

The Rest cannot be passive spectators

By Chandran Nair (1)

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Imagine a bomb going off in a European city or an American city and a pregnant woman being killed by the blast. The unborn baby is somehow saved but is critical. The mother is buried and her family pins all hopes on the baby's survival.

Five days later the little one dies. We are all left cold. This happened last month but you probably haven't heard of it despite the 24-hour TV news and social media.

You didn't hear because the victims were not from a Western nation but instead were Palestinians in Gaza — meaning they were only Arabs, Muslims, supporters of terrorism and undeserving of your sympathy.

Contrast this with Boston, London, and Bali where all acts of violence against innocent civilians were covered in great detail by the international media.

But you will not hear much about Shaymah and her baby. There are obviously many more nameless ones.

How did we become mindless consumers of news riddled with lies and distortions? It starts with understanding the nature of the geopolitical struggle between the West and the Rest. Recent events prompt a reflection of global history that shaped the modern world.

As the West commemorates the start of World War I in 1914, it is telling how the broader global canvas on which the war took place is obscured.

For instance, almost 90% of Africa was ruled by European powers in 1914. And yet there are no significant commemorations for thousands of Africans, Chinese, Indians and others who died fighting in wars they had no stake in.

The truth is that while the European powers fought among themselves, Asian, African and Arab nations were the oppressed majority whose resources were used to enrich the West.

After the two World Wars an exhausted Europe was forced to end colonialism. It was, however, an incomplete liberation for developing countries because the Europeans handed over the reins of power to the US.

Washington has since shaped the global narrative about a new era of peace and world order to suit its interests.

It created global institutions and rules including the United Nations, the World Bank, the IMF, the WTO and a pliable international media. The current world order was created to hand the US in particular an 'exorbitant privilege'.

Once the system was established, the rest of the West was roped in. Events in recent months have made it clear again that the West seeks to carve a geopolitical position that pits it against the Rest.

It is instructive to compare West Asia with the recent events in Ukraine where the Russians are accused of supplying arms to rebels, causing death and destruction which the Americans and Europeans are outraged about.

This is despite the fact that the West supplied arms to all and sundry, including dictators in West Asia, resulting in the deaths of thousands.

The West has also been the main supplier of arms to Israel. The week that Shaymah died, the US senate agreed to resupply weapons to Israel and approved further funds to the tune of \$250 million.

No European government put pressure on the US to call for sanctions or war crimes proceedings as has been the case with Russia. The rest of the world, and Asia in particular, should no longer sit back as horrified spectators.

They need to stop being passive and take action. This is necessary despite the West's reluctance to renounce its self-appointed global role as moral guardians.

We ought to remember that moral exemplars like Nelson Mandela and Mahatma Gandhi were branded as terrorists by the West before being embraced.

Some of us understand and will no longer remain silent as compliant bystanders simply because we are the Rest.

Chandran Nair is founder and CEO, Global Institute for Tomorrow, a Hong Kong-based think-tank.

Notes / m.z.

More articles by Chandran Nair:

I.

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www.global-inst.com/ideas-for-tomorrow/2014/the-west-against-the-rest.html

www.theglobalist.com/the-west-against-the-rest

II.

The West: A Minority Club -- Why not hold the West as well as the Rest accountable for their actions? - the Globalist, 13 August 2014

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www.global-inst.com/ideas-for-tomorrow/2014/asias-leaders-must-work-together-to-solve-their-problems-and-leave-the-us-out-of-it.html

www.scmp.com/comment/insight-opinion/article/1514934/asias-leaders-must-work-together-solve-their-problems-and

Chandran Nair
Founder and Chief Executive

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Chandran Nair is the Founder and CEO of The Global Institute For Tomorrow (GIFT) and is dedicated to advancing an understanding of the impacts of globalisation and the role of business in society through thought leadership and positive action to effect change. Prior to starting GIFT Mr. Nair was Asia Pacific Chairman of UK based industry leader Environmental Resources Management (ERM). He established the company as Asia's leader in environmental consulting.

For more than two decades, Mr Nair has strongly advocated a more sustainable approach to development in Asia, and has helped governments and corporations instil these principles into their key decision-making process. Mr Nair serves on the Governance for Sustainability Global Agenda Council of the World Economic Forum. He is a regular speaker and panellist at the World Economic Forum, the APEC CEO Summit and conferences organised by the UN and OECD. He has also been invited to speak to senior management at some of the world's leading companies including HSBC, Bosch, BASF, Nestle, and L'Oreal.

His first book entitled, "Consumptionomics: Asia's Role in Reshaping Capitalism and Saving the Planet" was published in December 2010. It was named one of the top 50 Breakthrough Capitalism books in 2012 and one of The Globalist's top ten books of 2011. The book has been translated into German, Chinese and Bahasa Indonesia. The Chinese version was endorsed by Sinopec Chairman Fu Cheng Yu and Vice Chairman Xie Zhen Hua of the NDRC.

Mr Nair has served as an Adjunct Professor at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology and at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy in Singapore.

Email Chandran Nair at: cnair@global-inst.com