

Linking 2Ds: Democracy and Development for Global Peace

Vijay Mehta – vijay@vmpeace.org

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For further information:
Email: vijay@vmpeace.org
Web: www.unitingforpeace.com
Tel: 02073772111

Introduction

In today's conference, we are highlighting two strands, Democracy and Development of 4D for World Peace Campaign, and explore why both of them are hijacked by destructive capitalism, exploitation of resources, humanitarian interventionism and examine how we can claim them back for a just, peaceful and sustainable world.

Just to recap, Uniting for Peace launched 4D for World Peace Campaign and had its launch in 2011. 4D stands for Disarmament, Demilitarisation, Development and Democracy. The core message of the campaign is to disarm and demilitarise the world and the savings thus achieved to be deployed for development and democracy. To promote the campaign, we have hosted around 15 events in various cities – London, Birmingham, Edinburgh, debates in Universities – Oxford, Bristol, Warwick, Sussex and outside UK – The Hague in Netherlands, Delhi, Mumbai and Hyderabad in India. In 2012, Uniting for Peace produced a film **“Change the World”** based on the campaign, which was inspired from my recently published book, **The Economics of Killing: How the West Fuels War and Poverty in Developing World**. The campaign has attracted attention home and abroad and is being appreciated by luminaries and Nobel Peace Prize Winners Mairead Corrigan Maguire, Shirin Ebadi, and bestselling author, Deepak Chopra and many more who have endorsed the campaign.

In the next stage, we are preparing briefings explaining the four D strands of the campaign. It will consist of mechanisms, actions and solutions which will help change policies of the decision makers, leaders and governments.

Democracy and Development OR Corporatocracy and Resource Theft ?

Democracy and development agenda have been seized by politicians, corporations, military and wealthy in collaboration with media. It seems the real agenda is destructive capitalism, wars and resource theft which has been glossed over in the name of democracy and development.

Democracy – or rather, the thing that we have come to call democracy, with its professional politicians, political parties and preoccupation with the money – has been entirely co-opted by finance capitalism.

Today's electoral democracy entirely stifles the expression of everyday experiences. It is no accident that the current political system protects the interests of the super-rich at the expense of almost everyone else. Genuine democracy enables ordinary people to break free from the conventions that limit their capacity to lead fulfilling lives. In our democracy, the limitations are entrenched, because the conventions are all about protecting the power of money, which enables transnational corporations to gain economic and political power to take key global decisions outside democratic norms and process, as the state has become ineffective.

The top 1 percent of the world's population own 43 percent of the world's wealth. Still the rich do not think it is selfish to avoid tax or have a moral obligation towards society. Electorates doubt the capacity of the politicians to do anything, especially when government themselves are raiding the public purse by increasingly raising funds by printing money or Quantitative Easing (QE), inflation, implementing job-killing social security welfare cuts, and confiscate depositors funds as recently happened in Cyprus to the horror of everyone.

Multinational corporations and banks have built businesses on the back of the tax payer to the extent that even their losses are written off by the taxpayers hard earned money. The rich are dependent on the government for research, updating its infrastructure and protection of its assets while hoarding their wealth in offshore tax havens.

The American Folk singer Bob Dylan said "Democracy don't rule the world. The world is ruled by violence." It is perpetrated in the guise of humanitarian intervention using the military muscle or power for imposing values of democracy, freedom and liberty. From King Leopold of Congo right up to the present Iraq and Afghanistan wars, the overwhelming military force used by US and the Western countries to invade, occupy and control other countries is not for democracy but the real agenda is the control of the resources of those countries. Humanitarian interventions what they are: cynical excuses for launching imperialist wars of aggression. The ultimate goal being the "free market" exploitation of these country's natural resources by multinational corporations.

More and more countries in Africa and Middle East are singled out and attacked under the guise of terrorism a big time cover-up for land grabs, securing food supplies and stealing precious resources like oil, gold, diamond, cobalt, coltan, copper etc.

In my book **The Economics of Killing** I have explored this scenario in which I said "Africa continues to present the most disheartening example of the connection between militarism, resource theft and poverty. The World Bank 2011 World Development Report was the first to make this nexus of effects its central theme. The report adds one of the main recurring issues raised by countries and indigenous people in the United Nations fora has been the use of militarism as the pretext to gain control over natural resources, including land, minerals and oil without restitution or compensation."

Linking Democracy and Development for Global Peace

The overall aim of today's meeting is how we can offset the predatory threats of countries and multinationals and change the agenda to bring peace and prosperity for the majority of people. One of the ways is to link Democracy and development which are interconnected and interdependent. Most of the challenges facing the world today – poverty, wars, terrorism, democratic deficit are interlinked. In this respect vision of 4D campaign addresses the underlying causes of conflict and under development by linking disarmament, demilitarisation, development and democracy to tackle the threats and works in a comprehensive and coordinated way by building partnerships at national and global level for poverty reduction and bringing transparency to the democratic process.

Besides this doom and gloom significant progress, has been made in certain countries, like India, Brazil and China. A successful democratic and development example is India's contemporary experience in which a country with over a billion people is achieving spectacular economic growth within a democratic framework. Brazil has a flourishing economy and a vibrant democracy. China's remarkable economic advance under an authoritarian regime is causing pressures for democratic change at many levels.

Going forward we need to urgently implement reforms in three areas: **democracy, banking and financial services and development** for any meaningful progress not only in poverty reduction, but also for accountable and transparent democracy.

In regards to democratic reforms, democracy can be thicker and deeper only when rulers discard their false sense of superiority and consciously fashion themselves as equal to the ordinary people in status, dignity and wealth.

There are standout examples like President Mujica of Uruguay, Nelson Mandela, former President of South Africa, and Pope Francis of Argentina, who amidst a sea of average world leaders steeped in mediocrity are rare personalities who are radical practitioners of equality and democratic ideals. The new Catholic Pope Francis has uniquely discarded the ritualistic showiness and ceremonialism which have defined his office for centuries.

The test of true democracy is when the rulers “surrender to the people” instead of trying to steer them or impose her or his will on them. Progressive conception of leadership-from-below, which accepts wisdom of the masses, is the antithesis of power-drunk policymakers who behave condescendingly. A revolution in personal austerity on the part of the governments is direly needed to stop citizen’s alienation from governments and established political parties.

The global norm of extravagant and overbearing state officialdom makes a mockery of the core value of democracy. Even before modern democratic regimes developed, thinkers like Plato were articulating role models of “philosopher kings” who would inspire people with their asceticism and absence of greed. But the construction of state power as a means to control and command people meant that such visions were replaced by ruling principles of domination and concentration of economic and political resources at the top of the pyramid.

Elite culture, which so annoys and inconveniences average citizens, especially in the developing world, is a manifestation of the skewed distribution of power in both authoritarian and democratic regimes. It can only be eroded through a new consciousness on the part of individuals and movements who challenge the status quo like Arab Spring, Indignado’s and wall street protests, which work as checks and balances to the power of the government.

Banking, financial services and monetary system reforms should be for building a social caring peace economy. Bankers and corporations should pay their due and fair share of taxes, should be regulated for creating a social caring, wisdom based enlightened economy where 99% of the people should be the first priority and not just the 1% elite. Any improvement in humankind can only come if the poor felt that they can have a share in the world’s resources and also have a stake in the government. That will be a way forward for a transparent, accountable and representative democracy which can work for the benefit of all and also bring peace on our fragile planet earth.

As per the development reforms, first and foremost, rich countries should stop stealing and extorting materials from developing countries under the guise of free trade and globalisation. Developing countries should adopt Chinese model which lifted 600 million people out of poverty, by following a policy of protecting growth of state champions.

Reduction and reallocation of military spending need to be made part of restructuring for economic and social development and recovery not only in the poor countries, but in the rich countries as well. This means, a reduction of military interventions and withdrawal of troops from Iraq, Afghanistan and reducing the size of military and weapon manufacturing. In short, we need to bring fundamental shift in our mindset, ethics and values to eradicate wars, violence and establish peace to reduce debt and financial crisis in which US and most of European countries are engulfed. According to Global Peace Index 2011, if the countries cut back their violence at the rate of 25% for example, it could save global economy \$2.25 trillion. Eradicating violence altogether, can create a stimulus of \$9 trillion, enough to tackle financial, climate change crisis and wipe out extreme poverty including covering cost of achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

Military spending and its reduction should be considered as a tool to fund development efforts. It's time for a mentality change within and among states towards new budget priorities, the demilitarisation of societies and the financial support of development efforts deriving from these sources.

Way Forward and Conclusion

2013 will be a critical year for the coming decades of international development, as international working groups propose ideas to the United Nations for what should drive the global development agenda once the Millennium Development Goals expire in 2015 and are replaced by its successor framework Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) The UN has created an online portal for civil society input at www.worldwewant.org and is promoting discussion on Twitter with the hashtag #SDGs.

To move forward the agenda of development, governments of the developed countries should fulfil their commitment of giving 0.7% of GDP which they have signed and obliged to do so. This is of highest priority of completion for MDGs.

When you see extreme poverty remains a daily reality with more than 1 billion people who live on less than a dollar a day, one cannot help but feel the missed opportunity of a multitude of people who could have been doctors, engineers, teachers, computer experts, business entrepreneurs, what you may say if they were given a chance to attend school or university. In so many ways they could have benefited humanity if they were given a chance. Trillions of dollars are always found to save the collapsing banking system or to fight wars in different countries like Iraq and Afghanistan. But money can never be found for poverty reduction and development which shows lack of political will.

In the long journey of humanity, if there was a group of people who deserved to be given a chance, it is the poorest of this world. They cannot wait. We must not use the economic crisis, the food crisis or other setbacks as an excuse to complete the MDGs. Today with the help of knowledge, know-how and the resources the world possesses, we should accept the challenge that nobody should go hungry and take actions to fulfil this goal. Remember, each of us have the capacity to change the world. Let us make the dream of making poverty history and completion of Millennium Development Goals a reality by the year 2015.

One of the ways we can affect change is through the holistic 4D for World Peace Campaign. 4D is a charter of people and organisations which believe through the savings gained by disarmament and demilitarisation we can implement development, affect financial services reforms and promote democracy. It also believes true and lasting peace can be sustained when economic, social and environmental justice have been achieved. Then there is a hope that we can link the global democracy and development agenda successfully for peace.

My book, *The Economics of Killing*, demonstrates through 4D for World Peace Campaign, there is an alternative model to the deadly cycle of military and economic disaster. It is the vital necessity for disarmament and establishing security on a world scale and a strict regulation of arms trading to create a peace dividend within an international legal framework. It will pave the way by which the military industrial model could be replaced by adopting equitable policies for disarmament, demilitarisation and working for sustainable development thus ending the cycle of violence and poverty.

We need to explore nonviolent ways for building peace and restoring human dignity, ethics and civilisation, reflected in an initiative 4D for World Peace. The 4D for World Peace Campaign offers a

choice: continue on the same destruction path of greed and competition based on market forces and suffer even more – or build a safer and fairer way of life for lasting peace. I think we have a good chance as any to accomplish this now.

Let me conclude with a quotation by Thomas Paine (English-American political activist, author, political theorist and revolutionary) who said and I quote:

"When shall it be said in any country of the world, my poor are happy, neither ignorance or distress is to be found among them; my jails are empty of prisoners, my streets of beggars; the aged are not in want, the taxes not oppressive; the rational world is my friend because I am friend of its happiness. When these things can be said, then may that country boast of its constitution and government." Thank you for listening.

Notes

1. Vijay Mehta, *The Economics of Killing*, Pluto Press, London 2012
2. Sreeram Chaulia, *The Power of Humility*, *The Asian Age*, April 2013
3. Vijay Mehta, *Millennium Development Goals – A Blueprint for Development*, *Uniting for Peace*, February 2013 issue.
4. Sir Richard Jolly, *Disarmament and Development – The Kindest Cut of All*, 2011
5. UNA UK, *Millennium Development Goals: 2015 and Beyond*, January 2013.
6. Vijay Mehta, *The Role of Global Institutions in Tackling Poverty*, April 2008, Magdalen College, Oxford.
7. Oxfam Media Briefing, *The Cost of Inequality: How Wealth and Income Extremes Hurt Us All*, February 2012
8. Food and Agriculture Organisation, UN, *Hunger and Malnutrition: The Key Datasets You Need To Know*, 2012
9. Vijay Mehta, *We Can End Poverty*, June 2010, London
10. Mark Leon Goldberg, *13 Stories That Will Drive the Global Agenda in 2013*, December 2013.
11. Save the Children, *Ending Poverty in Our Generation*, 2012

Bio – **Vijay Mehta** is a renowned author, international speaker and global activist for peace, development and human rights. He is the chair of *Uniting for Peace* (www.unitingforpeace.org) and Founding Trustee of *Fortune Forum Charity* (www.fortuneforum.org).

Working since 1979, *Uniting for Peace* is a non-profit organisation devoted to creating and promoting a global culture of peace, nonviolence and poverty reduction. The flagship campaign of *Uniting for Peace* is called 4D for World Peace. It is campaign to create global frameworks for taking actions on interconnecting global issues of disarming and demilitarising the world and the savings thus achieved to be deployed for development and democracy.

Fortune Forum was founded by his daughter Renu Mehta. *Fortune Forum* held summits (2005 and 2006) where Former US President Clinton, Former US Vice President Al Gore and Actor Michael Douglas were keynote speakers. The summits raised over a million pounds for charity and attracted a worldwide audience of 1.3 billion people (one fifth of humanity) including print and media coverage.

Vijay Mehta's books include *The Economics of Killing* (2012), *The Fortune Forum Code: For a Sustainable Future* (2006), *Arms No More* (2005) and *The United Nations and its Future in the 21st Century* (2005).

He has appeared in various TV programmes including BBC World, Press TV, Ajjak-24 hour Indian news channel, and *Think Peace* documentary, Canada, among others. The *Sunday Times*, *Independent*, *Observer* and *Guardian* newspapers, among other journals have written about him. His life is devoted to the service of peace, humanity and our planet.

Vijay Mehta is the recipient of the *Global Indian Karmaveer (Action hero) Puraskaar (Award)* by iCONGO (International Confederation of NGO's). He is now a noble-laureate 2012 – 2013 of the iCONGO team of advisors and mentors (www.icongo.in). It is an award for outstanding luminaries working for peace and social justice.

Vijay Mehta's new book **"The Economics of Killing: How the West Fuels Wars and Poverty in the Developing World"** is published by Pluto Press (UK) / Palgrave Macmillan (USA) / Amazon (Worldwide). For reviews and endorsements of the book, please visit: www.theeconomicsofkilling.org

"Vijay....a long standing activist for peace, development, human rights and environment"
The Sunday Times Magazine, London 1st February, 2009

"Vijay Mehta lends intellectual credibility to the project and wrote 'The Fortune Forum Code for a Sustainable Future', a sort of manifesto that will underpin the group's future activities."
The Independent, London 26 September 2006