

WORLD DISORDER

CHAOS THREATENS THE GLOBE

Jayantha Dhanapala denounces the force of arms in the name of world order

Dr. Henry Kissinger – veteran Harvard academic in political science, author, diplomatic practitioner and respected commentator on international affairs, despite a chequered career in the US Government – published his latest book *World Order* at the end of 2014. The book contained a historical analysis of a quest for a rule-based global order.

That quest has to be undertaken in a world where, in Kissinger's words, "chaos threatens side by side with unprecedented interdependence; in the spread of weapons of mass destruction, the disintegration of states, the impact of environmental depredation, the persistence of genocidal practices and the spread of new technologies threatening to drive conflict beyond human control or comprehension."

Thus, in today's world, a rule-based world order seems even more remote, considering the diversity of emerging players and problems, with no apparent centre of gravity.

Let us consider some of the key global threats facing the world today; 25 years after the Berlin Wall fell, symbolising the end of the Cold War, and in the 70th-anniversary year of the United Nations – the epicentre for harmonising the actions of 193 nations, mandated by the UN Charter to maintain international peace and security.

Firstly, there is the Fifth



HISTORIC WALK People walk along the preserved segment of the Berlin Wall, called East Side Gallery, where the Light Border (Lichtgrenze) – a lighted balloons installation on the route of the former border between East and West Berlin – has been installed to mark the 25th anniversary of the fall of the dreaded Wall.

Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which conveys the unambiguous message that climate change is caused by human action – and that, left unchecked, it will lead to catastrophe.

Then, as the global economic downturn persists, there is inequality of income as a feature throughout the world,

where the poorest 1.2 billion consume just one percent while the richest billion consume 72 percent, causing increasing frustration and social tension – especially among the youth, who account for 26 percent of the world population.

Thirdly, there is religious extremism, racism and the bestial violence of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant

(ISIL) – which is also known as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and by the Arabic acronym Da'ish (or DAESH), a Sunni Islamist rebel group, based in Iraq and Syria; Boko Haram (for 'Western education is forbidden'), in north-east Nigeria; the Taliban, in Afghanistan and Pakistan; and other anarchic groups which challenge our shared

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Yearbook has noted the following: “There is a certain fluidity in international governance. There are now more actors exerting influence around the world, and more centres of decision-making. These include countries from the South and the East. In addition, a heterogeneous set of non-state actors is now a permanent part of the international security landscape.”

The failure of the UN Security Council to act in conflict areas such as Syria illustrates the weakness of multilateral cooperation today. At the end of December, a Security Council resolution calling for an end to the occupation of Palestine territories failed to muster more than eight affirmative votes, with even Non-aligned countries abstaining.

Weapons of war, including the threat of nuclear weapons, are of no deterrent value to combat global problems. It is more likely that, in a skewed world of nuclear haves and have-nots, we are going to witness increasing proliferation of weapons, including nuclear weapons by terrorist non-state actors.

Scientific evidence is proof that even a limited nuclear war – if such confines are possible – will cause irreversible climate change, and the destruction of human life and its supporting ecology on an unprecedented scale. We, the people, have a Responsibility to Protect (R2P) the world from nuclear weapons, by outlawing them through a verifiable Nuclear Weapon Convention overriding all other self-proclaimed R2P applications.

Two NGOs – International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) and PAX – have painstakingly researched the financing of nuclear weapons. In their Don’t Bank

values and civilised societal norms.

Moreover, there is the state terrorism of Israel waging unequal war against the Palestinians, while occupying their territory and depriving them of their statehood in violation of international law.

There are more than 50 million people throughout the world, who are currently displaced by war and violence – some 33.3 million in their own country, and approximately

16.7 million as refugees – the highest number since World War II (WWII)

And then, there are the problems of hunger, diseases like the Ebola pandemic (in Western Africa), poverty and violations of human rights that continue to disfigure the human condition.

Multilateralism was the chosen tool, post WW II, for global problems, with the UN vested with the task of maintaining international peace

and security. The Cold War obstructed the full realisation of that scenario. Despite the US being the sole superpower since the end of the Cold War, and recording the largest investment in its military security (US\$ 640 billion, out of a total global military expenditure of 1,747 billion dollars, in 2013), it is unable to enforce world order.

Meanwhile, the 2014 Stockholm International Peace Research Institute’s (SIPRI’s)

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on the Bomb report, the NGOs reveal that, since January 2011, 411 different banks, insurance companies and pension funds have invested US\$ 402 billion in 28 companies in the nuclear weapons industry. The nuclear-armed nations spend a combined total of more than 100 billion dollars on their nuclear forces every year.

Let me quote from the report: “The top 10 investors alone provided more than 175 billion US Dollars to the 28 identified nuclear weapon producers. With the exception of French BNP Paribas, all financial institutions in the top 10 are based in the US. The top three – State Street, Capital Group and BlackRock – have a combined US\$ 80 billion invested. In Europe, the most heavily invested are BNP Paribas (France), Royal Bank of Scotland and Barclays (both United Kingdom). In Asia, the biggest investors are Mitsubishi UFJ Financial and Sumitomo Mitsui Financial (both Japan), and the Life Insurance Corporation of India.”

Apart from the disarmament dividend, the achievement of a world order can also be accomplished by individual leaders who have helped the world to scale many heights in history.

Colonialism enslaved many countries for centuries – it was dismantled under the aegis of the UN, liberating numerous countries in Asia and Africa; the civil rights movement in



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the US ended segregation, racial discrimination and other indignities imposed on black Americans; the odious apartheid regime and the peaceful transition to a non-racial democracy in South Africa was achieved; and finally, we have witnessed the end of the Cold War, with its global tension and rivalry.

These are inspirational achievements of which humankind can be proud. Through all these achievements, we remember – gratefully – the exemplary leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela. It was their unswerving dedication to non-violence that ensured victory over evil and injustice.

Last year, we observed the centenary of the beginning of World War I, and many commentators drew parallels between the global situations of 1914 and 2014. The

deterioration of relations between the US and Russia, over Ukraine, and sanctions imposed by the West on Russia (with oil politics being deployed, to weaken the Russian economy) are alarming trends.

A chance for progress in nuclear disarmament remains the long-running negotiations between Iran and a group of world powers, informally led by the US.

A deal to curtail the Iranian nuclear programme, in return for lifting economic sanctions, would be a significant foreign policy achievement for President Barack Obama. This would enable him to follow up the welcome rapprochement with Cuba, through reconciliation with Iran – winning Iranian cooperation, in the solution of much of the problems in the Middle East.

Another opportunity lies with the Marshall Islands – one of the smallest members of the UN, and a victim of nuclear weapon testing – which has courageously taken the nine nuclear weapon-armed nations to the International Court of Justice. The cases will be heard this year. For the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) nuclear-weapon states (the US, the UK, France, Russia and China), the claims are made under both the NPT and customary international law.

For the four states possessing nuclear arsenals outside the NPT

(India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea), the claims are made under customary international law only. The customary law obligations are based on widespread and representative participation of states in the NPT, and the long history of UN resolutions on nuclear disarmament. They also reflect the incompatibility of use of nuclear weapons with international law.

The relief requested is a declaratory judgement of breach of obligations relating to nuclear disarmament and an order to take, within one year of the judgement, all necessary steps to comply with those obligations. They include the pursuit – by initiation, if necessary – of negotiations in good faith, aimed at the conclusion of a convention on nuclear disarmament, in all its aspects under strict and effective international control.

This is a welcome first opportunity after the 1996 ICJ Advisory Opinion to confirm and clarify the status, under international law, of the legality of the possession and use of nuclear weapons.

Ultimately, it is international law that will help establish world order, and not the force of arms.

NOTE Jayantha Dhanapala recently assumed duties as Senior Advisor on Foreign Affairs to the President – the views expressed in this article are personal

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