inexperienced, they said. He couldn't win the people's respect. He was trying to ride on his father's name. He was attempting to "do an Obama."

Reporting on the unseemly political dog fight, Barbara Yaffe wrote in the Vancouver Sun: "A message on the federal Liberal party website, promoting an ad that defends the new leader against recent Conservative attacks, reads: 'Hope and Hard Work. Be Part of the Change.'

"Catch those two words in there? Hope. Change. Obama's 'Yes, We Can' could be coming next. The Liberal pitch, made last week, solicits a \$5 donation in a bid to raise \$1 million to 'make sure every Canadian hears our message....The other side is trying to bury our message of positive change under an avalanche of negative attacks,' says the message from Trudeau, with a photo showing him in an open-necked shirt.

"Let me be clear: We aren't going to let them get away with it."

The next general election is due no later than 2015. Nevertheless, the political battle has already been joined. Canadian voters have been subjected to a barrage of directed mail attacks on the Liberal Party leader from almost the day he was elected to the post. Some of his expatriate detractors have emerged from outside the country to throw verbal missiles at him and his party.

At times it has been unclear whether his detractors are actually fighting the Liberal Party's new leader, or his father whom they looked on with awe and disliked with great intensity. Are they scared by the potential impact of his father's political reputation on the fortunes of the son?

Harmonious Society

Pierre Trudeau was endowed with a sharp tongue, a ready wit, and a great capacity for the "mot just" - exactly the right word or phrase in tricky situations. He had a powerful intellect, and a probing interest in all things connected with his role as a national leader.

He traveled widely before he entered politics, and knew at first hand the problems and potential of many of Canada's partnering countries. Like the internationally reputed

Lester B. Pearson before him, Trudeau turned out to be very much a "foreign affairs president." He maintained effective relations with China and Cuba to the mutual benefit of all three countries.

When he was no longer in office, a reporter sought his views on a controversial piece of legislation sponsored by Prime Minister Joe Clarke. "What should Mr. Clarke do about his Bill?" the reporter asked. Without waiting so much as to bat an eyelid, Trudeau replied: "Pay it."

On being a neighbor of the US, Trudeau told an audience at the Washington Press Club: "Living next to you is in some ways like sleeping with an elephant. No matter how friendly and even-tempered is the beast, if I can call it that, one is affected by every twitch and grunt."

In domestic affairs, he was less engaged in economic management than in keeping the fabric of society intact. He was challenged by intolerance on both sides of the language divide (English and French), and more viciously, by a separatist-terrorist movement.

He showed fortitude in dealing with the terrorist threat, at first scaring the pants off middle-of-the-road Canadians, who did not relish the prospect of military influence in their land. His approach was perfectly illustrated in this brief excerpt of cross-talk with a Canadian reporter at the time:

Trudeau: Well there are a lot of bleeding hearts around who just don't like to see people with helmets and guns. All I can say is, go on and bleed. But it's more important to keep law and order in the society than to be worried about weak-kneed people who don't like the looks of a soldier— Reporter [interrupting]: At any cost? How far would you go with that? How far would you extend that? Trudeau: Well, just watch me.

When the threat had passed, his courage and wisdom were both recognized and praised.

Over the long term, his goal was to create a harmonious society in which Canada's much talked-about "two solitudes" would co-exist. An important instrument of policy that he deployed in his efforts to reach this objective was bilingualism. He rejected the notion that Canada consisted of two nations. His son Justin supports his father's position, and recently dismissed the dual-nation theory as belonging to the 19th century.

Justin Trudeau has opted for an easy-rider style. He wore a v-necked T-shirt and cargo shorts as he glided through a crowded food court in a shopping mall, dropping friendly smiles here, offering warm handshakes there, and acting the crowd-pleaser with grace and charm.

His approach has already brought his party early results - although elections are not just around the corner. The party, say Canada-watchers, appears to have surmounted even temporarily, the fund-raising difficulties they have faced in recent times. ➡ [Page 8 bottom]

PERSPECTIVES

Banks Count Ten Times More Than Europe's Youth

By Roberto Savio*

ROME - Youth At the last summit of European heads of state in Brussels, the main theme was youth unemployment, which has now reached 23% of European youth (although it stands at 41% in Spain). Last year, the International Labour Organization issued a dramatic report on 'Global Employment Trends for Youth 2012' in which it spoke of a "lost generation".



According to projections, the generation currently seeking to enter the market place will retire with a pension of just 480 euro – if it actually succeeds in entering the market – because of temporary jobs without social contributions.

After long discussions, Europe's leaders decided on June 27, 2013 to allocate 6 billion dollars of European money, to fight youth unemployment. After much shorter discussion, they decided to allocate up to 60 billion dollars to support Europe's banks. This, on top of the striking subsidies already received: the European Central Bank alone has given one thousand billion dollars to the banks at nominal cost.

All the efforts to create a European banking system under a central regulator are now on hold until the German elections in September. A member of the German delegation at the June summit is reported saying: "We know well what we are supposed to do, to calm financial markets. But we are not elected by financial markets, we are elected by German citizens." (NYT | IHT online). And of course, no effort has been made to explain to Germany's citizens why it is in their interest to show economic solidarity with the most fragile countries of Europe. Democracy, as it is understood today, is based on leaders who follow popular feelings not on leaders who feel their duty to push their electors towards a world of vision and challenges.

The summit was also obliged to accept the blackmail of British Prime Minister David Cameron: either you maintain the subsidies that then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher obtained in 1973, when you insisted that we join Europe (which makes Britain a net recipient of European money), or we will block the European budget. This is because the anti-Europe electorate in Britain is growing and Cameron could not afford to appear weak. But Cameron was one of the strongest proponents of the subsidy for the banks, and no wonder: the financial system now accounts for 10% of the British gross domestic product (GDP)!

It is a very curious situation, in which not only has Europe spent several hundred billion dollars for its banks, it has even invited the International Monetary Fund (whose controlling member is the United States) to join the European Institutions and manage the European crisis. And, in an unprecedented sign of independence and resistance to the United States, Europe has rejected American calls for reducing austerity and starting policies of growth as Washington and Tokyo have been doing, so far with proven success.

Nevertheless, what is common to the three most powerful players in the West (United States, Europe and Japan) has been their inability – and unwillingness – to place banks under control and react to their strings of crimes. ☹

**Roberto Savio is founder and president emeritus of the Inter Press Service (IPS) news agency, publisher of Other News and editorial adviser to IDN-InDepthNews. This article is being posted by arrangement with the writer.*

[Continued from page 7]

The Liberals have raised over one million Canadian dollars since his ascent to the leadership. The money came from 14,000 donors, of whom 6000 were making a political donation for the first time ever. Meanwhile, polls have shown that the relentless campaign against him has not shaken his current popularity. Liberals have taken a 7 point nationwide lead in the polls. Their rating stands at 35 percent with Conservatives at 28 percent and the left-leaning National Democratic Party at 22 percent.

Globally, where the current government's lackluster style has resulted in an erosion of influence and a leadership role among like-minded nations, greater attention is being focused on Canada. Critics have "given up" in despair and want even the Montreal-based ICAO moved to the Middle East. Others, remembering Canada's stellar role in the past are hoping for better days to come. There will be more developments as the months go by, and topsy-turvy changes of fortune, no doubt. However the results turn out when a general election is held, it is quite clear that the new Trudeau's rise to his party's leadership has enlivened Canadian politics beyond expectations. For the first time since the now almost forgotten Trudeauania of the past, Canadian politics have been transformed into a fascinating spectator sport. [IDN | May 7, 2013]

□



2007 bank run on Northern Rock, a UK bank | Credit: Wikimedia Commons

Central bankers from the entire world join in the Bank for International Settlements (BIS) based in Basel. Now its Basel Committee on Banking Supervision, headed by the governor of the Swedish Central Bank, Stefan Ingves, has come up with a proposal that would finally subject European banks to a relationship between their capital and the volume of financial operations they can afford.

'Revolutionary' proposal

This 'revolutionary' proposal calls a relationship of 3 percent, meaning that the banks would need to hold about 1 euro in capital for every 33 euro in risk or other financial exposures. Obviously, of course, if a bank sustains a loss higher than 3%, it would require the state to eliminate the deficit in order to save the institution. Well, even this bland proposal has been received with a howl of protest from many banks, claiming that they would have great difficulty in raising capital.

Under the old capitalist economy, no enterprise would run without capital adequate to its need. Today we have a new branch of economy, which wants to play without capital, and expects the state to bail it out if anything goes wrong. So, let us just look briefly at how many times things went wrong without anybody ever going to jail.

On April 28, 2002, then New York State Attorney General Eliot Spitzer, on behalf of the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), won a lawsuit ordering 10 U.S. banks to pay 1.4 billion dollars in compensation and fines because of fraudulent activities. One year later, the SEC discovered that 13 out of 15 financial institutions randomly investigated were guilty of fraud. In 2010, Goldman Sachs agreed to a fine of 550 million dollars to avoid a trial for fraud. In July last year, the U.S. Senate presented a 335-page report on the British bank HSBC, the largest in Europe.

Over the years it helped drug dealers and criminals recycle illicit money. For example, the bank sent 60 billion dollars in cash by road or plane from the accounts of Mexican drug dealers to its New York Branch. The fine was 1.9 billion dollars. In November 2012, SAC Capital was fined 600 mil-

lion dollars, and in the same month the second British bank, Standard Chartered, was fined 667 million dollars. In February this year, Barclays Bank announced that it had set aside 1.165 billion euro to face fines for "illicit transactions" (the bank is now under investigation for a very dubious capital increase of 8.4 billion euro in 2008).

And in March this year, Citigroup accepted a fine of 730 million dollars for "selling investments based on junk to unsuspecting clients". These are just a few of the most clamorous cases, and there are many, many more, involving even the Japanese bank Nomura.

We all know that the crisis in which we find ourselves (which, for the optimists, will end in 2020 and for the pessimists in 2025) was triggered in the United States by the 10 largest banks which decided to sell derivatives based on junk and certified by the Standard & Poor's and Moody's rating agencies. U.S. taxpayers "donated" 750,000 million dollars to the banks, while the British did the same for HSBC, Royal Bank of Scotland, Barclays Bank and Northern Rock.

While this financial disaster was happening, the 'Big Five' (Goldman Sachs, Merrill Lynch, Morgan Stanley, Lehman Brothers and Bearn Sterns) paid their executives 3 billion dollars between 2003 and 2007, And, in 2008, they received 20 billion dollars in bonuses while their banks were losing 42 billion dollars.

All of this was certified by Standard & Poor's and Moody's, which control 75% of the world market. Now Standard & Poor's has been requested to pay 500 million dollars. But what about the millions of people who have lost their jobs? The millions of young people who see no future in their lives? It's the old story: if you steal bread, you go to jail, but if you steal millions, nothing will happen to you ... and if you steal millions in a bank, even less reason to worry.

Meanwhile, back at the summit table, the priority for survival is to allocate taxpayers' money, even if all talk about youth unemployment. After all, what really matters is that leaders will be re-elected. [IDN | July 6, 2013] □

PERSPECTIVES

New Coalition To Handle Investment Treaties

By Martin Khor*

GENEVA - Leaders of several Latin American countries have set up a new coalition to coordinate actions to face the growing number of international legal suits being taken against governments by transnational companies.



Ecuador Foreign Minister
Ricardo Patino | Wikimedia

A ministerial meeting of 12 countries held in Guayaquil, Ecuador, decided on several joint actions to counter the threat posed by these law suits, which have claimed millions or even billions of dollars from governments.

“No more should small countries face law suits from big companies by themselves,” said Ecuador’s Foreign Minister Ricardo Patino, at a media conference after the meeting which he chaired. “We have now decided to deal with the challenges posed by these transnational companies in a coordinated way.”

Seven of the countries, mostly represented by their Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Trade or Finance, adopted a declaration with an agreement to form a conference of states affected by transnational interests. They are Ecuador, Bolivia, Cuba, Nicaragua, Dominican Republic, St. Vincent and Grenadine and Venezuela.

Representatives of another five countries (Argentina, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Mexico) also attended the meeting and will convey the results to their governments.

The Ministers decided to set up an executive committee, led initially by Ecuador, to coordinate political and legal actions, including sending information on legal disputes involving the states, coordinating joint legal actions and disseminating information to the public.

They also agreed to establish a regional arbitration centre for settling investment disputes, based on fair and balanced rules when settling disputes between corporations and States.

The proposed centre is to provide an alternative to existing international tribunals which are seen as biased in favour of investors’ interests.

The tribunals, such as ICSID (based at the World Bank in Washington), have also been accused of being mired in conflict of interest situations. Only a few arbitrators hear a majority of cases, with many of them also appearing as lawyers for companies in other cases, and some being board members of transnational companies.

The Ministers also decided to create an “international observatory” to monitor and analyse investment cases, to

reform the present arbitration system, and suggest alternative mechanisms for fair mediation between states and transnational companies.

The observatory would also promote coordination between the judicial systems of Latin American States, to ensure the enforcement of domestic judicial decisions on disputes between States and transnational corporations.

It should also give advice to governments on their negotiations with transnational corporations, especially in trade and investment contracts.

The meeting had been prompted by serious concerns arising from investment cases taken by transnational companies against the governments under bilateral investment treaties and free trade agreements that enable these companies to sue for loss of future profits due for example to new government regulations or a cancellation or amendment of a contract.

There have been more than 500 known investor-to-state cases, 60 alone in 2012. Some countries in the region, such as Argentina, Ecuador, Venezuela and Mexico have each had 20 to 30 cases taken against them.

The proliferation of cases in recent years has also affected developing countries in other regions, such as South Africa, India, Indonesia and Vietnam, as well as many developed countries.

Disillusionment with the agreements and the arbitration system has prompted a variety of actions by governments such as suspension of negotiations for new treaties, attempts to renegotiate or withdraw from existing treaties, and withdrawal from the jurisdiction of the ICSID tribunal.

The Vice President of Ecuador, Jorge Glas Espinel, briefed the meeting about two arbitration disputes taken against his government by oil companies under bilateral investment treaties (BITs), and on the tribunal judgments which in his view were unfair and even outrageous.

In one of the cases, Ecuador was asked to pay US\$2.3 billion compensation (including interest) to the American oil company Oxy, even though the arbitrators recognised that the company had broken the terms of its contract with the government. [IDN | June 24, 2013] □

**Martin Khor is Executive Director of the South Centre. A version of this article was published in SOUTHNEWS, a service of the South Centre to provide information and news on topical issues from a South perspective. It is being reproduced by arrangement with them.*

PERSPECTIVES

Genuine Democracy Needs Responsible Media

By Ramesh Jaura

BERLIN - When Erik Bettermann, the outgoing director-general of the German international broadcaster Deutsche Welle, launched the Global Media Forum in 2008, he had an ambitious aim: to institute a 'media Davos' on the banks of the river Rhine. The recently concluded sixth Forum has indeed achieved that aim. It imbibed the essential spirit of the World Economic Forum in the Swiss Alps and manifested alternative approaches guiding the World Social Forum.

More than 2,500 participants comprising representatives of mainstream, government controlled, alternative and social media as well as non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and academia from over 100 countries attended the three-day conference from June 17 to 19, 2013 in the post-war historic city of Bonn and exchanged views on 'The Future of Growth - Economic Values and the Media' in some 50 workshops. They agreed that citizens are the key drivers of change, and that the media must build up an informed citizenry without which democracy would remain a farce.

Such a threat is real – also in western democracies. A case in point is the “really existing capitalist democracy (RECD),” as eminent American philosopher and linguist Noam Chomsky describes the U.S. political system. Any resemblance to the word “wrecked” is accidental, he jokes about the acronym. The “soaring rhetoric of the Obama variety”, such as, “government of, for and by the people”, is far from the reality of RECD, Professor Chomsky argued in a keynote address at an opening session of the Global Media Forum.

Seventy percent of America’s population has no influence on policy. It is just a tenth of the top one percent who actually determine what policy should be. “The proper term for that is not democracy, it’s plutocracy,” Chomsky said.

Asked about the role of the press, Chomsky simply replied concluding his keynote address on the opening day: “I would like the press to tell the truth about what matters.” The significance of this simple remark is underlined by the fact that the inequalities of everyday life on the national agenda, influence reporting, public perception and language itself.

India’s environmental activist Vandana Shiva’s keynote address on the closing day of the conference was another highlight of the Forum. “The future of growth as GDP (Gross Domestic Product) and commodification of the planet and society will inevitably accelerate ecological and social disintegration and the rise of a surveillance state,” she said. “We need to focus on the growth of wellbeing of the planet and the people for the sake of peace, justice and sustainability,” the winner of The Right Livelihood Award said. The concept of GDP as a measure of economic growth and human progress was challenged in different workshops during the conference. ‘Sustainable growth’, ‘Sus-

tainable economy’, ‘Green economy’, ‘Beyond GDP’ ‘Goodbye GDP, Hello GDW (Well-being)’ were recommended as some of the alternative concepts on the anvil to replace the GDP paradigm.



Beyond GDP

There have been signs of a paradigm shift since 1990 when the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) first published the Human Development Index (HDI) – a composite measure of health, education and income. It was introduced in the first Human Development Report in 1990 as an alternative to purely economic assessments of national progress, such as GDP growth.

Participants in a workshop hosted by the United Nations University pointed out that the congruence of unprecedented economic, social and environmental crises call for a revaluation of present measures of progress. It was argued that current indicators, such as GDP and the HDI, are insufficient to provide robust indication of societal progress. They fail, for instance, to inform on distributional aspects of economic growth; to reflect the state of natural resources; and to indicate whether national policies are sustainable in the long run. In this context, the workshop discussed new indicators of societal progress based on three international initiatives:

-- The Inclusive Growth Project, which works towards achieving material progress through economic growth while encompassing equity, equal opportunity to basic service provision, and social protection for the most vulnerable people of the society.

-- The Inclusive Wealth Report 2012 (IWR 2012) that presents a promising economic yardstick, the Inclusive Wealth Index (IWI). Grounded in theory and research, the IWR 2012 proposes a radical shift in the way we measure economic progress: switching the analysis from ‘flows’ (like GDP) to ‘stocks’ of capital assets (or wealth). In the report, the wealth of nations is evaluated in an inclusive way by considering not only manufactured capital, but also human and natural capital. ☺



Deutsche Welle DG Erik Bettermann © DW

Twenty countries were assessed in the IWR 2012, including high, middle and low-income economies over a period of 19 years (1990-2008). The IWR 2012 is the first of a series of reports that will be published every two years.

-- The Economics of Land Degradation (ELD), which is an initiative for a global study on the economic benefits of land use and land-based ecosystems. The vision of the ELD initiative is to transform the global understanding of the value of land and build support for sustainable management practices.

These are critical matters to prevent the loss of natural capital, preserve ecosystem services for society, combat climate change as well as its relevance for food, energy and water security issues.

Another workshop hosted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) underlined that though for many decades, gross domestic product has been the main indicator used by national and international institutions to define and measure progress, a focus on economic growth fails to capture many factors which affect people's lives. Safety, health, equity, a feeling of community and a clean environment are all important in determining well-being.

Over the last decade, a number of countries and institutions have set out to identify alternative ways to measure the progress of societies: from a commission led by some of the world's most renowned economists – Stiglitz, Sen, Fitoussi – to Germany setting up a parliamentary committee on 'Growth, prosperity and the quality of life,' to Bhutan, whose King declared that gross national happiness is more important than gross national product. But the powers that be are apparently not ready to say goodbye GDP and say hello to GDW (well-being).

"As an organisation whose mission it is to help governments design better policies for better lives, the OECD is equally interested in understanding what drives the well-being of people and nations. Its 'Better Life Index (BLI)', an interactive online instrument that invites users to create

their own Better Life indexes, was launched to engage citizens in the ongoing effort to identify key drivers of well-being. Since people are encouraged to share their results, this is also a way for the OECD to learn what really matters to them;" an OECD representative pointed out.

But this is not enough to drive policy change, panellists in the workshop agreed. The OECD, the media, private sector, civil society and other actors play an important role in translating academic rhetoric into action in language that encourages engagement and participation, they said.

Gross National Happiness

A Bhutanese participant regretted that very little attention was paid to the Happiness Index. King Jigme Singye Wangchuck of Bhutan coined the term Gross National Happiness (GNH) in the 1970s. The concept of GNH has often been explained by its four pillars: good governance, sustainable socio-economic development, cultural preservation, and environmental conservation.

Lately the four pillars have been further classified into nine domains in order to create widespread understanding of GNH and to reflect the holistic range of GNH values. The nine domains are: psychological wellbeing, health, education, time use, cultural diversity and resilience, good governance, community vitality, ecological diversity and resilience, and living standards.

The domains represents each of the components of well-being of the Bhutanese people, and the term 'well-being' here refers to fulfilling conditions of a 'good life' as per the values and principles laid down by the concept of Gross National Happiness.

Short of stressing that 'All you need is happiness', wide-ranging discussions at the Global Media Forum were characterised by the consensus that growth will have no future if it remains grounded on what Chomsky terms RECD and RECT. Growth will have a future only if it is built on pillars closely intertwined with the well-being of all sections of the population.

Responsible media are the backbone of well-informed societies. "The established media, and social media alike, bear a large responsibility," Bettermann told Forum participants in a closing session. "Social media channels have an ever more important role in shaping people's personal opinions, and in turn, in the formation of public opinion. They uniquely combine information and participation – transcending borders and spanning cultures and languages," he added.

With this in view, the focus of next year's Global Media Forum will be: 'Challenges for the Media – From Information to Participation'. Deutsche Welle, which is celebrating its 60th anniversary this year, will then be headed by Peter Limbourg who takes charge as new director-general in October 2013. [IDN | June 29, 2013] □

PERSPECTIVES

Creating New Values Through Gift Economies

By David Andersson*

This is the text of a presentation at a workshop - 'Turning a Crisis into an Opportunity: Humanizing the Economy' - organised on June 18 by IDN partner Pressenza International Press Agency at the Deutsche Welle Global Media Forum 2013 in Bonn. It is being reproduced by arrangement with Pressenza.

Gift economies could be very potent and effective organizing tools for creating value. We have many examples of gift economies in our world today, such as community gardens or free/open software, where no money is paid for the creation and maintenance of this resource but instead people contribute time and talent and get recognition and respect as well as shared access to the resources .



information publicly available. This is essentially an example of 'open source' being applied to drug discovery. We know that data increases in value when connected with other data and that the more eyes looking at a problem, the more potential solutions may arise.

The interesting part of gift economies is that it releases energy, ideas and commitments that the market economy,

Other examples include the Time Dollar community, where people give their time in exchange for services or goods, and the donation system (such as blood donations). It sometimes confounds economists who think that rational self-interest in a cash economy is the only way to create value, but it is clear to see in the internet that sharing is happening all the time: Wikipedia, social networking communities, collaborative websites and archives like the Internet Archive website, the blogosphere community, and of course the Linux operating system with tens of millions of volunteers around the world who add to its design without the apparatus of the corporate world. Linux is ported to more computer hardware platforms than any other operating system.

with its legal contracts and focus on accumulation of money, often can't. Giving economies have a sense of mutual commitment and trust, they promote openness, the sharing of information, and are socially very satisfying and build community. The challenge is to recognize that we have such systems already and should give them respect as coherent value-generating systems.

The creative world also has developed a Common License mechanism removing money exchange and opening accessibility for music, photos, videos, software, and scientific and educational materials under the Creative Commons License. The Creative Commons organization has the following goal: "Our vision is nothing less than realizing the full potential of the Internet — universal access to research and education, full participation in culture — to drive a new era of development, growth, and productivity." It has grown from under 1 million works in its the first year to over 400 million at the end of 2010.

It's worth recalling the bold vision of James Quilligan — an analyst and administrator in the field of international development since 1975 — for re-inventing nation-states and international relations through commons-based governance: "The solution does not rest with the sovereign club of nations or with the club of the world's elite banks and corporations. It rests with the people and our ability to create political accountability for the management and production of our commons. It involves our ability to create the new structures that will support sustainability and sharing."

GlaxoSmithKline (GSK), for example, is a major pharmaceutical company that has surrendered all copyrights in its malarial data set, which includes more than 13,500 compounds known to be active against malaria:

Quilligan has also collaborated with several United Nations agencies as well as international development organizations on global commons issues and has served as an economic consultant for government agencies in 26 nations. Quilligan is presently Managing Director of the Center for Global Negotiations and Chairman of Global Commons Trust.

By making this information publicly available, GSK hopes that many other scientists will review this information and analyse the data faster than we could on our own. Hopefully, this will lead to additional research that could help drive the discovery of new medicines. We would also encourage other groups, including academics and pharmaceutical companies, to make their own compounds and related

**David Andersson is currently the Director of the New York City chapter of the Humanist Party (HP), member of 'Making Worlds: a Commons Coalition', a collaborative effort by Occupy Wall Street to explore the utility of the commons in creating a better world and the coordinator of the New York Coalition to Expand Voting Rights (Ivote NYC), Before forming the HP in 2009, David Andersson was the Director of Special Campaigns at the Center of Cultures for more than 10 years and co-founded the Diversity Center of Queens in Jackson Heights. [IDN | June 26, 2013] □*

LATIN AMERICA

Behind the Brazilian 'Spring'

By Ted Hewitt*

LONDON, ONTARIO - Much of the global media has focused on the protests occurring throughout Brazil. Almost all have drawn their own conclusions as to the cause of the tumult, and almost all in splendid contradiction. Similarly, there has been an enduring preoccupation in most news reports with the violence and looting associated with all such public demonstrations.



Young protesters demand better hospitals and public transport, while calls for political reform are less focused.

Credit: Fabiana Frayssinet | IPS

In reality, both the causes and the effects of the Brazilian protests are only poorly understood at this point; and for its part, the violence portrayed in the media has primarily been the exception rather than the rule.

I know. I was there. I watched while protestors massed outside Brazil's Congress on the evening of June 17, but stopped politely to let the bus carrying our delegation pass to return to our hotel. And on June 18, I spent close to two hours on one of Brazil's Wall Streets, the Avenida Paulista, accompanying tens of thousands as they marched peacefully in support of their "cause."

Ostensibly, and as has been widely reported, Brazil's protests have been linked to increases in transit fares amounting to single digit percentages; in São Paulo, representing approximately \$0.10 on an average \$1.50 subway or bus fare. In response, transit authorities in several cities have already reversed these increases. The protestors, for their part, vow to continue their fight.

This comes as no surprise. The reality is that the fare increases per se represent a significant symptom, but hardly the cause of the malaise currently affecting a wide spectrum of the Brazilian population. Most of the demonstrators, perhaps not unexpectedly, are youths. They are also predominantly middle class, heralding from families that could more than easily absorb a single digit percentage increase in transit fares.

From their perspective, however, and as the multitude of the placards they carry clearly illustrate, they view the now-constant and endemic increases in bus fares, other public services, and even basic foodstuffs in Brazil as counterpoint to the billions of reais the country has invested, and will invest in infrastructure for showcase events like the World Cup and the Olympics.

Price increases, in this context, are effectively seen by some as a tax on the youth and particularly the poor to help pay for what are seen as lavish excesses – designed primarily to impress foreign visitors. These are also the same billions of reais, in the view of the protestors, that could be directed to existing and pressing needs in Brazil to affect health care reform and vastly improve education. While credible arguments can be made, and are made, to suggest that such infrastructure investments will ultimately serve Brazil well, and attract needed foreign investment, taken in context, the protests are certainly understandable.

In fact, there are strong parallels with the political demonstrations that occurred in the early 1980s, when the then-ruling Brazilian military first indicated its intention to move the country back toward civilian rule after nearly 20 years in power.

Then, the *Diretas Ja* (direct elections now) movement, counted heavily on idealistic youths, who took to the streets in the tens of thousands as part of an effort to speed up Brazil's democratic transition. And to a considerable extent, they succeeded, with the return to electoral democracy in 1986 and the formulation of a new constitution two years later.

As Brazilians currently observe the effect of people power across the Arab world and elsewhere, they themselves – and particularly their youth – now return to their roots in the protests across the country that show no signs of slowing in the near term.

What remains to be seen is the response from powers at the national level – led by the *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (Workers' Party) and other political forces on the left that themselves were forged in the popular protests against Brazil's military dictatorship (1964-1986).

**Ted Hewitt is a professor at the University of Western Ontario and a contributor to Geopoliticalmonitor.com. A version of this article appeared on Geopoliticalmonitor.com on July 1, 2013, and is being re-published by arrangement with them. [IDN | July 1, 2013] □*

ASIA

New Look For India's Historic 'Bhendi Bazaar'

By Qureish Raghieb*

MUMBAI - From being an irrigation tract in its early days to being developed by the British to resettle communities – affected by the Great Mumbai Fire that broke in 1803 at the Fort area – and then eventually mushroom into a bustling business district, Bhendi Bazaar in India's South Mumbai, has come a long way in terms of socio-economic evolution.



'Bhendi Bazaar' – an aerial view | Credit: Indian Muslim Observer

The market area derives its name from a plantation of *thespesia populnia* or bhendi in the north-west of Dongri as mentioned in the Maharashtra State Gazette. Surprisingly, even with its 200-year-history of characteristic entrepreneurial resilience, Bhendi Bazaar gradually sunk in an abyss of civic neglect and infrastructural despair leading it to be seriously challenged in a liberal Indian economy.

But interestingly, even during the global economic slowdown that affected Indian market growth in the last decade, this large area having distinct business dynamics, undertook economic reforms such as diversification and

new business ventures while indulging in minimal credit facilities.

This has been largely possible as over 50% of the 1250 commercial establishments in the project area are owned by Dawoodi Bohras – one of the oldest mercantile communities that first settled in the city during the 18th century.

Known for their business acumen, Dawoodi Bohra businesses in Bhendi Bazaar and elsewhere have grown exponentially by benefitting from the Burhani Qardan Hasana Trust, a global financial institute established by the community's spiritual leader His Holiness Dr. Syedna

Mohammed Burhanuddin. The trust facilitates short and long-term interest-free credit disbursement, which in turn, helped in arresting larger effects of recession, and facilitated capital inflow in the area.

Apart from the traditional business of hardware tools, artifacts bazaar, the Friday flea market, there has been an increase in pilgrim tourism due to the religious and cultural centers situated in the area like the world renowned Raudat Tahera, the mausoleum of Syedna Taher Saifuddin.

Taking into consideration all these socio-economic dynamics, mainstream market players particularly from the service and hospitality sectors along with small manufacturers have put-up outlets in the area providing job opportunities and alternate source of income to many a household in Bhendi Bazaar.

However, be it petty shopkeepers or value added service providers depending on elite clientele or businesses requiring spacious floor-space – all macro and micro market players have been adversely affected due to diminishing urban facilities in the vicinity.

‘Constrained optimization’

With an overall 74% ground coverage, the present 66,264.74 Sq. m. area has a rather high population density in South Mumbai. Interestingly, the newly proposed Bhendi Bazaar re-development project undertaken by the Mumbai based Saifee Burhani Upliftment Trust (SBUT) will have a 54.55% ground coverage post redevelopment. The project, according to the mainstream economic theory, is constrained optimization. It represents arriving at a set of best solutions to a matrix of problems.

From a purely economic perspective, the non-profit redevelopment initiative in the area would shift the perfectly inelastic supply curve of commercial and residential land to the right. This would lead to an increase in consumer surplus to the residents and additionally provide positive externalities to the surrounding areas such as over 15 m wide internal peripheral roads for vehicular movement, separate loading-unloading facilities for commercial vehicles and 1,16,153.93 Sq m of much needed parking facility in the area.

It is fascinating to note that Bhendi Bazaar’s parameters of economic growth are largely defined on the lines of the

area’s cultural and social vibrancy. The fact of the matter is, while all religious and cultural architectural structures situated in the vicinity are to be retained, all legitimate businesses and cosmopolitan residents would also be relocated back in the same locality.

Moreover, unlike the present inequitable market scenario, both complementary and substitute goods’ stakeholders in the neighborhood are to be provided with shops strategically facing the main roads making it Mumbai’s longest high-street shopping area.

All these factors in the economic evolution of Bhendi Bazaar eventually serve the multiple purpose of retaining to a great extent the local cultural flavor, reinstate the traditional bazaar essence while it provides a contemporary business environ, and reinforce Bhendi Bazaar’s past business glory.

There is apparently an absence of a quality shopping area catering to the simultaneous needs of all strata of the society in a three kilometer radius around the proposed Rs. 300 crore (US \$545.45 million) Bhendi Bazaar

re-development site. With an average 100,000 footfall registered today, a conservative approximation of a three-fold commerce and trade growth would appear to be a reasonable prediction taking into account a much broader customer base expected in the post-redevelopment phase.

Subsequently, economic stimulus will be by way of employment gains, leveraged investment, and revitalized neighborhoods while fiscal impacts would include generating new sources of local revenue derived from previously less productive establishments.

A small minority has expressed reservations advocating the need to preserving the “natural fabric of the city”. But it does not have any credible solutions to offer in correcting the colonial era’s deteriorating long, linear stretches that constitute this area.

At stake are 80% of buildings that suffer from dangerous dilapidation and constant repairs, compounded with critically congested 150-year old arterial roads. All this pose a serious risk to human life and property. The question that begs to be answered is whether or not the residents of Bhendi Bazaar have a right to a better quality of life as their forefathers did a century ago?

*The writer is a Mumbai based writer on current socio-economic affairs in South Asia. [IDN | June 21, 2013] □



ASIA

Aiding Kachin State Entails Great Personal Risk

By Sushetha Gopallawa*

WASHINGTON DC - While in Myanmar's Kachin State in May, I visited a number of displacement camps around and I also met with Kachin community-based organizations (CBOs) who deliver aid in both government and non-government controlled areas.

Over 100,000 people have been displaced since conflict between the Myanmar military and the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) resumed in June 2011. While about 35,000 of these individuals are living in government-controlled areas, more than half of the displaced are located behind rebel lines, in areas controlled by the Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO), the KIA's political wing.

The KIO have granted humanitarian agencies permission to enter their territory and deliver assistance. The Myanmar government, however, continues to block the UN and the international donors from accessing KIO-controlled areas. Thus the majority of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Kachin State are largely dependent on local CBOs for their most basic needs – including shelter, food, health care, water and sanitation, access to medicines, education, and protection.

For even the best equipped agencies, accessing IDP camps in KIO-controlled areas can prove difficult. Many camps are located in remote areas at high altitudes, and during the rainy season (which lasts from May to October), the roads become almost impassable. Supplies often need to be transported by mule, making the process slow and complicated, and hampering the ability of CBOs to do their lifesaving work.

Geographically speaking, some parts of KIO territory are more easily accessed through China than through Myanmar. However, donor restrictions and Chinese border rules make aid delivery very challenging. China does not allow supplies bearing logos of foreign organizations to be transported across its borders, and it also restricts the shipment of food and medicines procured inside Myanmar through China to KIO-held areas. Most donor agencies, meanwhile, prohibit CBOs from purchasing supplies in China.

These complex logistical issues force most CBOs in Kachin State to take incredible risks. During my time in the region, I heard many stories about the innovative – and often dangerous – steps that CBO staff take to reach those in need.



Image credit: opensocietyfoundations.org

Some hide in the forests and wait until nightfall, or until the Chinese border guards have left their posts, before crossing into KIO-controlled areas via China. They also collaborate with Kachin drivers living inside China to find back roads and avoid official border crossings. Still other CBO staff work with Chinese-based Kachin businessmen and traders to procure much needed supplies, and then store them until they are ready for transportation to the IDPs.

Some of these CBO workers have been stopped and questioned by the Chinese border authorities. But if not for their work in rebel-held areas – at such grave personal risk – thousands of IDPs would receive barely any lifesaving assistance.

Instead of directing aid through these courageous CBOs, some major donors and agencies – most notably the U.S. government – have decided to wait until the Myanmar government allows UN convoys to go behind rebel lines. These donors also maintain that many CBOs have limited capacities, lack accountability and are insufficiently transparent. But it could be weeks or months before official access to KIO zones is granted, so it is time for the donor community to think outside the box and be flexible in supporting these CBOs in the KIO-controlled areas. Indeed, they should also invest in capacity-building for these groups to help them meet international standards, rather than simply dismissing them.

Without the incredible work being done by community organisations in KIO-controlled areas, the UN and the international community would have another humanitarian crisis on their hands in Kachin. But to keep the situation from getting worse, they will have to recognize these groups as real partners. [IDN | June 04, 2013] □

*The writer, a former Sri Lanka foreign service officer, visited Myanmar's Kachin State for Refugees International. Her report is reproduced with permission.

AFRICA

Impressive Economic Growth Underway

By Jaya Ramachandran

GENEVA - There is good news from Africa. The continent is witnessing the second fastest economic growth, and according to knowledgeable sources it may grow even faster in 2013. What is more, currently Africa accounts for 14 sovereign wealth funds (SWFs) with a total amount of USD114 billion in 2009, representing 3% of global SWFs, and that share is expected to increase in future with the establishment of new SWFs.

After expanding 5% a year in the past two years, well above the global average, Africa's GDP (Gross Domestic Product) is on track to grow by 5.3% this year. This was the upshot of a televised debate with the presidents of Nigeria and South Africa and business leaders at the 43rd World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos, Switzerland .

"If certain bottlenecks were taken out, I can easily see that doubling," said Graham Mackay, Chairman of the British SABMiller. The global brewer was established in South Africa more than a century ago and has extensive investments across the continent. Mackay singled out infrastructure development as probably the key driver to Africa's continued economic progress.

South African President Jacob G. Zuma stressed that the countries that comprise Africa are determined to consolidate their gains. "We realize that intra-trade is not enough and are working hard on that," he said. Africa is not consumed with conflict, he added. "We are also dealing with the economic issues. We've just discussed and agreed to integrate three of the five economic regions, creating a free trade area of more than half a billion people."

There are risks for investors wherever you invest in the world, said Nigerian President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan. But in Africa, political instability is no longer one of them. "Presently, about three African states have conducted successful elections two times," he said. "Most African states have stable political systems."

Africa's leaders recognize that there are risks, but they said they are dealing with them. Nigeria, for example, is diversifying beyond oil into commercial agriculture to avert economic damage from volatile commodity prices. On recent labour unrest in South Africa, Zuma said solutions are being discussed by all sectors, including the government, labour unions, businesses and civil society.



Louise Arbour, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Brussels-based International Crisis Group (ICG), warned about the risk of the current armed unrest in Mali destabilizing West Africa, but said that the fight against terrorism should not obscure equally important underlying issues that Africa must address, which are governance, political and economic exclusion and very weak institutions.

"The narrative in Africa is changing and changing very fast," said Sunil Bharti Mittal, Chairman and Group Chief Executive Officer, Bharti Enterprises of India. "There is no question that you are seeing more and more countries moving on to the democratic process and moving up the growth curve." Bharti has been very successful in setting up telecommunications companies on the continent.

"From the standpoint of investors and people coming into Africa, I think what is important to see is commitment from the political leadership to secure investments, ensure there are no major fallouts of any terror activities which have recently developed, and, importantly, manage foreign exchange in a manner which does not deliver shocks," he added. Mittal also called for repatriation of business profits becoming the norm and development of Africa's financial system.

The 43rd World Economic Forum Annual Meeting is taking place from January 23 to 27 under the theme Resilient Dynamism. More than 2,500 participants from over 100 countries are taking part in the Meeting.

They include nearly 50 heads of state or government and more than 1,500 business leaders from the Forum's 1,000 Member companies, as well as Social Entrepreneurs, Global Shapers, Young Global Leaders and representatives from civil society, media, academia and the arts. ➡

Sovereign wealth funds (SWFs)

In run-up to the World Economic Forum, the African Development Bank reported that in recent years, with the sustained rise in commodity prices, significant revenues from commodity exports have led to the establishment of SWF in a number of African countries, especially by oil/gas exporters. Currently, 58% of SWF assets worldwide are derived from oil and gas revenues. Major global players of SWFs include China, Middle East and Norway which cumulate more than two-third of global SWFs' assets.

Africa accounts for 14 SWFs with a total amount of USD114 billion in 2009, representing 3% of global SWFs. The largest sovereign funds are the Libyan Investment Authority and Algeria's Revenue Regulation Fund. However, in comparative terms, this is disproportionately lower than the Norwegian Government Pension Fund's USD656 billion and USD627 billion managed by Abu Dhabi Investment Authority, the world's two largest sovereign funds.

Africa's contribution could increase in future with the establishment of new SWFs, the African Development Bank reported. It said that in 2012, three SWFs have been launched in Angola, Ghana, and Nigeria while the Tanzanian government has announced plans to create its sovereign fund to manage the country's revenues from new gas and oil discoveries.

In addition, recent major oil and gas discoveries in East and West Africa are likely to give new opportunities for more African SWFs in the mid-term to foster management of revenues from these new resource discoveries.

The main purpose of a SWF is to ensure that resources of a country are preserved for future generations. Yet, there is controversy about the merits of such funds. On the one hand, advocates for SWFs argue that these funds can help boost economic growth and prosperity for current and future generations. Conversely, critics posit that these funds could give too much power to governments and could switch the global economy away from liberalism and therefore hamper market competitiveness.

Moreover, SWFs could be a source of threat of national security in recipient countries if they are used by investors for political rather than economic purposes. A SWF is also set in order to stabilize government fiscal and/or foreign exchange revenues and macroeconomic aggregates by smoothing out fluctuations in prices of export commodities.

A majority of Africa's SWFs are established for the purpose of price and revenue stabilization. Over the past years, resource-rich African countries have accumulated significant excess reserves from exports of natural resources.

In the short term, because of commodity price fluctuations observed during the past years, countries have put in mechanisms to smooth their revenues/expenditures in

order to ensure a better control of government expenditure planning. By creating SWFs, policymakers try to smooth the volatility of resource-driven revenues by lowering the effect of boom and bust cycles resulting from volatility in commodity prices. In this way, SWFs could be used to absorb large foreign exchange surpluses.

Furthermore, wealth diversification is another motivation for the widespread use of SWFs around the world. Prudent diversification of the natural resource generated wealth reflects a responsible approach for management of the country's assets.

In some countries, the decision to create SWFs may be triggered by other factors such as supporting sustainable spending by the government, and reducing political temptation for malfeasance and corruption in the use of natural resource revenues. Thus, investing in SWFs rather than in traditional central bank's reserve assets could reduce opportunity costs of reserves holdings and could shift the focus on return generation by the fund.

Role of SWFs in Africa?

Promoting intra-African investments and enhancing productivity: African SWFs can enhance productivity and spur intra-African investment through allocating part of their assets to growing sectors in Africa. For instance, the newly launched Angolan SWF is designed to target investments in Sub-Saharan Africa primarily in infrastructure and hospitality sectors. Other Sub-Saharan African sectors targeted by the Angolan Fund include agriculture, water, power generation and transport. Thus, African SWFs may benefit from the growth potential of African countries which offer significant wealth creation opportunities.

Fostering the role of the private sector: The SWFs are generally oriented towards investments in global financial markets rather than in emerging or developing countries, says the African Development Bank. However, African countries can use their own SWF assets to invest in domestic companies to boost growth and to create jobs through spurring private sector's role. The SWFs in Africa may position themselves beyond the objective of macroeconomic stabilization and focus on maximization of investments and returns especially in domestic assets. Moreover, SWFs can indirectly foster the private sector by supporting sound fiscal and monetary policies. This can prompt a fiscal-friendly environment for private sector companies.

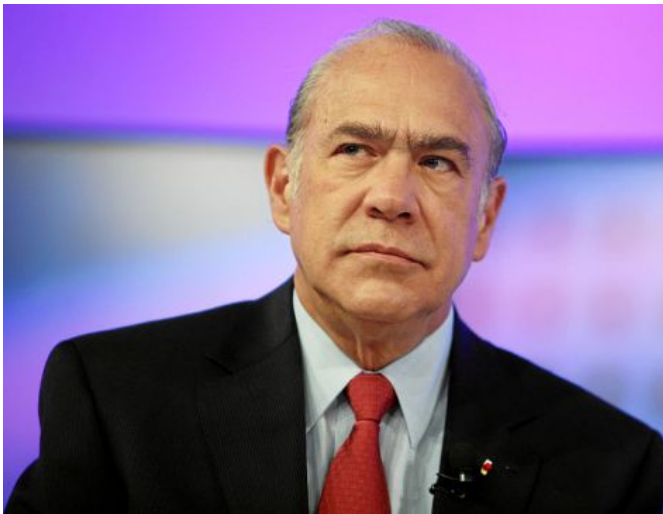
The Bank points out that African SWFs are encountering many challenges that slow their expansion. Governance, especially lack of transparency and accountability are the most important issues facing SWFs in Africa. Recent evidence indicates that African SWFs have low levels of transparency as measured by the Linaburg-Maduell Transparency Index. [IDN] □

AFRICA

South Africa Could Do Better, Says OECD

By Richard Johnson

PARIS - “Despite considerable success on many economic and social policy fronts over the past 19 years, South Africa faces a number of long-standing economic problems that still reflect at least in part the long-lasting and harmful legacy of apartheid,” according to a new report by the prestigious Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) .



OECD Secretary General Ángel Gurría
Credit: OECD

The report titled ‘Economic Survey of South Africa 2013’ finds that unemployment remains excessively high, educational outcomes are poor on average and extremely uneven, which aggravates the excess supply of unskilled labour as well as worsening income inequality. “In addition, the prospects for sustained improvements in well-being are compromised by environmental challenges, notably climate change and water stress.”

The survey by the 34-nation, mostly better-off industrialised countries, tells South Africa that it needs to achieve rapid, inclusive economic growth while at the same time making the transition to a low-carbon economy and managing effectively the country’s scarce water resources.

Tackling the key problems effectively will require continued skilful management of macroeconomic policies, but above all improved implementation of structural policies, with education being a particularly critical area, it adds.

Structural reforms needed

In particular, the OECD asks the South African government to undertake structural reforms in view of achieving faster, more inclusive and more sustainable economic growth. These should be purported, among others, to enable education do a better job in providing equal chances for all South Africans.

In particular, the government is asked to expand its programme to address infrastructure backlogs, improve the delivery of learning materials with priority to the most deprived schools, and increase the number of teachers. “More school leadership training and support staff could be provided to school principals in exchange for stricter accountability,” says the report.

The South African government should further improve the governance of the education system by joining the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) – as is customary in Europe – and the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) and by undertaking an OECD Review of Evaluation and Assessment Frameworks for Improving School Outcomes, the report suggests.

The survey adds: Product market regulation should be less restrictive, particularly as regards barriers to entrepreneurship. The within-sector legal extension of collective bargaining agreements could be curtailed, while the level of centralisation and co-ordination in collective bargaining could be increased to allow for greater influence of outsiders on wages and conditions.

Praise and Criticism

The report praises the South African policy framework for addressing environmental issues, including climate change and water scarcity, as sound, but it is of the view that implementation has so far been slow, in part due to limited administrative capacity. OECD tells the South African government that in designing climate change mitigation policies, it should favour broad and easy-to-implement instruments, such as a simple carbon tax.

Further: “Implicit and explicit subsidies for energy and coal consumption should be reduced, while other instruments, such as cash transfers or supply vouchers, should be used for protecting the poor.

The survey, presented in Pretoria on March 4, 2013 by OECD Secretary-General Angel Gurría and South African Minister of Finance Pravin Gordhan, stresses also the important advances South Africa has made in recent years. “South Africa has recorded tremendous success in a number of economic and social policies” Gurría said. “Per capita income is rising, public services are expanding, health indicators are improving and public finances are in better shape than in many OECD countries.” ☺

He noted that together with Brazil, China, India and Indonesia, “South Africa is one of our Key Partners”. This partnership, he added, is a two-way engagement: “one that allows us to support South Africa’s policy agenda for inclusive and sustainable growth; one that allows our members and other partner countries to benefit from your insights, expertise and unique experience.”

However, the country is growing at a slower pace than other leading emerging economies, according to the Survey. “A high proportion of the population is out of work; offering people a brighter future by creating jobs is a policy priority,” Gurría said.

“Income inequality remains high, educational outcomes should be improved and access to education needs to be inclusive. Environmental challenges like climate change and water scarcity need to be tackled to make economic growth green and sustainable. There is unfinished business that will require additional reform efforts.”

Priority areas

OECD identifies several priority areas for action. It asks South Africa to make better use of macroeconomic policy to support growth. It argues that the (budgetary) deficit expanded rapidly during the crisis and has been brought down only gradually since.

Much of the increase in spending came through large increases in the public sector wage bill, while public investment has fallen as a share of total expenditure. With core inflation remaining well contained, monetary policy has been eased cautiously. The rand has fluctuated with inter-national sentiment, and has been overvalued for extended periods. The survey also urges the South

The survey also urges the South African government to implement reforms to boost competition and improve the functioning of labour markets. Presently, most industries are highly concentrated, with network industries dominated by state-owned enterprises. Large firms are able to share excess returns with their employees via collective bargaining, and in some sectors the collective agreements are extended to other firms, creating a barrier to entry for small enterprises.



This, says the survey, results in “a sharply dualised labour market”, with a well-paid formal sector covered by collective bargaining and a secondary market where pay is low and conditions poor. Subsequently, many South Africans are excluded from work altogether, contributing to poverty, inequality, and ill health. Strengthening product market competition and improving the functioning of labour market institutions should therefore be high priorities, says the survey. [IDN | March 5, 2013] □

Photo above: South African Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan

MIDDLE EAST

Saudi Arabia Becoming Vulnerable

By Fahad Nazer*, Yale Global

WASHINGTON - Thanks to the bountiful oil under its desert sands and an equally plentiful supply of foreign labour – skilled and non-skilled – Saudi Arabia has enjoyed a booming economy. Prices of crude oil, nearly \$100 a barrel for two years running, have largely spared Saudi Arabia the ill effects of the economic downturn that stalled many nations across the globe.



Credit: Yale Global-Gulf News

Thanks to the prosperity, the kingdom has also survived, relatively unscathed, the seismic events of the Arab Spring, spurred in large part by feelings of economic deprivation and political marginalization among Arab youths.

But as more young adults come of age and expect jobs, as the potential for competing sources of energy emerge around the globe, leaders must plan for a more austere future, raising questions about the Saudi development model. Early casualties of this Saudi rethink include millions of expatriates who have flocked to a booming oil kingdom. While some have lived and worked in the kingdom for many years, the path to citizenship is notoriously inaccessible and most expatriates return to their home countries at some point.

Some observers have argued that the Saudi government's seemingly unlimited ability to spend billions to mitigate political, social or economic crises has been the key to its relative stability. The leaders strive to balance the still-predominant role that oil plays in the Saudi economy with long-term economic planning and demonstrate a commitment to human capital by spending lavishly on education, housing, healthcare and job-creation.

In various stages of planning across the kingdom are 24 industrial cities intended to provide thousands of jobs as well as housing for the estimated 400,000 Saudis who join the labor force every year. An estimated \$ 134.1 billion is earmarked for water desalination and electricity-

generation projects over the next decade. Some 130,000 Saudis study abroad as part of the King Abdullah Scholarship Program. More than half of the Saudis enrolled in more than 60 colleges and universities across the kingdom are women.

While this may seem like an ideal scenario – a state willing and able to develop its human capital to the fullest and an increasingly well-educated and eager population ready to take the helm of the biggest economy in the Middle East – there is one caveat: Almost 9 million residents of Saudi Arabia, or 32 percent of the population, are non-Saudis who perform everything from menial sanitation work to managing the nation's top banks. It's estimated that only about 20 percent of foreign workers are considered highly skilled; in addition, there are up to 2 million illegal migrants. In a society with leaders proclaiming young people are its "future," the role for immigrants is not clear.

Long before the Saudi population exploded – from 6.8 million in 1973 to more than 28 million currently – fields in the Eastern province began gushing oil that proved to be among the cheapest to extract in the world. As oil production and prices kicked into high gear by the early 1970s, Saudi Arabia underwent one of the most rapid transformations in modern history. From a sparsely populated, largely barren desert, Saudi Arabia today boasts state-of-the-art highways, airports and communication networks.

Until fairly recently however, the country lacked the manpower necessary to implement this massive undertaking. This so-called "miracle in the desert" needed a massive influx of foreigners from across the Arab world, Africa and Asia to turn rapid development into reality.

Recently, government unemployment-benefits programs confirmed what many have known for a while: An estimated 600,000 Saudis are unemployed, almost 80 percent of whom are under age 30.

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Many argue that the private sector, long dominated by non-Saudis, is the logical place to absorb citizen workers. To avert shocks to the system, Saudi officials implemented a penalizes those that do not. While considered a common-sense approach by many, business owners have protested what they call arbitrary standards that reduce bottom-line profits.

Saudi businessmen have long complained privately about a sense of entitlement among some young Saudis. These youths, they argued, expect high salaries despite inadequate experience and avoid entry-level positions. Many lack the skills necessary to fill technical positions or don't want to perform menial jobs. Hushed debate among business owners, government planners and intellectuals remained behind closed doors for years, but the conversation has since moved onto social-media platforms like Twitter and internet chat-rooms as well as the mainstream media.

In early April, the government began cracking down on workers violating regulations requiring them to work only for their original visa sponsor, intended mostly to free up semi-skilled jobs that citizens were ostensibly willing to fill. Saudis were quickly reminded of the essential role that migrants perform in the kingdom, as news of the arrests spread and hundreds of shops, restaurants and private schools closed.

While many supported the crackdown based on a rule-of-law argument, a small but vocal minority expressed xenophobic views, using the internet not only to rally support for the crackdown but in some cases, launch campaigns vilifying specific groups of non-Saudis, especially illegal migrants who have long lived on the margins of Saudi society. Some pushing this "Saudis first" agenda portrayed illegal migrants and workers as veritable "locusts," invading the nation and engaging in illegal activities, including organized criminal gangs, prostitution and even witchcraft.

As the animus intensified, other Saudis advised their countrymen not to transfer this hostility to the millions of

program called "Nitaqat," which ranks businesses according to the percentage of Saudi nationals employed. Nitaqat rewards companies for hiring more Saudis and legal workers who have played a pivotal role in the kingdom's development and urged Saudis to treat immigrants as guests. Among writers asking Saudis to look at themselves was Khalaf Al-Harbi in the Saudi Gazette:

"The fault is within us and not within the foreign workers." In the meantime, an estimated 800,000 Yemenis, Indians, Pakistanis and Filipinos among others deported over the past 18 months have added a truly global dimension to what Saudi authorities see as necessary measures to reduce a 12 percent unemployment rate.

Officials in the home countries for some nationals voice concern about their own ability to absorb tens of thousands of people into an already tight job market, with leaders in Yemen and the Philippines acknowledging that their economies rely on overseas remittances.

An already emotionally charged discourse was complicated by a number of high-profile cases of alleged abuse of foreign domestic workers by Saudi employers, along with equally troubling reports of foreign caretakers abusing or even killing children in their care.

Some Saudis have even blamed Arab members of the Muslim Brotherhood who fled places like Egypt and Syria in the 1950s and 1960s of "exporting" a brand of militant Islam into the kingdom. In April a government representative reportedly told a local newspaper that imams in mosques in the Mecca region must be Saudi nationals, though prominent foreign clerics continue to preach on a number of satellite television channels.

The uncertainty and panic that followed the crackdown prompted King Abdullah to issue a three-month grace period for illegal workers to rectify status. Still, difficult decisions await Saudis about the millions of non-Saudis in the country legally as the government looks to resolve high unemployment and secure work for its own youth.

[IDN | June 02, 2013] □



Credit: World Factbook

MIDDLE EAST

Egypt Developments in Continuing Revolution, Not a Coup

By Ismail Serageldin*



Demonstrators in Cairo's Tahrir Square on the morning of 27 November 2012 | Credit: Wikimedia Commons

CAIRO - Egypt is once more doing things its own unique way. After millions of people went into the streets and in 18 days that shook the world succeeded in toppling the regime of Hosny Mubarak after 30 years of rule, they came back again in their millions into the streets and squares of Egypt and toppled Mohamed Morsi after one year of rule.

Dr. Mohamed Morsi was Egypt's first elected civilian president, in free and fair elections organized by the post-Mubarak military rulers after 18 months of transitional governance. The people rejoiced in the election and the handover of power from the military to Dr. Morsi on July 1, 2012. They backed him in his bid to assert civilian leadership over the military.

But soon, through a series of ill-advised actions, the Morsi government seemed to most Egyptians more intent on serving the interests of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) than in bringing the country together. The MB and the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP) they created alienated all political factions in Egypt, even the Islamists in the Salafi movement who largely share their vision of an Islamic Egypt.

Feeling blocked in their desire to change course, and some even feeling betrayed by the narrow agenda of the ruling MB and FJP elite, the people felt obliged to resort to this democratic and largely peaceful tactic of collecting signatures and coming out in peaceful protest. ☞

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Despite the spurts of violence and the likely continuation of some strife in the short term, we all hope that we will move on to create a real, inclusive and properly functioning democracy and open a new era for Egypt and its people.

A historical precedent

About a hundred years ago in late 1918 Egyptian nationalist leaders led by Saad Zaghloul wanted to present Egypt's case for independence from British occupation to the Versailles conference at the end of World War I. They proved to the British their legitimacy by getting hundreds of thousands of individually signed statements deputizing them to represent Egypt.

Egypt's people had spoken clearly and democratically. The British ignored this mandate and exiled Saad Zaghloul and his colleagues to Malta. The public took to the streets, followed by widespread civil disobedience and ultimately the British had to back down. They brought back Zaghloul and his colleagues, recognized Egypt's independence in 1922 and Egypt started its 30 years of liberal multi-party democracy with the 1923 constitution.

The Revolution gets its second wind

The revolution of January 25, 2011 was beautiful and peaceful. But to many who participated in it the events following the revolution did not deliver on its promises. This time they were determined to have a "mid-course correction" and give the revolutionary spirit its second wind.

Despite efforts at intimidation by the Islamists, including their big demonstrations on June 28, and their blaring TV channels warning that anyone who opposed President Morsi would be an apostate and should be killed and other such tactics, the people stayed on course and came out in their millions for these days, that were not "days of rage" but very largely "days of peaceful protest" where the nation came together and showed a certain moral grandeur.

Incidentally, the Morsi-appointed Islamist Minister of Culture was waging an all-out war on the artists and intellectuals, who retaliated by blockading his office and holding performances in the street from street theater to poetry readings, as the Opera was closed, ballet was banned and the heads of the national library and archives, the conservatory of music and the High Council for Culture were all dismissed, and their staffs went on strike (against the minister).

The Library of Alexandria was probably the only public cultural institution to remain open and functioning more or less normally, without any interference. And again, even without any human chains around it, no one threw a stone at it.

Actually this time, no police or public buildings were targeted. Over the last few months, the targets were the HQ of the MB and the HQs of its political party, the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP). Many were attacked and burned by a

number of rioters. Later on the police found stashes of weapons in some of those party HQ and the MB's own central HQ, which they claimed were for self-defence.

The Army after having asked the president several times to seriously search for common ground, and getting only a "no compromise" and "I am the boss" speech and seeing the will of the people expressed in individual signed statements by ordinary citizens and the enormous crowds estimated at somewhere upwards of 20 million in all of Egypt, rejected the "no compromise" line of the President and working with all the leaders of these national groups deposed him. But they did not do that alone.

The Head of the Constitutional Court of Egypt, the Pope of the Coptic Church and Sheikh Al Azhar (head of Sunni Muslims), The Al-Nour Salafi Party, the retired head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) El-Baradei, and representatives of other movements, together with Army leaders, drafted the communiqué which deposed the president, and they were all there in reading the communiqué, and they spoke immediately after the reading of the communiqué on TV.

This was no Coup

President Morsi's followers claimed that what happened was a coup d'état by the military against an elected civilian leader, and called on outsiders to respond accordingly. But this was no coup. There was no small group of conspirators. There was no secrecy. The army simply aligned itself with the will of the overwhelming majority of the people, who refused to be intimidated by the threats of the MB and the FJP and came out into the streets on the appointed day of 30th of June.

Here is the definition of a Coup d'Etat:

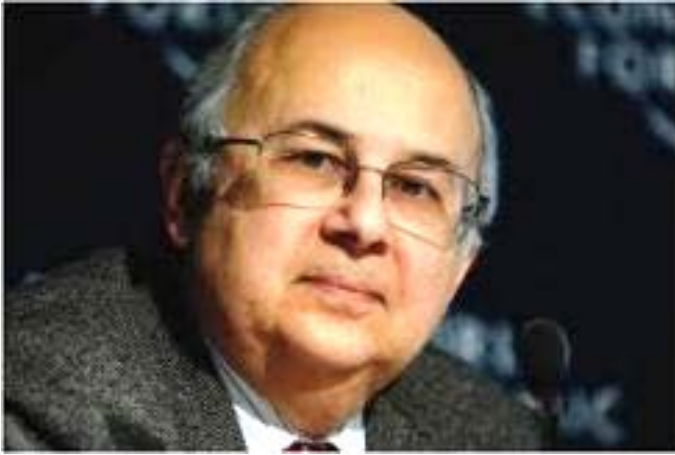
A sudden decisive exercise of force in politics; especially: the violent overthrow or alteration of an existing government by a small group. -- Merriam Webster

(French: "stroke of state") Sudden overthrow, often violent, of an existing government by a group of conspirators. ... Their success depends on surprise and speed. -- Concise encyclopedia

In what way does this even remotely describe what happened in Egypt? Starting several months ago with a public campaign by youthful activists under the slogan "Tamarud" (rebellion), tens of millions of people have been saying that they want the current rulers to step down and that they would express themselves peacefully by collecting signatures (some 22 million signatures) of individual Egyptians to say so, and they will be coming into the public spaces of Egypt (not just Tahrir Square) on the 30th of June to prove their point. And come they did. In their millions.

A can of tuna...

I was discussing with one of the demonstrators, and asked him about what he thought of the fact that Dr. Morsi



Ismail Serageldin | Credit: Library of Alexandria
Artist's rendition of the ancient Library of Alexandria | Wikimedia



became President through legal and fair elections and still had time on his term. And in one of those simple, direct expressions of powerful folk wisdom he said to me: **“So I bought a**

can of tuna. I opened it and the tuna was rotten. Do you think I should eat it?” Another said to me: **“They have done enough damage in one year, and I am not going to wait to see how much more damage they can cause in three more years”.**

A third (an intellectual) said to me: **“So what? Hitler came to power with free elections. If the Germans had deposed him and his Nazis after one year, the world would have been a much better place”.** A fourth said that **“We are the ones who voted him in, and now we are telling him to step down”.**

A fifth, also an intellectual, said to me **“By definition, the legitimacy of the ruler is based on the consent of the governed. Periodic elections are a means to ensure that consent is regularly expressed. He has lost the consent of the governed. They have overwhelmingly expressed their will. He should just go”.** A sixth said: **“yes elections, but not one man, one vote, and only one time”.**

The message of the protesters was clear, and I think that the “can of tuna” sums it up best!

Overview

This was a spectacular revolution that no one, repeat no one, has seen the likes of. Bigger and larger than the crowds that ended the Mubarak regime, this movement, organized (again!) by unknown youthful leaders, mobilized all of Egypt. The movement drew its legitimacy from individual papers signed by millions and millions of individual citizens (estimated at 22 million individual signatures). And on the date of the rendezvous, June 30, the crowds were in every city, and the Muslim Brotherhood and their supporters could only marshal two (relatively) small crowds in two squares in Cairo after busing their followers from all the provinces.

This was an unprecedented display of “people power” in largely peaceful demonstrations, holding up national flags and demands for freedom and democracy, and today, no one can say any more – as they tried to say after the Mubarak ouster – that the huge crowds were only due to the Islamists joining the revolution.

This was no “coup”. The judges and lawyers, the army, the police, the religious leaders, including both the Pope (Coptic Christians) and the Shaikh Al-Azhar (Sunni Muslims) the civil society and most of the parties except the party of the Muslim Brotherhood as well as the artists and intellectuals, and the vast majority of journalists in the media simply rejected the Islamists and their plans for an Islamic Republic, and the people of Egypt refused to wait another three years to say so.

Once more, the army refused to fire on the people, and this time refused to allow any private militias to do it either. This was no coup. This was the Egyptian revolution getting its second wind, correcting its path and ensuring a new birth of freedom on this ancient land.

We can only hope that this time, we all take the time to draft a proper constitution first and then proceed to new elections in the light of that constitution, rather than rushing to new elections while still contesting the current constitution and the way it was “rammed through”. We can only hope that the supporters of the deposed president do not resort to violence to try to turn back the clock.

It is also time that all, repeat all, Egyptians come together in national reconciliation and work together for a better future. But whatever happens, it is clear that having taken matters in to their own hands twice, the Egyptian people are not willing to let anyone ignore their wishes anymore... and the actions of every Egyptian in these crowds today exemplify the words of William Ernest Henley’s *Invictus*:

*It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul.*

[IDN | July 8, 2013] □

MIDDLE EAST

Syria: Enough is Enough

By Jayantha Dhanapala*

KANDY - The two-year-old conflict in Syria rages on with the embattled dictatorship of Bashar al-Assad and his Ba'ath Party withstanding the attacks of a motley group of rebels supported by the West and by the money bag monarchies of Saudi Arabia and Qatar with Israel not far behind. Dictatorships - whether unelected, elected or inherited - are of course unacceptable in this day and age when the palpable consent of a sovereign people is paramount for the governance of independent countries. However, no regime change by self-appointed guardians of democracy from abroad can replace a genuine movement for change by the people, of the people and for the people.

Applicable international law, even in the implementation of the controversial 'Responsibility to Protect' doctrine, is very clear on this - only the Security Council can take action in the name of maintaining international peace and security. The tenth anniversary of the infamously illegal invasion of Iraq for the purpose of regime change and on the false pretext of eradicating weapons of mass destruction was recently observed by massive bombings and blood-letting in Iraq with a weak government presiding over a faction-ridden country coping with unbridled violence. Is that the future that awaits Syria?

The Syria imbroglio differs from the Iraqi one in a number of ways. It emerged at the time of the Arab Spring when Tunisia first and then Egypt, Yemen, Syria, Bahrain, Libya and other Arab countries saw the people rise spontaneously against dictatorial regimes with whom the West and the rest of the world had been content to have normal, and even cozy, relations.

The West supported these popular uprisings selectively. Tunisia's revolt was autonomous and did not need foreign assistance to succeed. In the case of Libya, Gaddafi's resistance was soon swept away when the Western powers in the Security Council exploited voting abstentions by Russia and China to empower NATO to enter the battle. Libya, post Gaddafi today, remains divided by factions and is dangerously unstable. The revolt in Bahrain was suppressed because the Saudis supported the unpopular ruler there. Syria was the next target and this suited Israel's agenda since it was on Israel's border and Syrian territory on the Golan Heights remains occupied by Israel.

The Arab world was divided in supporting the Syrian regime, which comes from the 12% Alawite sect of the Shias in Syria where the Sunnis and Kurds demand power sharing as in Iraq. The Arab League suspended the Syrian regime and later gave the Syrian National Coalition that seat in its body. The fact is that a heterogeneous collection of



groups including the Jihadist Jabba al-Nusra and other extremist groups suspected of Al Qaeda links are benefiting from arms supplied by the Western supporters and the wealthy Saudi and Qatari financiers of the rebel groups.

Regional rivalry

The regional rivalry between the Saudis and the Qataris has complicated the Syrian problem. Syria is the linchpin of the Middle East and its complex religious and ethnic mix can affect the whole region if it unravels. In the past the connection between Lebanon and Syria was well established but today the links between Syria and the Middle East region are far wider and deeper. The explicit support for the Syrian regime by the Hezbollah is sufficient to ensure Israeli and Western opposition to continue and reports of Israeli missile attacks on Syria are no surprise. The Syrian regime has suffered a number of defections at senior military, official and diplomatic levels. At the international level Russia remains the main supporter and arms supplier of the Assad regime. After the bitter lesson of the Libyan episode, Russia and China have vetoed any move by the West to obtain Security Council approval for action on Syria.

The humanitarian cost of the war has been enormous. The heads of humanitarian agencies in the UN system took the unusual step of coming out with a joint statement urging a political solution saying "Enough, enough.... We, leaders of U.N. agencies charged with dealing with the human costs of this tragedy, appeal to political leaders involved to meet their responsibility to the people of Syria and to the future of the region." ↻

**Jayantha Dhanapala is currently President of the 1995 Nobel Peace Prize recipient the Pugwash Conferences on Science & World Affairs, a former UN Under-Secretary-General and a former Ambassador of Sri Lanka.*

The death toll of more than 70,000 is tragic. The displacement of refugees (over 1.3 million to date) has created problems for neighbouring countries especially in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey. The Palestinian refugees within Syria have also to face acute distress. The UN's efforts have been unproductive – but not for want of trying. First, Kofi Annan was appointed Special Envoy but gave up in the face of the intransigence of the parties. Lakhdar Brahimi succeeded him and talked of finding chinks in the blank wall that faced him. He is still trying to get the parties to the negotiating table but the lack of unity among the rebel forces and the perception that negotiating with Assad, instead of insisting on his resignation, will perpetuate the ruling regime, stand in the way.

"Red line" controversy

The latest controversy surrounds the alleged use of chemical weapons in particular the nerve gas sarin. The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) of 1993 bans chemical weapons universally but Syria is among a very few states, including Egypt and Israel, not party to the CWC. Its stocks of these weapons are probably small but it is also likely that rebel groups have secured access to these weapons and have used them to implicate the regime. This likelihood is increased by the imprudent statement of Obama, desperately fighting against the pro-Israeli and other warmongering groups in the US, saying that the Assad regime would be crossing a "red line" if it used chemical weapons against its own people. This signalled to all that, if that "red line" was crossed, the US would shift from the sidelines of this conflict providing intelligence and used light weapons to actually putting boots on the ground.

Such a step would be a giant flip backwards for Obama who came into power to extricate his economically troubled country from the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq into which the preceding Bush Administration had led the USA with

disastrous consequences. The opinion polls in the US are against another war. Obama has now been forced to qualify his earlier statement by seeking answers to the questions as to when and how the chemical weapons were used and by whom. He is unlikely to get clear-cut, unambiguous answers especially since the UN mandated team of experts has not been permitted to enter Syria. The Russian offer to send their own experts is likely to be rebuffed by the Western powers who doubt the credibility of Russian experts.

As the controversy rages the people of Syria are being killed and wounded and the cities including Damascus – the oldest continuously inhabited city in the world – are being destroyed and with it a priceless heritage of humankind. The contending parties have to first agree to a ceasefire with a UN peacekeeping force to supervise it. The next step is to negotiate in order to form a coalition government that can bring a stable peace and genuine democracy to Syria with the Ba'ath Party included with or without Assad. Russia must pressure Assad and the West, Saudi Arabia and Qatar must persuade its coalition to take these steps since outright victory for either party is unlikely in this stalemate where all are losers.

Indeed it is rumoured in Washington that Obama favours the pragmatic Gen. Salim Idriss, the commander of the rebels' Supreme Military Council in a Russian brokered deal to end the war. Pending a peaceful solution US supplies of arms to the rebels while Russia supplies arms to the Assad regime would be a regression to the proxy wars of the Cold War era while Syria bleeds. And in the midst of all this where is the role of once influential Non Aligned Movement (NAM)?

[IDN | May 8, 2013] □



Credit: media.npr.org

NUKE ABOLITION

'Nuclear Iran Unlikely to Tilt Regional Power Balance'

By Jim Lobe and Joe Hitchon

WASHINGTON - A nuclear-armed Iran would not pose a fundamental threat to the United States and its regional allies like Israel and the Gulf Arab monarchies, according to a new report released here on May 17 by the Rand Corporation.

Entitled "Iran After the Bomb: How Would a Nuclear-Armed Tehran Behave?", the report asserts that the acquisition by Tehran of nuclear weapons would above all be intended to deter an attack by hostile powers, presumably including Israel and the United States, rather than for aggressive purposes.

And while its acquisition may indeed lead to greater tension between Iran and its Sunni-led neighbours, the 50-page report concludes that Tehran would be unlikely to use nuclear weapons against other Muslim countries. Nor would it be able to halt its diminishing influence in the region resulting from the Arab Spring and its support for the Syrian government, according to the author, Alireza Nader.

"Iran's development of nuclear weapons will enhance its ability to deter an external attack, but it will not enable it to change the Middle East's geopolitical order in its own favour," Nader, an international policy analyst at RAND, told IPS. "The Islamic Republic's challenge to the region is constrained by its declining popularity, a weak economy, and a limited conventional military capability. An Iran with nukes will still be a declining power."

The report reaches several conclusions all of which generally portray Iran as a rational actor in its international relations. While Nader calls it a "revisionist state" that tries to undermine what it sees as a U.S.-dominated order in the Middle East, his report stresses that "it does not have territorial ambitions and does not seek to invade, conquer, or occupy other nations."

Further, the report identifies the Islamic Republic's military doctrine as defensive in nature. This posture is presumably a result of the volatile and unstable region in which it exists and is exacerbated by its status as a Shi'a and Persian-majority nation in a Sunni and Arab-majority region.

Iran is also scarred by its traumatic eight-year war with Iraq in which as many as one million Iranians lost their lives.

The new report comes amidst a growing controversy here over whether a nuclear-armed Iran could itself be successfully "contained" by the U.S. and its allies and deterred both from pursuing a more aggressive policy in the region and actually using nuclear weapons against its foes.

Iran itself has vehemently denied it intends to build a weapon, and the U.S. intelligence community has reported consistently over the last six years that Tehran's leadership



has not yet decided to do so, although the increasing sophistication and infrastructure of its nuclear programme will make it possible to build one more quickly if such a decision is made.

Official U.S. policy, as enunciated repeatedly by top officials, including President Barack Obama, is to "prevent" Iran from obtaining a weapon, even by military means if ongoing diplomatic efforts and "crippling" economic sanctions fail to persuade Iran to substantially curb its nuclear programme.

A nuclear-armed Iran, in the administration's view – which is held even more fervently by the U.S. Congress where the Israel lobby exerts its greatest influence – represents an "existential threat" to the Jewish state.

In addition, according to the administration, Iran's acquisition of a weapon would likely embolden it and its allies – notably Lebanon's Hezbollah – to pursue more aggressive actions against their foes and could well set off a regional "cascade effect" in which other powers, particularly Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Egypt, would feel obliged to launch nuclear-weapons programmes of their own.

But a growing number of critics of the prevention strategy – particularly that part of it that would resort to military action against Iran – argue that a nuclear Iran will not be nearly as dangerous as the reigning orthodoxy assumes.

A year ago, for example, Paul Pillar, a veteran CIA analyst who served as National Intelligence Officer for the Middle East and South Asia from 2000 to 2005, published a lengthy essay in 'The Washington Monthly', "We Can Live With a Nuclear Iran: Fears of a Bomb in Tehran's Hands Are Overhyped, and a War to Prevent It Would Be a Disaster." ↻

Image above: iran-isfahan-nuclear | Credit: Lob Log

More recently, Colin Kahl, an analyst at the Center for a New American Security (CNAS) who also served as the Pentagon's top Middle East policy adviser for much of Obama's first term, published two reports – the first questioning the “cascade effect” in the region, and the second, published in May and entitled “If All Else Fails: The Challenges of Containing a Nuclear-Armed Iran,” outlining a detailed “containment strategy” — including extending Washington's nuclear umbrella over states that feel threatened by a nuclear Iran — the U.S. could follow to deter Tehran's use of a nuclear bomb or its transfer to non-state actors, like Hezbollah, and persuade regional states not to develop their own nuclear arms capabilities.

In addition, Kenneth Pollack, a former CIA analyst at the Brookings Institution whose 2002 book, “The Threatening Storm” helped persuade many liberals and Democrats to support the U.S. invasion of Iraq, will publish a new book, “Unthinkable: Iran, the Bomb, and American Strategy”, that is also expected to argue for a containment strategy if Iran acquires a nuclear weapon.

Because both Brookings and CNAS are regarded as close to the administration, some neo-conservative commentators have expressed alarm that these reports are “trial balloons” designed to set the stage for Obama's abandonment of the prevention strategy in favour of containment, albeit by another name.

It is likely that Nader's study – coming as it does from RAND, a think tank with historically close ties to the Pentagon – will be seen in a similar light.

His report concedes that Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons would lead to greater tension with the Gulf Arab monarchies and thus to greater instability in the region. Moreover, an inadvertent or accidental nuclear exchange between Israel and Iran would be a “dangerous possibility”, according to Nader who also notes that the “cascade effect”, while outside the scope of his study, warrants “careful consideration”.

Despite Iran's strong ideological antipathy toward Israel, the report does not argue that Tehran would attack the Jewish state with nuclear weapons, as that would almost certainly lead to the regime's destruction.

Israel, in Nader's view, fears that Iran's nuclear capability could serve as an “umbrella” for Tehran's allies that could significantly hamper Israel's military operations in the Palestinian territories, the Levant, and the wider region.

But the report concludes that Tehran is unlikely to extend its nuclear deterrent to its allies, including Hezbollah, noting that the interests of those groups do not always – or even often – co-incide with Iran's. Iran would also be highly unlikely to transfer nuclear weapons to them in any event, according to the report. [IPS | May 18, 2013] □

US-Russia Cling to Bygone Era

By George Gao

UNITED NATIONS - In the late 19th century, Russian playwright Anton Chekhov famously touted one golden rule for dramatic productions: if you show your audience a loaded gun in the first act, that gun must go off by the last.

But Chekhov's storytelling trope is troubling if applied to the world's weapons technology today, which include an estimated 17,300 nukes – used primarily by nations as props to leverage international power.

According to the Ploughshares Fund's World Nuclear Stockpile Report, an estimated 8,500 nukes belong to Russia and 7,700 to the U.S. The seven other nations with a nuclear arsenal trail far behind: they include France (300), China (240), the U.K. (225), Pakistan (90-110), India (60-110), Israel (60-80) and most recently North Korea (10).

“It's hard to imagine any military mission that will require the use of one nuclear weapon. The use of 10 weapons would be a catastrophe beyond human experience, and 50 is unthinkable,” said Joe Cirincione, president of the Ploughshares Fund, a global security foundation based in the U.S.

“The number you need to actually deter an enemy from attacking the U.S. with or without nuclear weapons is very, very low. To be on the safe side, you might want a couple of

hundred,” he told IPS. “The idea that we need thousands of nuclear weapons... is an outmoded, irrational, expensive legacy of the Cold War,” he said.

While the U.S.'s nuke budget is secret, Cirincione estimates that in the next decade, the U.S. will spend 640 billion dollars on nukes and its related programmes – such as missile defence systems, environmental clean-up of nuclear activity and the technological upgrade of the current nuclear arsenal.

Asked about the US's role in pushing for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation on the international scale, Cirincione said, “The U.S. is probably the most influential voice in this debate, but it can't do it alone. Most importantly,

it needs Russia to reduce the arsenals with them.” On Feb. 5, 2011, the U.S. and Russia entered into force a New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START), in which both nations agreed by 2018 to limit the number of their warheads to 1,550; and the number of their combined intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) and heavy bombers equipped for nuclear armaments to 800. ➔

“If the U.S. and Russia can agree to cut their arsenals in half, for example, as they did in the 1980s and the 1990s... it would be universally applauded, and it would be very difficult for bureaucracies and political opponents to resist that in either country,” said Cirincione.

But U.S. progress for disarmament and non-proliferation has stalled in the past few years. George Perkovich, director of the Nuclear Policy Programme at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, attributes the U.S.’s balk partly to internal politics in Washington.

In his April 2013 monograph, *Do Unto Others: Toward a Defensible Nuclear Doctrine*, Perkovich writes, “A relatively small, specialized community of experts and officials shapes U.S. nuclear policy.”

Members of this community often distort nuclear threats to the U.S., as well as the best ways to respond to such threats, argues Perkovich. They do this not in the U.S.’s national security interest, but in their own career interests to prevent “their domestic rivals from attacking them as too weak to hold office”.

Nukes deter U.S.-led regime change

Perkovich also notes in his monograph that Iran, North Korea and Pakistan believe having their own nuclear arsenals deter U.S.-led regime change. They fear the fates of nuclear-free Iraq in 2003 and Libya in 2011.

Asked how the U.S. should respond if future world governments – oppressive or not, who are acting against U.S. interests – continue pursuing nukes to prevent regime change, Perkovich told IPS that would be a difficult problem.

“The one and only thing nuclear weapons are good for is to keep people from invading your country. So, states and leaders that worry about getting invaded tend to find nukes attractive, or alliance with the U.S. attractive,” he said.

“Non-proliferation would be easier to achieve if states didn’t worry they were going to be invaded and/ or overthrown if they didn’t have nuclear weapons.

“The problem, clearly, is that some governments are so brutal and menacing to their own people and neighbours that it is hard to foreswear trying to remove them,” he added.

Perkovich recommended that the U.S. limit pressure against repressive governments to political and moral means, as well as to sanctions; and that the U.S. clarify it won’t act militarily, if the repressive regime does not attack its neighbours or seek nukes.



Cirincione, author of *Bomb Scare: The History and Future of Nuclear Weapons*, argued that vying for nukes, in Iran and North Korea’s cases, may actually be counterproductive.

“I don’t think it improves their security, I think it isolates them even further,” he said. “It prevents them from forging the kind of international ties that can really aid their country, build their economies (and) increase their influence.

“That means that in order to stop those countries from getting or keeping nuclear weapons, you have to address their legitimate security concerns. A part of the engagement with those countries has got to be security assurances that guarantees then that you won’t attack them, or that their neighbours won’t attack them.”

Obama’s nuclear legacy

During his December 2012 speech at the National War College in Washington, U.S. President Barack Obama said, “Missile by missile, warhead by warhead, shell by shell, we’re putting a bygone era behind us.”

Cirincione explained that pursuing nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation has been important to Obama since his youth. Obama’s first foreign policy speech as president – in Prague in April 2009 – and his first foreign policy speech after re-election both focused on nukes.

“The president faces a multitude of pressing issues, but only two of them threaten destruction on a planetary scale: global warming and nuclear weapons,” said Cirincione.

While opposition to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation is prevalent inside Washington, it pales in comparison to opposition facing warming, immigration, or tax reform.

“This is an opportunity for the president to make a major improvement in U.S. and global security with a relatively small investment of his time,” said Cirincione, who explained that Obama’s efforts to curb nukes may conclude a historic arc, which started with President John F. Kennedy’s efforts in the 1960s and was accelerated by President Ronald Reagan’s efforts in the 1980s.

Cirincione said, “(Obama’s) got three and a half years to do it. If he starts now, he can get the job done. He can change U.S. nuclear policy to put it irreversibly on a path to fewer nuclear weapons, and eventually (eliminate) this threat from the face of the earth.” [IPS | May 17, 2013] □

Image: The first launch of a Trident missile on Jan. 18, 1977 at Cape Canaveral, Florida. Credit: U.S. Air Force

NUKE ABOLITION

UN Accused of Playing Down Disarmament Conference

By Thalif Deen

UNITED NATIONS - Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon is one of the most vociferous advocates of a world free of nuclear weapons. "Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are not utopian ideals," he says. "They are critical to global peace and security."

Still, the Group of 77, the largest single coalition of 132 developing countries, implicitly accuses the United Nations of falling short in its efforts to publicise a meeting on nuclear disarmament scheduled to take place Sep. 26.

Ambassador Peter Thomson of Fiji, the G77 chair, last week described the upcoming talks as "the first-ever high level meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament."

He said the meeting is of importance to developing nations, and therefore, all efforts should be made to give it timely and wide publicity.

A G77 delegate told IPS the conference is not getting the advance publicity it should, probably because three of the big powers, the United States, UK and France, are not supportive of the meeting.

"We have not seen anything on the high level meeting so far," he added.

The lack of coverage stands in contrast to the strong public stand taken by the secretary-general, who has consistently called for the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

Asked about the significance of the upcoming meeting, Dr. John Burroughs, executive director of the New York-based Lawyers Committee on Nuclear Policy, told IPS the meeting is a chance for world leaders, including U.S. President Barack Obama and others, to give direction to the nuclear disarmament enterprise, "which is now drifting aimlessly despite much rhetoric over the past five years."

"Of course they should reassert that the global elimination of nuclear weapons is a shared aim of the international community," he said.

But they can and should do more, he said, specifically to set in motion concrete, multilateral processes to achieve that objective.

"If there can be a Nuclear Security Summit process, focused on securing nuclear materials, why can there not be a Nuclear Disarmament Summit Process?" he asked.

Or definitive action could be taken to overcome the 16-year deadlock in the Conference on Disarmament, if necessary by establishing a separate process, Dr Burroughs said.



The resolution calling for the high-level meeting, which was sponsored by Indonesia and the 120-member Non-Aligned Movement, was adopted last December in the General Assembly by a vote of 179 to none against, with four abstentions (Israel, and three of the five permanent members of the Security Council, namely France, UK and the United States).

The other two permanent members, China and Russia, voted for the resolution.

All five permanent members are the world's five declared nuclear powers, with India, Pakistan, Israel, and more recently North Korea, outside the P-5 nuclear club.

In an explanation of his country's decision to abstain on the vote, Guy Pollard, deputy permanent representative of the UK, told delegates last December, "We question the value of holding a high-level meeting (HLM) of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament when there are already sufficient venues for such discussion."

He cited the General Assembly's First Committee (on Disarmament), the U.N. Disarmament Commission, and the Conference on Disarmament.

"We are puzzled about how such a HLM will further the goals of the NPT (Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty) Action Plan that was agreed by consensus in 2010," Pollard said.

"In our view," he said, "this roadmap of actions offers the best way of taking forward the multilateral nuclear disarmament agenda, along with related issues."

"We continue to believe that nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament are mutually reinforcing and therefore regret that this high level meeting doesn't treat both of these aspects in a balanced manner," Pollard said.

Meanwhile, in a new study released last month, George Perkovich, director of the Nuclear Policy Programme at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, points out one of the few ways that President Obama could restore confidence in U.S. intentions would be to update the declaration of the role of nuclear weapons in U.S. security policy, including in defence of its allies. ➔

“In his searching Nobel Peace Prize speech (in December 2009), Obama recognised the occasional inescapability of war and the imperative of waging it justly,” Perkovich said.

So, too, Obama now could examine how the ongoing existence of nuclear arsenals, even if temporary, can be reconciled with the moral-strategic imperative to prevent their use, says the study titled “Do Unto Others: Toward a Defensible Nuclear Doctrine.”

“The president could articulate a limited framework for the legitimate use of nuclear weapons that the United States believes would be defensible for others to follow as long as nuclear weapons remain,” it says.

Such a nuclear policy, says Perkovich, could then be conveyed in the U.S. Defence Department’s Quadrennial Posture Review, which is due later this year.

Dr. Burroughs told IPS that non-nuclear weapon states have been doing their best to create opportunities to set a clear course on disarmament.

At the initiative of Austria, Mexico and Norway, the General Assembly in 2012 established an open-ended working group on taking forward proposals on multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations, scheduled to meet for three weeks this summer in Geneva.

Norway hosted a conference in Oslo in March on the humanitarian impact of nuclear explosions.

And Indonesia and the Non-Aligned Movement proposed the resolution last year that scheduled the September high-level meeting on nuclear disarmament.

“However, the P-5 in the Security Council have been recalcitrant. So far they have said they will not participate in the open-ended working group,” said Dr. Burroughs.

They also declined the invitation to participate in the Oslo meeting. And last year the UK, the United States, and France, along with Israel, abstained on the resolution scheduling the high-level meeting, expressing doubt as to its value, he added.

“So the personal engagement of heads of state/government and foreign ministers is clearly necessary,” Burroughs said.

“We continue to believe that nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament are mutually reinforcing and therefore regret that this high level meeting doesn’t treat both of these aspects in a balanced manner,” Guy Pollard, deputy permanent representative of the UK at the UN.



George Perkovich
Credit: Carnegie Endowment

At lower levels, the Permanent Five officials have been floundering, he added.

“Unless there is a change of tune coming from the very top, the September meeting will turn out to be a fruitless exercise,” he said.

The crisis on the Korean peninsula should be a wake-up call.

The nuclear threats exchanged by North Korea and the United States have once again laid bare an often underappreciated fact, the unacceptable risks arising from reliance on nuclear weapons.

In September, P-5 leaders and other governments possessing nuclear arsenals should seize the moment to signal clearly, to their own governments as well as to the world, that they will now engage constructively with non-nuclear weapon states on a process for the global elimination of nuclear weapons, he said.

Parliamentarians, mayors, and civil society groups working for a nuclear weapons-free world should also take advantage of this global platform, which surprisingly is the first time a General Assembly high-level meeting will be held on nuclear disarmament, Dr Burroughs said.

[IPS | May 6, 2013] □



NUKE ABOLITION

'Don't Take Arabs' NPT Membership for Granted'

By Baher Kamal*

CAIRO - Not that nuclear issues are an actual source of concern to Egyptian citizens. They are deeply worried about their present and immediate future now that inter-religious violence is on the rise, triggering a dangerous, growing insecurity amidst an overwhelming popular discontent with President Mohamed Morsi's regime. Simply put, there is too much frustration and deception here to think of nukes.



◀ Mohamed Kadry Said | Credit: [facebook.com/mohamedkadry.said](https://www.facebook.com/mohamedkadry.said)

Egypt's perspective was explained to this journalist by one of the country's top experts on this issue, Major General (Ret.) Mohamed Kadry Said, Military and Technology Advisor and head of the Military Studies Unit at the Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies, Cairo

Mohamed Kadry believes that in spite of all obstacles, a major breakthrough is required to end the current nuclear deadlock in the region, where Israel is the only atomic power, though the Iranian nuclear programme continues to draw attention – and sanctions – in Western countries.

Should such a breakthrough not happen, Egypt and Arab countries may withdraw from the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which they were pushed to join in 1995 in exchange of U.S. promises to free the Middle East from atomic warheads, Israeli nuclear arsenal included.

Mohamed Kadry emphasized that currently no Arab country in the region has a 'declared' nuclear project. "The only exception in the Middle East is Israel. I am talking about the Arabs, not Iran, not Pakistan," he said.

Asked how he viewed the fact that Israel is estimated to have some 230 nuclear bombs – a figure that exceeds the combined number of atomic warheads in India and Pakistan – Mohamed Kadry said the number of Israel's nuclear warheads varies according to different estimates, though the figure of 150 heads has been most often circulated.

Some estimates put this number between 100 and 200 nuclear bombs. "Anyway, whether 100 or 200 it does not make a real difference. The really important fact here is that the very possession of nukes is dreadful."

Following are excerpts from this journalist's interview with the Kadry:

Question: During their last five-year periodical NPT review conference in New York in May 2010, participants agreed to launch an international conference to discuss ways how to free the Middle East from nuclear weapons. After intensive negotiations, Finland announced the hosting of such a Conference in Helsinki last year. But the meeting has been postponed ...

Nevertheless, it is also a fact that the governments of Arab countries in general, and in the Gulf region in particular – following reported U.S. political pressures – have lately been expressing increasing fear of Iran's nuclear programme and therefore focusing, again, on nukes.

In fact, Bahrain's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Ghanum Fadhel Al Buainain, and Foreign Affairs Minister Shaikh Khalid Bin Ahmed Bin Mohamed Al Khalifa, told this journalist in Manama in March that their nation – as well as all other Gulf countries – do not want to hear a word about any nuclear activities, even for peaceful purposes.

Their arguments are that even civil nuclear activities of whatever nature, have strong, negative impacts on the very lives and livelihoods of the Gulf peoples, from polluting waters and thus affecting the fish – which historically constitutes the main source of living – to the risk of a nuclear accident.

These anxieties are shared by Egypt, which has always played a pivotal role in efforts aimed at declaring the Middle East a nuclear-free-zone. In fact, Egyptian diplomacy continues to undertake efforts in that direction in spite of the internal situation, with the support of Arab countries.

Mohamed Kadry (MK): Let me give you some background. Because of dreadful consequences and the menace emerging from any new atomic power, the international community decided to establish the NPT (Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty).

The initial idea was that the Treaty would be open to all countries to join, with a review or a renewal discussion process every ten years, after which any country could renew its membership in the Treaty or just withdraw from it. At the beginning, Egypt and Arab countries decided not to join the Treaty . . .

Q: Why?

MK: Perhaps because they considered it 'useless' in view of the fact that it was a Treaty out of which anybody could walk out. At this stage the U.S. appeared on the scene pressurising Egypt and the Arabs as well as Iran to join the NPT. They agreed to join in exchange of two promises: that the Treaty would be valid indefinitely – instead of being renewable every ten years – and that efforts would be made to free the Middle East from nuclear weapons.

Of course, this would include Israel. All that process culminated in 1995. [The Treaty was opened for signature in 1968, and it entered into force in 1970. On May 11, 1995, it was extended indefinitely.]

Q: That very year the UN Security Council issued a resolution on the need to free the region from atomic weapons. Any breakthrough since then?

MK: The fact that the Security Council's resolution was adopted in 1995 did mean that the whole issue would be settled that very year. It would be the starting point . . .

Q: But with the exception of the 2010 decision to hold an international conference to find ways how to eliminate nuclear weapons in the Middle East, nothing has happened over the last 18 years. Why should then the Arab countries in the region continue to be a part of the Treaty?

MK: The fact is that Arab research centres have met on several occasions in the previous months to discuss precisely this point. So far, there is a general consensus that if the planned Helsinki conference is not held this year, in 2013, then we would recommend to Arab governments to withdraw from the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Q: The Iranian nuclear programme was launched in 2003, before current president Ahmad Nijad was elected. Tehran claimed that it can enrich its uranium by 20 percent. But the scientific community assures that an atomic bomb requires 95 per cent enriched uranium. Do you think Iran has the capability to produce nuclear weapons?

MK: Yes, definitely!

Q: Are you saying that Iran already has nuclear weapons?

MK: I said that they have the “capability” to produce them . . . this is a very complex process.

Q: Back to the Middle East nuclear-free-zone and the postponed Helsinki conference. Do you think that such a conference will ever take place?

MK: Yes, I do believe so.

Q: With a specific, legally binding, and an applicable outcome?

MK: I believe something will happen . . . I mean a breakthrough like what occurred after the Second World War.

Q: Such a breakthrough would really imply the elimination of all nukes in the Middle East, including Israeli atomic arsenal? How realistic is this?

MK: I think so. Realistic? Who did expect all those major changes that happened after the Second World War, particularly in Europe?

*Baher Kamal is an Egyptian-born Spanish national with nearly 40 years of professional experience as a journalist. He is Publisher and Director of Human Wrongs Watch, Spain. [IDN-| May 3, 2013] □

In a dramatic act that signalled its frustration with the “unilateral postponement” of an agreed 2012 Conference on the Middle East, Ambassador Hisham Badr announced his delegation’s walk-out “to protest this unacceptable and continuous failure to implement the 1995 Middle East Resolution” and “send a strong message of dissatisfaction with the lack of seriousness in dealing with the issue of establishing a zone free of nuclear weapons, a central component of regional, Arab and Egyptian national security, which impacts directly international peace and security”. Amid mounting frustration, the walk-out occurred towards the end of the debate on the Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction (MEW-MDFZ) on April 29, 2013. Though diplomats from the Arab States were initially as taken aback as the rest of the Conference, the walk-out did not come as a big surprise. Badr had reminded delegates that the Arab Group had seriously considered “whether we should be attending this meeting in the first place”. - Rebecca Johnson in Open Democracy

NUKE ABOLITION

Youth Holds Out Hope For Banning Nukes

By Ramesh Jaura*

BERLIN | GENEVA - If it were up to the youth, all nuclear weapons in global arsenals would be declared inhumane and a comprehensive treaty banning these would be put in place.



Picture: SGI Youth in exchange meeting | Credit: SGI

This is the upshot of an international survey released at the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG) during a milestone conference. The survey, carried out by youth members of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI), shows that 91.2% of respondents aged between 15 and 45 are of the view that nukes are inhumane and 80.6% favour a comprehensive global treaty banning all these weapons of mass annihilation.

SGI is a socially engaged Buddhist association with over 12 million members around the world. It has been campaigning for the abolition of nuclear weapons since the second Soka Gakkai President Josei Toda's Declaration Calling for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons issued on September 8, 1957. In 2007, SGI launched the People's Decade for Nuclear Abolition campaign in order to galvanize public opinion in favour of banning all nuclear arsenal.

In fact SGI president Daisaku Ikeda put forward in his annual Peace Proposal 2010 the idea of organising a nuclear abolition summit in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 2015 to coincide with the 70th anniversary of the atomic bombings of those cities.

He reiterated the proposal in 2011 and the following year, and suggested the possibility of even organising the 2015 NPT Review Conference in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

In Peace Proposal 2013, Ikeda went a step further and pleaded for an expanded summit for a nuclear-weapon-free world: "The G8 Summit in 2015, the seventieth anni-

versary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, would be an appropriate opportunity for such a summit, which should include the additional participation of representatives of the United Nations and non-G8 states in possession of nuclear weapons, as well as members of the five existing NWFZs (nuclear weapons free zones) and those states which have taken a lead in calling for nuclear abolition."

It is against this backdrop that youth members of SGI surveyed between December 2012 and February 2013 a total of 2,840 young men and women in nine countries: Japan, USA, Britain, Italy, Australia, South Korea, Brazil, Malaysia and Mexico. These included official and unofficial nuclear weapons states, those under a U.S. nuclear umbrella and others in NWFZs.

Significance of survey findings

The significance of the survey findings is underlined by Global Zero, a movement campaigning for a world without nuclear weapons, which estimates that the nine official and unofficial nuclear weapons states spent about \$100 billion on their nuclear programs in 2011.

This conservatively assessed expenditure represents about 9% of their total annual military spending. Global Zero estimates that at this rate the nuclear-armed states will spend at least \$1 trillion on nuclear weapons and their direct support systems over the next decade.

The nine states include Russia, United States, France, Britain, and China, which are recognised as official nuclear weapons states under Article 6 of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as well as Israel, India, Pakistan, and North Korea considered as unofficial nuclear weapons states.

The results of the survey carried out by SGI youth members were presented to Ambassador Cornel Feruta of Romania, chair of the Second Session of the Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) for the 2015 NPT Review Conference from April 22 to May 3, 2013 in Geneva.

The findings were released about two months after the ground-breaking intergovernmental conference organised by Norway's foreign ministry in Oslo on March 4-5 to focus on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons. ☺

The Oslo conference followed up on a movement to outlaw nuclear weapons that has been growing since the 2010 review conference of the parties to the NPT. The conference final document noted "deep concern at the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons" and reaffirmed "the need for all states at all times to comply with applicable international law, including international humanitarian law."

This was followed by a resolution by the council of delegates of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in November 2011, strongly appealing to all states "to pursue in good faith and conclude with urgency and determination negotiations to prohibit the use of and completely eliminate nuclear weapons through a legally binding international agreement."

Subsequently, at the first session of the preparatory committee for the 2015 NPT review conference held in May 2012, 16 countries led by Norway and Switzerland issued a joint statement on the humanitarian dimension of nuclear disarmament, stating that "it is of great concern that, even after the end of the Cold War, the threat of nuclear annihilation remains part of the 21st century international security environment."

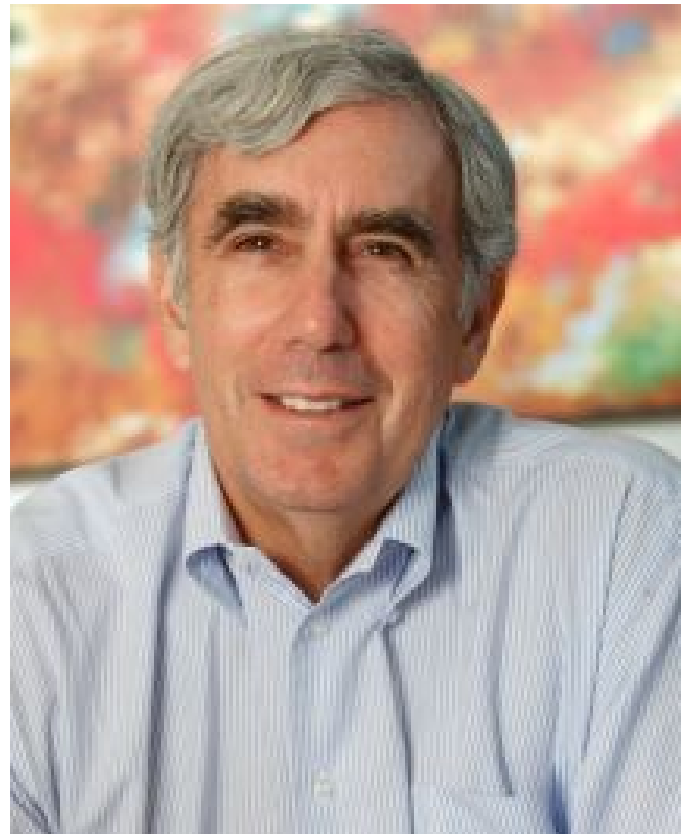
Catastrophic humanitarian consequences

Observers agree that this should initiate serious consideration of the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons, which were highlighted at the Oslo conference: "In the event of a sudden humanitarian emergency caused by a nuclear weapon detonation, it is unlikely that any state or international body has the means to respond in an adequate manner and be able to provide sufficient assistance to those affected. Moreover, it might not be possible to establish such capacity, even if attempts were made.

"The effects of a nuclear weapon detonation, irrespective of cause, will not be constrained by national borders, and will affect states and people in significant ways, regionally as well as globally."

These and equally atrocious consequences of a possible human error call for the global civil society to play a pivotal role in concerted efforts towards ushering in a nuclear weapons free world, said Kimiaki Kawai, SGI Program Director for Peace Affairs in a presentation at Palais des Nations in Geneva on April 26, 2013.

The consequences of human error have been spelt out by David Krieger, founder-president of Nuclear Age Peace Foundation: "While a nuclear war is not likely, it is possible and could occur by accident, miscalculation or design. Just as the large-scale radiation releases from the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant seemed unlikely until they occurred, the possibility of nuclear war also may



David Krieger | Credit: World Future Council

seem unlikely until deterrence fails and it occurs....One thing we know about humans is that we are fallible. We are not capable of perfection and we cannot eliminate human error altogether no matter how diligently we try. Human fallibility and nuclear weapons are a highly volatile mix."

However Krieger guards against despair. "Despair is a recipe for giving up but hope is a choice. We can choose hope," he said in a presentation at UNOG, and pleaded for "boldness and hope" with a view to ushering in a nuke-free world.

Hope, not despair, characterises an overwhelming majority of the young people surveyed by the SGI youth members. Nobuyuki Asai, chair of Soka Gakkai Youth Peace Conference and coordinator of the survey, said: "It is encouraging that so many youth recognize the inhumane nature of nuclear weapons. We will continue raising awareness among youth concerning nuclear weapons and the gravity of the threat they pose."

*Ramesh Jaura is global editor of IDN and its sister publication Global Perspectives, chief editor of IPS Germany as well as editorial board member of Other News. He is also executive president of Global Cooperation Council, board member of IPS international and global coordinator of SGI-IPS project for strengthening public awareness of the need to abolish nukes. [IDN | April 30, 2013] □

NUKE ABOLITION

Nuclear Weapons Indefensible on Humanitarian Grounds

By Hirotsugu Terasaki*

TOKYO - It is a cause of grave concern that there are an increasing number of regions under tension and exposed to the threat of nuclear weapons; namely, the Middle East, South Asia and Northeast Asia. Today, there are more countries that seem to be adhering to the doctrine of nuclear deterrence and/or extended deterrence than during the Cold War era.

This reminds me of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's warning to the world, "Unfortunately, the doctrine of nuclear deterrence has proven to be contagious. This has made non-proliferation more difficult, which in turn raises new risks that nuclear weapons will be used." It is critical that all of us share an awareness that humanity is standing at an important tipping point today.

There is a growing cognitive gap between nuclear-weapon states and non-nuclear-weapon states on the role of nuclear weapons in national defence. Daisaku Ikeda, president of SGI, points out: "Unless we confront the fundamental source of that contagion, moves to prevent proliferation will be neither convincing nor effective."

I would like to hereby stress that the logic of nuclear deterrence is no longer justifiable, as no state should pursue its own security interests at the risk of holding the world's population hostage to nuclear ambitions. As a step to stop the further "contagion" of nuclear deterrence, I urge all state parties to the NPT to confirm this point during the upcoming second NPT PrepCom in Geneva.

Risks of nuclear proliferation, terror and accidents continue to jeopardize our lives. Hiroshima and Nagasaki have taught us that any use of nuclear weapons would have catastrophic humanitarian consequences.

This point should never be forgotten. At the same time, the huge economic burden of nuclear weapons spending is what the world can no longer afford to ignore. We need to ask ourselves whether these risks, effects and costs of nuclear weapons can continue to justify nuclear arms. Is the value of nuclear deterrence justifiable in the face of these negative consequences?



An emerging approach supported by non-nuclear-weapon states sheds light on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons. Greater humanitarian focus and renewed awareness of the fundamental nature and consequences of these arsenals could alter the discourse and normative questions asked. The challenge facing the nuclear-weapon states is how well they can grasp these humanitarian concerns into their nuclear calculations.

It is therefore vital to galvanize the voices of the citizens around the world to question the humanitarian acceptability of these weapons especially in the nuclear-weapon states. We need to give greater space for "the common sense" of citizens questioning the utility of nuclear weapons in order to rid the world of these apocalyptic arsenals.

Let us recall what US President Obama declared in 2009 in Prague: "So today, I state clearly and with conviction America's commitment to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons . . . But now we, too, must ignore the voices who tell us that the world cannot change. We have to insist, 'Yes, we can.'"

Can we allow the nuclear-weapon states to remain complacent about nuclear deterrence? The answer to this rhetorical question is clearly "no" and the reason why is, as President Obama stated, because they are completely unjustifiable on humanitarian grounds irrespective of any political justifications.

We must redouble our efforts to resolutely push the state actors to see nuclear weapons use through a humanitarian lens. Regardless of how low the probability of a nuclear weapons detonation may seem to the nuclear strategists, the consequence is still extremely high in humanitarian terms. [IDN | April 26, 2013] □

*Hirotsugu Terasaki is Vice President, Soka Gakkai and Executive Director, Soka Gakkai International Peace Affairs. He issued this statement in run-up to the NPT PrepCom from April 22 to May 3, 2013 in Geneva. Picture credit: SGI

NUKE ABOLITION

Civil Society Raises Pressure Over NPT**By Ravi Kanth Devarakonda**

GENEVA - As parties to the treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) begin their second preparatory conference in Geneva on Monday, representatives of civil society and several countries have decided to bring the festering nuclear issue and its potential humanitarian consequences to the centre stage.

"The NPT has its own process and business as usual," said Rebecca Johnson, co-chair for the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), a Geneva-based global coalition of pressure groups working on disarmament and a ban on nuclear weapons.

The Geneva preparatory committee meeting will focus on a range of issues for the next two weeks to prepare the agenda for the 2015 Review Conference which will take place in Geneva.

More importantly, it is taking place against the backdrop of rising nuclear tensions in the Korean peninsula and Iran's nuclear enrichment programme. Also, several countries held an international conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear weapons in Oslo last month.

"My hope is that a large number of countries talk (at the Geneva meeting) about the importance of bringing the nuclear issue back to human level and understanding the humanitarian consequences because of nuclear weapons," Johnson told IPS.

She expects that a large number of parties to the NPT will sign up to the South African statement on the human dimension of nuclear weapons which will be delivered at the meeting. "We want a sustained dialogue on the humanitarian impact so that it changes the balance of power in the NPT," Johnson argued.

The NPT came into force in 1970 with the avowed goal of stopping countries from building a nuclear bomb. So far, 189 countries have ratified the treaty while India, Israel, and Pakistan refused to become parties to it. All three countries possess a nuclear arsenal, with total estimates varying from 50 to 200 nuclear weapons.

The official nuclear weapon states – the United States, Russia, Britain, France, and China who are known as P5 – are required to implement measures under the treaty to "cessation" of the nuclear arms race, and complete nuclear "disarmament". The five nuclear weapon states held a meeting last week during which they discussed promoting dialogue and mutual confidence on nuclear issues.

The P5 members exchanged views on various issues concerning "non-proliferation", "the peaceful uses of nuclear energy", and "disarmament" – known as the three pillars of the NPT.

The five nations, who are the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, reaffirmed their commitment to the goal of nuclear disarmament.

However, progress on nuclear disarmament is almost limited or negligible over the last 45 years. "There is not much progress on nuclear disarmament and we need a new dynamic to break the paralysis, otherwise there will be new cold war," said Martin Hinrichs, an ICAN activist. Representatives of ICAN from some 16 countries held a brainstorming session on how to go about their advocacy campaign during the NPT meeting this week.

"They (the P5) have got a vested interest and they constructed their industry, defence industries, and military to deploy, to possess, and to modernise nuclear weapons," said Johnson.

The P5 members, says Johnson, "have a vested interest in keeping the status quo and stopping new countries entering the nuclear club." Besides, they enjoy numerous privileges because of their status and it would be a mistake to think that they would implement substantive measures towards complete nuclear disarmament, she said.

So, the "game" for the elimination of nuclear weapons will not start from the P5 side who wield powerful nuclear weapons, Johnson said.

"What has to change is that the non-nuclear states have to start things to bring about nuclear disarmament," the ICAN co-chair argued. "They (the non-nuclear weapon states) have the power and tools to change by becoming aware that nuclear weapons are a humanitarian problem even if they are set in the international legal and political rules."

Therefore, it is important not to give exalted status to the nuclear arms states every time on the hope that they would carry out disarmament. "The non-nuclear weapon states are not supplicants, and they have to engage in politics and change international relations by joining forces with civil society," Johnson asserted. The international ban movement intends to delegitimise nuclear weapons for everybody so that countries are dissuaded from spending billions of dollars on nuclear weapons. [IPS | April 21, 2013] □

NUKE ABOLITION

Calling For a Nuclear Weapons Convention

By Frederick N. Mattis

ANNAPOLIS, USA - Soka Gakkai International (SGI) President Daisaku Ikeda's Peace Proposal for 2013 notes that worldwide abolition of nuclear weapons will require the legal framework of a treaty banning the weapons (variously called a nuclear abolition treaty, nuclear ban treaty, or Nuclear Weapons Convention – NWC). The SGI president proposes the goal of substantial completion in 2015 of the NWC text. Upon its finalization, then, of course, time will be needed for states to evaluate, sign, ratify, and formally accede to the NWC.

As Tim Wright of International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons has pointed out (op-ed, March 27, Truth-out.org), mere introduction of the Nuclear Weapons Convention for states' signature will be a boost for the nuclear abolition movement. Suddenly, abolition will be a reachable prospect, and thus states that maintain nuclear weapons will find themselves more subject to scrutiny and skepticism about their arsenals. Also, if nuclear states point to geopolitical insecurities as the basis for their arsenals, the existence of the [prospective] nuclear ban will bring added internal and external support for such states to undertake more consistent, and higher-level, negotiations on the matters in question.

Can the drafting period, probably by an ad hoc group of states, be relatively short for the NWC, even though its subject – worldwide elimination of nuclear weapons – is so portentous? Most likely, yes, in part because of labors of diplomats and others on prior treaties such as the current (1967) nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the 1987 Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty, START agreements, and the 1993 Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC).

The latter is particularly instructive for the Nuclear Weapons Convention, with the CWC's verification provisions (including "challenge inspections"), administrative bodies, and detailed lists of prohibited and restricted chemicals.

In addition, existence of the "Model Nuclear Weapons Convention" (1997, rev. 2007) is felicitous for the cause of nuclear abolition. The Model Convention (MNWC) was drafted by 50 volunteers: lawyers, engineers, scientist, physicians, and consultants. Its structure is similar, wisely, to the groundbreaking Chemical Weapons Convention, but with various adaptations and additional provisions pertinent to nuclear weapons. The MNWC will likely reduce (by my estimate) up to 80 percent the amount of time that would otherwise be required to complete the NWC text, once states sit down to negotiate an actual ban. (See link to MNWC at <http://www.lcnp.org>.)



SGI President Ikeda notes in his 2013 Peace Proposal that "The SGI's efforts to grapple with the nuclear weapons issue are based on the recognition that the very existence of these weapons represents the ultimate negation of the dignity of life." States such as the USA and Britain, for their part, often say that they will maintain nuclear weapons as long as they exist anywhere else on earth; but the fully enacted NWC will eliminate all nuclear weapons. Until abolition is achieved, states (and especially today's nuclear powers) will continue to face the following dangers: nuclear war or nuclear attack, "false-alarm" nuclear missile launch, terrorist acquisition of a weapon from a state's nuclear arsenal, and regional conflagration (nuclear or otherwise) if a fear-driven, "pre-emptive" attack on nuclear facilities is carried out.

Recommended provisions for the NWC

Keeping in view that enabling the nuclear weapon states to join the ban is the biggest challenge to nuclear abolition, following are some recommended provisions for the NWC, and their rationale.

1. Unanimity of accession by states to the NWC must be achieved before its entry into force, and the NWC declares that it applies "everywhere" (to cover non-state and any "ambiguous" areas)... Unless unanimity is required for entry into force, some at least of today's nuclear weapon states probably will not join the nuclear ban; and if unanimity is required, the enacted ban will have unprecedented geopolitical force.

2. States must join today's bans on chemical and biological weapons (1993 CWC and 1972 BWC) before signing the NWC... In a world where all states are poised to ban nuclear weapons, there is no reason to tolerate chem-bio weapons (which most states, including the USA and Russia, have already officially renounced by joining the CWC and BWC). Also: unless CWC/BWC accession by all states is indeed required before signing the nuclear ban (and for its entry

into force, after all states join), some states—as one example, Israel—likely would not sign the nuclear ban.

3. Under the worldwide NWC, the actual weapons (warhead) elimination period does not begin until after states mutually approve of all states' nuclear ban domestic (national) implementing legislation (to ensure that such legislation does not undermine the ban), plus mutually approve of fellow states' level of cooperation in providing treaty-required declarations of nuclear weapons, facilities, and materials, with this including cooperation in baseline, achievable verification of the declarations by international nuclear ban inspectors... This provision is likely necessary for today's nuclear weapon states because they may be somewhat "wary" about abolition even as the ban's initial major steps unfold (i.e., states' enactment of suitable implementing legislation, and then states' nuclear declarations and their baseline verification). If it should happen that some state flouted its treaty obligations (on one of these crucial, initial treaty "roll-out" aspects), the treaty's progress could be halted by a state and would not proceed

to its essence (nuclear warhead elimination) until the situation is rectified.

4. Warhead elimination [over posited 3.5 years] commences with Russia or the USA, whichever has more warheads, eliminating enough of them over six months to reach the other's initial (lower) level – after which point both continue reducing, following the treaty's timetable for warhead elimination. Also, and starting from that point when Russia and the USA are first "equal" (six months into elimination period): all other nuclear possessors eliminate 25 percent of their arsenals within 90 days; but thereafter they can "wait" until Russia and the USA in tandem reach the other states' varying, much lower [and 25-percent reduced] levels, at which times they join the USA and Russia in further reductions leading to all states simultaneously reaching zero. This provision is intended to be a workable compromise for, on the one hand, Russia and the USA with their multi-thousand warhead arsenals, and also for the other nuclear possessors with their many fewer. . [IDN | April 6, 2013] □

*Frederick N. Mattis is author of Banning Weapons of Mass Destruction, pub. ABC-Clio/Praeger Security International

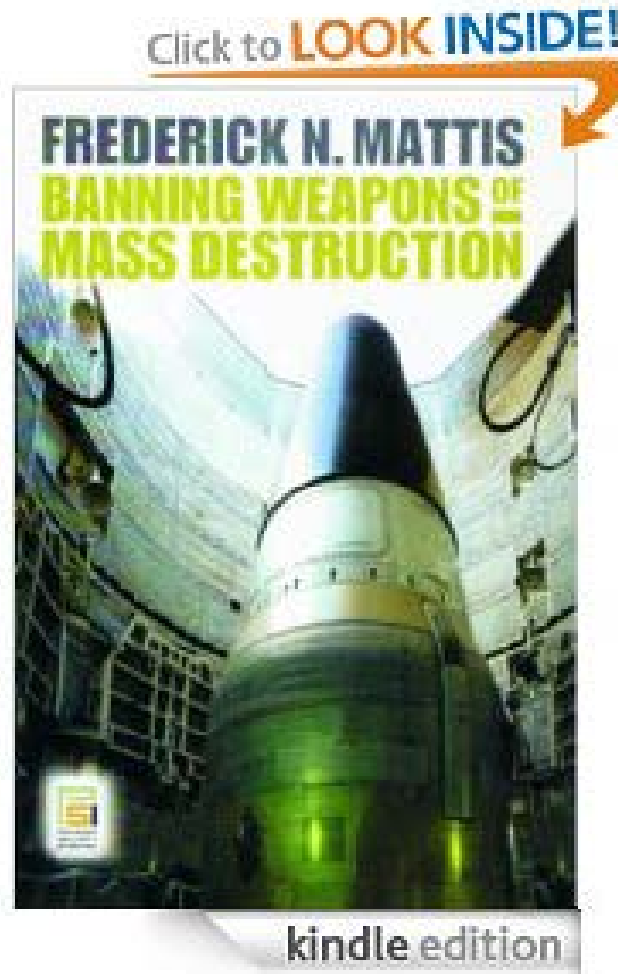


Image: www.amazon.com/Banning-Destruction-Security-International-ebook/dp/B002AMVCGM

THE LAST PAGE

Rice and Power in Obama's Foreign Policy Mix

By Ernest Corea



WASHINGTON DC – President Barack Obama has named Ambassador Susan Rice, the indefatigable US “permanent representative” at the UN as his next National Security Adviser. The official designation is Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, an influential White House position that does not require confirmation by the US Senate. .

Rice, and former White House official Samantha Power who has been nominated to succeed her, are expected to shake up Obama's foreign policy establishment, making the case for a more activist policy with human rights as its centerpiece.

Rice, described by some critics as combative, will succeed low-keyed and consensual Tom Donilon, who is expected to leave the White House in July.

Susan Rice | Credit: <http://usun.state.gov>

Rice joined the Obama presidential election campaign in 2008 and has functioned as one of his key advisers since then. As a campaigner, she reportedly dismissed Obama's 2008 opponent Senator John McCain's foreign policy approach as “reckless”. McCain led the charge against her when she was considered the front-runner to succeed Hillary Clinton as Secretary of State. The innuendo-laced campaign against Rice became so vitriolic that she removed herself from contention.

An alumna of Stanford University, and of New College, Oxford, where she earned a DPhil degree, Rice is a Rhodes Scholar. Her professional experience includes a staff position at the prestigious Brookings Institution, and on the White House National Security Council which she will now direct. She was Assistant Secretary for African Affairs in the Clinton administration.

Power began life as a highly regarded journalist, and has a well-established reputation as an academic and author. She was on Obama's campaign team in 2008 until she described his opponent (Clinton) as a monster. Subsequently, she was appointed to the White House Staff and until recently, was a senior NSC adviser.

All ambassadorial positions require Senate confirmation. While her record makes Power a good fit for the UN position, some rash comments made and later regretted could raise the question of temperament when Senate scrutiny of her nomination begins.

Malaysia: More of The Same

Passions have not all cooled, but sufficient time has passed since Malaysia May 5 general elections that Malaysians and their many friends abroad can breathe a sigh of relief, exhale, and say: “It's not another 1969.” That was the year in which the ruling coalition (National Front) was so embarrassed at the polls that its supporters “went amok” in waves of death and destruction. Some of the worst violence, directed mainly against Malaysia's ethnic Chinese, was in the capital, Kuala Lumpur. ➡

The government – led at the time by the father of Malaysia’s independence, Tunku Abdul Rahman – suspended parliament and the constitution. A new constitution with restrictions on public discussion (outside parliament) of explosive ethnic issues was adopted, as were new economic policies designed to placate the Malay majority while also providing opportunities for the almost proverbially hardworking minority Chinese.



Between then and now, Malaysia went through a successful economic transformation, and its successes are widely touted among international investors. But the country also saw the spread of public unrest over allegations of corruption in public life and fears that a restrictive streak in national politics was growing. The poor-rich gap widened.

On the eve of this year’s election The Economist wrote that the opposition would “never have a better chance than now” to unseat the government which has been in office for 56 consecutive years. When the votes were counted, however, it was clear that the chance was lost. The government remained in power, although the voting figures were skewed.

The ruling and victorious government coalition secured 47.38 percent of the vote while the defeated opposition coalition had 50.87 percent. More important, however, is the ethnic polarization that characterized the election campaign and could dominate national life unless Prime Minister Najib Razak is able to develop a healing touch. The overall ethnic breakdown is: Malay – 50.4 percent, Chinese – 23.7, Indigenous – 11, Indian – 7.1, and Other – 7.8.

Pakistan: Sharif Gets Another Chance

A Pakistani military leader told a group of American legislators several years ago that “democracy is for phlegmatic people like the British.” He obviously did not consider his own countrymen and women sufficiently phlegmatic to qualify for democracy. Now, a new generation in Pakistan appears determined to show that Pakistan can grapple with the challenge of establishing democracy.

The June 5 election of Nawaz Sharif as Prime Minister, backed by a majority in the National Assembly, resulted in the transfer of power from one democratically elected party to another. This is a historic moment for the country.

Now, as a local commentator has said, comes the hard part. Sharif who has been Prime Minister twice before well knows both the promise and peril of the responsibilities entrusted to him. Problems requiring resolution include economic development in a country where the power supply is so poor that 20-hour blackouts have been experienced. Security questions ranged from concern over the use of US drones in his country to the continuing activities of the Taliban. Neighborly relations are, as always, in a state of flux.

A complex agenda; but, then, he wasn’t compelled to seek the office he holds. (Global Perspectives | June 2013) □

Picture top right: Malaysia’s first PM Tunku Abdul Rahman
Credit: tunkuabulrahman.com

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