

THE BATTLE ROYALE FOR TOP UN JOB

In this issue

An Asian Yes - But Who?	1
Who is Afraid of Ban Ki-Moon?	2
Tharoor's 4-Point Agenda	3
ASEAN Nominee States His Case	4
Dhanapala Remains Optimistic	5
Where the Pope and the UNSG Meet	6

Voices of the South on Globalization is a monthly newsletter intended to inspire a meaningful North-South Dialogue by raising awareness for global interdependences and by offering a forum for voices from the South in the globalization debate. Each edition will present short analyses or commentaries from a Southern perspective on one particular issue of the globalization process.

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AN ASIAN YES - BUT WHO?

Since the establishment of the United Nations, Asia has had only one opportunity of holding the position of the Secretary General with U Thant of Burma in office 1961-71. There is a wide consensus therefore that it is Asia's turn to step in again when Kofi Annan finishes his second five-year term end of December. But which of the four candidates locked in a battle royale will win?

South Korea's foreign minister Ban Ki-Moon who led the UN Security Council's secret "straw poll" with 12-1-2? India's official nominee and UN Under Secretary General for Communications and Public Information Shashi Tharoor who followed Ban with 10-2-3? Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand, Surakiart Sathirathai who scored 7-3-5? Or Sri Lankan seasoned diplomat and former UN Under Secretary General of the Department of Disarmament 1998-2003 who bottomed with 5-6-4?

The straw poll marked the first stage of the selection process by UNSC whose current members, besides the permanent five (P-5) USA, Russia, China, Britain and France are Argentina, Congo, Denmark, Ghana, Greece, Japan, Peru, Qatar, Slovakia, and Tanzania. They were asked to check in a in a secret ballot one of three boxes next to each of the four announced candidates: "encourage," "discourage," and "no opinion." In the past, there were only the "encouragement and "discouragement" options.

The July 24 straw poll was conducted in such tight secrecy that stenographers and UN secretariat staff were banned. Each delegation was allowed only an ambassador and one aide in the consultations room. France's Jean-Marc de La Sabliere, the current Security Council president, handed out identical pens so that no-one would be able to guess who voted how from the colour of the ink.

It is true that the two trailing candidates got under the 9 positive votes they would need to be elected in an eventual Security Council vote. But at this stage, the only thing that really matters is the "discourages" -- and whether any of them come from a veto-bearing permanent member who could block a candidate's election. Unlike in previous straw ballots, the council did not use different colour paper for permanent and non-permanent members.

Despite the secrecy shrouding the poll, Tharoor is of the view that the ongoing race for the SG's post has been "the most transparent race there has ever been" for the top UN job. "The four names that therefore came to the Council are the result of a more open process than has ever happened before, and the only way in which someone else could now emerge would be through the same process, through officially putting their name forward in a public manner to the Security Council...", he said in an interview. According to David Mephram, head of the international programme at the Institute of Public Policy Research (ippr) in London, the process has not been transparent enough. **[Continued on page 6]**

WHO IS AFRAID OF BAN KI-MOON?

South Korea's Ban Ki-Moon has been rather low-key in his campaign to bag the SG's post. But it did not take long after the results from the first straw poll were leaked that speculation became rampant among insiders. Ban's results drew the most speculation: who cast that sole discouraging vote?



Early speculation strongly suggested Japan, as South Korean government strongly opposed a permanent seat for Japan last year and tensions have been high lately between the two governments. Of course, others strongly suspected China of being the lone dissenter, worried that the Republic of Korea was too closely aligned with U.S. interests.

But, this is too interesting a race to settle for such obvious speculation, reported the watchful unsg.org.

James Bone with the London Times offers a tantalizing rumour. "My sources tell me that one ballot paper had "discourage" votes against all four candidates. Diplomats assume this was [U.S. Ambassador John] Bolton's ballot... [This] means that it was Bolton -- and not China, for instance -- who cast the sole negative vote against South Korean foreign minister Ban Ki-Moon." A little fact-checking with an informed source at the UN suggests that this is very plausible, but cannot be confirmed given the anonymity of the vote itself.

In addition to the none-of-the-above ballot, there was reportedly a single ballot with four checkmarks next to "No Opinion." Speculation among ambassadors is that this ballot was cast by Britain's Sir Emyr Jones Parry, but that is being denied by unnamed British sources. It might also have been "China, keeping its powder dry," writes Bone, though "a more likely scenario is that it was a junior council ambassador who just did not have instructions on how to vote."

Obviously encouraged by the straw poll the South Korean government announced August 31 its decision to intensify the campaign to get Ban UN's top post and temporarily halt its efforts to become a member of the UNSC. Ban has been low key in publicising his views on the UN and tabling an agenda. But in his address to the Council on Foreign Relations May 31 in New York he explained dealt with a wide range of issues a news SG must handle:

The picture [Courtesy: The Tribune, Chandigarh] above shows Ban Ki-Moon (left) with India's President Abdul Kalam (right) last year in New Delhi.

Reform of the UN: The United Nations family must stay the course of reform. In particular, on management reforms the secretary-general is the chief administrative officer of the United Nations. He or she must make most of the powers given by the charter and the member states. Bold leadership should be taken. Measures must be promptly introduced for enhancing the integrity, professionalism and morals of the secretariat. In the end, the reform needs to be integrated into the daily work of the management and staff in the Office of the Secretary-General.

Combat Terrorism: Terrorism continues to be the greatest security challenge of our times. The possibility of linkage with WMDs amplifies the potential dangers many times. The United Nations can lose no time in presenting to the world a comprehensive convention against international terrorism. We should muster the resolve and solidarity that enables the General Assembly to promptly adopt a resolution condemning the terrorism immediately after the September 11th.

The work of the Peacebuilding Commission should produce real value on the ground. The first cases will be pivotal for the future shape and scope of the United Nations peace-building work. All stakeholders are urged to embark upon the task with a strong sense of mission and dedication. **The United Nations' work in peacekeeping and complex emergencies should be more firmly grounded in humanitarian principles.** Human sufferings should be alleviated and human dignity should be safeguarded at all times. The moral authority of the United Nations depends on its ability to help people most in need, and it must do so with the highest ethical standards and professionalism.

MDGs: One of the most important thing is the Millennium Development Goals. This MDG should be advanced. When the target year of 2015 arrives, I hope that the United Nations will be able to credibly claim that the mission is accomplished on the most heralded goals it has promised for the world. The Korean experience in this regard shows that the development goes hand in hand with security and human rights, that development is the key to preserving peace and security and human rights. Political will must be mobilized to increase developmental assistance, including for capacity building for good governance. Progress in this regard will be vital for convincing the public that the United Nations can effectively deliver. Tangible progress in MDG's implementation will also help bridge the South-North divide. ☑

THAROOR'S 4-POINT AGENDA

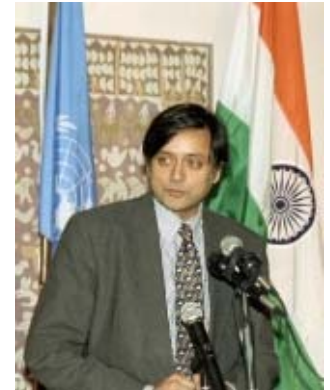
India's official nominee Shashi Tharoor has been living up to his reputation as a "gifted communicator" in the run-up to the final selection. In a spate of interviews with Indian and foreign newspapers he has been building up his case. In interviews with IPS correspondents Thalif Deen in New York and Kalinga Seneviratne in Singapore he reiterated he would not be as "India's Secretary General" but an "Indian Secretary General". He summed up his vision of UN of the 21st century in a four-point agenda in a Newsweek International article.

Make Democracy a Priority: There is much at the United Nations that must continue -- our excellent work in humanitarian relief and crisis response, and in social and economic development, to take a few examples. But we must make a greater effort to promote democracy and good governance as key ingredients of development. We now have a Democracy Fund to help us do that, financed not just by the rich West but by countries like India. To that end the United Nations must also stand up for human rights everywhere, ensuring that the new Human Rights Council fulfills its responsibilities more effectively than the over-politicized Human Rights Commission it replaced. And we must not let conflicts reignite when peacekeepers have left: we must strengthen the newly created Peacebuilding Commission to ensure that conflict gives way to development and the creation of democratic institutions so that peace is truly sustainable.

Bolster the Ranks: We have to make a difference where it counts—in the field, not just in the conference rooms in New York and Geneva. No task is more important than reinforcing the United Nations' operational capacity -- to fulfill the Millennium Development Goals (a set of promises to improve the lives of billions by 2015, which for the most part are not on course to being met), to mount effective peacekeeping operations (which currently take too long to deploy and are uneven in quality) and to respond urgently to humanitarian crises. (I know from my own experience with refugee work that we are doing well there, but can become the gold standard for emergency relief.) As head of the United Nations, I would strengthen the international civil service, eliminating the nepotism and cronyism for which we have sometimes justifiably been blamed. And I would work together with Washington on the unfinished business of management reform, especially to ensure ethics, accountability and transparency, together with truly independent audit oversight.

Prioritize and Streamline: The United Nations must be more sharply focused on areas where it has a proven and undoubted capacity to make a difference -- when major humanitarian disasters strike, peace must be kept or territories administered. But where others have the capacity, the resources and the will to keep the peace -- NATO in Afghanistan, the European Union in Bosnia, though not yet the African Union in Darfur -- the United Nations should bless their efforts. And where the task, like enforcing peace in Iraq, is clearly beyond us, we should let wars be fought by warriors, not peacekeepers.

Heal Wounds: There's a great danger of the East-West divide of the cold war being replaced by a North-South divide at the United Nations, as developing countries resist what they see as a rich-country agenda. The new secretary-general must urgently combat this. I would focus on building issue-based coalitions to deal with specific practical problems (things like management inefficiencies, procurement policies, information technology, outsourcing) that have little to do with ideological politics.



At the same time, let us never forget that the United Nations will only succeed as recourse for all and not the instrument of a few. It must amplify the voices of those who would otherwise not be heard, and serve as a canopy beneath which all can feel secure. As our great second secretary-general, Dag Hammarskjöld, put it, the United Nations was not created to take mankind to heaven, but to save humanity from hell. That it has, so far, but not all the time and not everywhere. We can do better. Indeed, at this time of turbulence and transformation, we must. ☑

Quotable Quote:

"I don't have a Plan B. Never did and don't now. I've really devoted my adult working life from the age of 22 to working for the United Nations so you'll really forgive me for not having entertained any other possibilities. If this doesn't work, then I will have to start thinking about it, and of course, all good ideas will be welcomed. But at this stage, **I am very much focused on a race I intend to win.**"

-- Tharoor in a Skypecast interview August 18 hosted by the **South Asian Journalists Association (SAJA)**,

Acknowledgements:

Tharoor's complete article in Newsweek is available at: <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/14534558/site/newsweek>
Shashi Tharoor's image is taken from his website <http://www.shashitharoor.com/STforSG/>

Important links:

Shashi Tharoor's Remarks To Regional Groups
<http://www.shashitharoor.com/STforSG/platform/platform.html>
Response to Secretary-General Candidate questionnaire
<http://www.shashitharoor.com/STforSG/platform/questionnaire.html>

ASEAN'S NOMINEE STATES HIS CASE

The Thai Government's nominee for the SG's post Deputy Prime Minister Surakiart Sathirathai is also an official candidate of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). Very little has appeared in the international media to indicate that he is pursuing a high gear public drive. But on campaign tour and www.surakiart.com website he has been vigorously stressing his eligibility for the job because of his "career long record of wise statesmanship, strong administrative leadership, intellectual depth and moral vision". Surakiart says he will bring the intellectual weight and moral vision necessary for the SG General to work effectively as the global statesman representing all Member States.



Peace: Surakiart's deepest moral commitment, rooted in his Buddhist heritage, is to peace. Peace within oneself, peace among peoples and among cultures. From his student days, Surakiart has sought to improve the effectiveness of the international institutions and multilateral collaboration that he sees as the strongest path to peace. His approach stresses

flexible multilateral arrangements and personal trust. To manage peace we must learn to manage change, he says. The Asia Cooperation Dialogue illustrated his vision of learning to live with differences and the ability to build strength out of diversity -- the first ever pan-Asian framework stresses inclusiveness and respect for diversity rather than institutional form. Now in its fourth year, the ACD structure comprises 28 members representing 85 percent of all the sub-regions of Asia with 19 areas of broad cooperation projects that are yielding tangible results.

Surakiart knows that the road to peace is not always the shortest or most popular. In the 1980s, his behind the scenes work, in close cooperation with the United States, to bring different Cambodian factions together when the Thai government's officially recognized one faction alone was strongly disapproved by many Thai diplomats and officials. Nevertheless, when the mission bore fruit and helped bring peace, stability and eventually a UN supervised election to Cambodia, his effort and subtle diplomatic skill came to be highly regarded and appreciated by all.

Poverty alleviation has been Surakiart's central focus -- motivating his interest in international economics, finance and development. Peace, he says, is only sustainable when accompanied by prosperity. His efforts have been animated by the principles of self-reliance, South-South cooperation, "prosper thy neighbour," and multilateral cooperation for development. He has consistently sought links between international finance and trade issues and real world poverty at the local level.

He has experience with the difficult task of bringing vastly different national governments together for a common development task, notably in his work on the Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy and the East-West Economic Corridor, linking Asian nations from Vietnam to Myanmar and India.

Democracy and Effective governance. An experienced institutional reformer and manager, Surakiart understands the significance of effective and accountable governance, locally, nationally and internationally, to the pursuit of peace, prosperity and social justice. He has been a particular champion of participation, broadening those at the negotiating table, and opening governance to the engagement of all stakeholders and citizens. He has deep experience encouraging democracy and reforming governance within Thailand, among Thailand's neighbours, and in his management reform work in the private sector.

Human Rights and Humanitarianism. Surakiart has a long record of commitment to human rights as a universal measure for good governance and social justice. His diplomatic career has placed him at the centre of transnational work in health, human security and humanitarian relief, most recently in the coordination of Tsunami relief.

Surakiart took the lead in organizing an Asian-wide response to the SARS epidemic, hosting a high-level meeting of ASEAN and Chinese leaders days after the crisis broke. He has been deeply involved in sharing Thai experiences with HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment with neighbouring nations, and co-chaired the second Asia-Pacific Ministerial Meeting on HIV/AIDS in Bangkok in 2004.

Surakiart is a serious academic and intellectual. He obtained two masters degrees, one in law from Harvard (LL.M) with a thesis on human rights and the other in law and diplomacy from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University (M.A.L.D.), and was the first Thai to earn a doctorate in law from Harvard University. His thesis explored the global trade law regime from the perspective of the third world. He co-edited a monograph on Third World approaches to international law with his Harvard mentor Fred Snyder, and has been an active participant in academic debate since, publishing widely. ☑

Picture courtesy of Bernama

DHANAPALA REMAINS OPTIMISTIC

Sri Lanka's candidate for the post of UN Secretary General, Jayantha Dhanapala, is not discouraged by the fact that he finished last in secret straw poll among the 15 members of the Security Council. "The results are not definitive. The poll gives no indication as to what the ultimate choice will be," Dhanapala said in an interview in Colombo. The real vote will be taken only in October, he said.

Dhanapala said that the number of votes in the "No Opinion" category indicated the possibility of changes in his favour at a later date. "The early front runners may fall out of favour. And current views may not translate themselves into actual votes," he said.

In the secret straw poll, the UNSC members had been asked to check mark ballot papers, which only read "Encourage", "Discourage" and "No Opinion". And there was no way of knowing which country voted for whom, and how the five permanent members, with a veto each, voted. Dhanapala pointed out that all the four candidates had got "discourage" votes and said that this was pregnant with possibilities. "If one of the voters in this category is a Permanent Member, it may mean a veto," he said.

"Boutros Boutros Ghali got 14 out of 15 votes, but a veto prevented him from getting selected finally," Dhanapala recalled. In 1996, the U.S. used its veto to stall Ghali from getting the customary second term.

The Colombo-based Daily News quoted James A Paul, Executive Director of the New York based Global Policy Forum, which monitors the day to day activities of the UN, as saying that the straw polls were "early exercises" and any speculation based on them would not take one very far.

However, the U.S., the most important factor in the United Nations, does not seem to be so dismissive. Speaking to the media in the UN after the poll, the U.S. envoy to the United Nations, John Bolton said: "The individual candidates who have declared now have to examine these results and decide what their next step is. And others who have been considering whether to become candidates can look at the results and decide whether they will now enter the race."

Dhanapala recently responded to the UNSGselection.org coalition's candidate questionnaire, sharing his views on the North-South divide, civilian populations in conflict, civil society's role in global governance, disarmament concerns and gender balance in the UN system. "My vision of the UN has always been that of the undisputed centre of a rule-based world order in which sovereign states voluntarily participate. The UN has built and maintained norms that improve the daily lives of people. It must continue to do so to take our world forward to sustainable peace and prosperity," he said.

In the past two decades, the UN's peacekeeping operations have grown to become one of its largest and most prominent functions -- not only in terms of the four-fold increase in the number of missions and Blue Helmets and the cost, but also with regard to the nature of peacekeeping with greater risks peacekeepers are exposed to today.



Dhanapala regretted that there has also been a sharp decline in the quality of peacekeepers with outrageous acts of misconduct. **Also regrettable is the reluctance of developed countries to provide peacekeeping troops.** "A more rapidly deployable peacekeeping force is a basic necessity with peacekeepers being trained so as to avoid the gross indiscipline that we have seen," he said. The protection of UN peacekeepers, as with all UN field staff, is a vital obligation of member states, he said.

Dhanapala expressed the hope that the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission will fill the gaping lacuna of the past and prevent countries recovering from conflict from sliding back into civil war. But for this a major investment of resources will be necessary. A constituency must be built in all countries in support of UN peacekeeping through national parliaments, the media and civil society and for this purpose the services of retired UN peacekeepers at the officer level would be helpful.

There are several additional areas of peace and security where more work needs to be done, including Chapter 6 initiatives for the peaceful settlement of disputes where the Secretary-General has to be more pro-active. Terrorism has become a global phenomenon requiring enhanced global co-operation in observing the existing international legal norms and finalizing a comprehensive convention.

He also pleaded for the arms industry engaging in a dialogue within the context of the Global Compact on conforming to codes of conduct. A radical shift of emphasis from conflict resolution and post conflict disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) to conflict prevention and the peaceful settlement of conflicts such as through greater use of the rule of law and the International Court of Justice will require a raft of measures which the Peacebuilding Commission can be expanded to implement. ☑

WHERE THE POPE AND THE UNSG MEET

The election of the UN Secretary General is as opaque and untransparent as that of the Pope, though the UN Charter provides a rather uncomplicated selection process for the organization's top post.

Article 97 of the Charter provides that the Secretary-General be appointed by the General Assembly upon a nomination from the Security Council. The nominee must receive at least nine votes in the Council, including no veto from a permanent member. Rule 48 of the Provisional Rules of Procedure of the Security Council requires that the Council's deliberations on the nomination must be held in private session. Similarly, Rule 141 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly requires the Assembly's consideration of the Council's nominee to be discussed and voted on in closed session.

The Canadian government has led governmental calls for reform, initially through the release of "non-paper" calling for a "more open and rigorous" selection process for the UNSG. In subsequent discussions, the Canadian ambassador has outlined five specific proposals for reform. Two of the proposals - a single 5 or 7 year term and discussions between candidates and regional groups - are being pushed for implementation this year, while the others will need to be realized for later selections. The non-paper recommends that the UNSG selection process could adopt practices currently used in the selection of other high-level offices - processes that are "consultative, transparent and merit-based." The Canadian ambassador has particularly charged that the feasibility of holding forums between candidates and member states has been demonstrated with the recent World Economic Forum appearance of candidates before an international audience.

Concerns from developing nations on the selection of the next UNSG has been voiced most vocally by **India**, which has suggested the Security Council present the General Assembly with three nominees rather than the traditional single nominee. The proposal met with unanimous opposition by the permanent members, and was rejected other members (including Canada) for its potential of splitting the membership and weakening the next UNSG's base of support, but the proposal is being considered by the **Non-Aligned Movement**, the largest bloc of member states within the UN.

A taskforce of the United Nations Association of the United States (UNA-USA) recently released "Selecting the Next Secretary General," offering several recommendations on improving the selection process, identifying desired skills and qualifications of candidates and noting the issues and priorities the next UNSG will face. The taskforce included representatives from several UN member states, former and current UN officials, and several private sector, academic and civil society experts. ☑

[Continued from page 1]

Mephram pleads in an article for opendemocracy.net for reforming the system for choosing the world's figurehead. "The choice of Annan's successor matters hugely. The United Nations is at a critical moment in its history: badly divided by the Iraq war and the oil-for-food scandal, and still traumatised by the attack on the UN headquarters in Iraq on 19 August 2003 in which the highly respected Sergio Vieira de Mello and twenty-one others (mostly UN officials) were killed."

Although the post carries limited formal power, the UN Secretary General has the responsibility and the opportunity to exert considerable moral leadership. Through quiet but effective personal diplomacy, Annan has become a respected international voice for decency and sanity in the international system. "His successor will need to be someone of exceptional ability and character that can build on these achievements, as well as developing an agenda of their own," says Mephram.

But the process for selecting SG remains risible, he regrets. He quotes Brian Urquhart, former under-secretary-general at the UN, who argues in an article in the September-October 2006 issue of Foreign Affairs: "There is no formal procedure for searching for, nominating, or vetting candidates, nor, as yet, is there any provision for the Security Council to interview aspirants to this vital post."

The decision will be taken behind closed doors with no opportunity to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the Security Council or in the General Assembly. It is probably too late this time for it to be done any other way. But this should really be the last occasion in which the UNSG is selected on this flawed basis.

Mephram pleads for radically revised process in place of the horse-trading and secret deals. A more transparent and professional process truly commensurate to the importance of the job is needed. In his view, specific reforms should include a single term of six years, a proper process for nominating and selecting candidates, a clear manifesto statement from each of the prospective candidates, open hearings in the Security Council and the General Assembly, and an end to the notion of regional rotation.

– **Ramesh Jaura**

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