

Dissident Warwick

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Abstract:

Dissident Warwick is a termly independent student publication from a progressive political standpoint and now in its third issue. It comprises articles on political theory, analysis of current and campus events, history, campaigning and activism, interviews, book and film reviews, counter-culture, illustrations and any submissions outside of any pre-determined area.

Its flexible, collective and non-hierarchical editorial process via the editing blog has enabled the creation and dissemination of research and knowledge in a way that reflects an alternative political perspective, writer autonomy, great variety, and high-quality pieces, which have included articles on Warwick's new Chancellor Richard Lambert, political theory, Tibet, student activism, and an interview with Howard Zinn.

This project has been instrumental in the articulation of the student body's interests and beliefs, distinct from the one-dimensional career-driven consumer-student targeted by the university and mainstream media. Furthermore, it has successfully explored the potential of horizontal and collaborative research and creation.

Keywords: *progressive, student publication, non-hierarchical editorship, politics*

Introduction:

Student political debate, particularly at Warwick University, is lacking a clear perspective that is at once autonomous, intelligent, well-articulated, non-dogmatic and non-partisan. Existing media and publications offer little by way of innovation, by discouraging creative, progressive and wide-ranging approaches of understanding and critically analysing the surrounding social reality. Further, their hierarchical structures and links to corporate sponsorship or party political agendas delimit the field of possible articulation and thus constrain writers' autonomy.

Dissident Warwick, with its progressive political outlook and editorial flexibility, aims to provide a real opportunity for an alternative, progressive and non-partisan forum on campus, through which the entire range of the progressive political spectrum can be expressed, from anarchism to socialism, feminism to environmentalism, and anywhere in-between and beyond. The collective, non-hierarchical and flexible editorial process also allows for the content of the magazine to vary from issue to issue, by respecting the autonomy of the contributors and reflecting their interests and beliefs rather than spelling out one particular centralised position. It also allows the potential for creative and multi-disciplinary approaches to issues, encouraging innovative insights and a process of debate and discussion, particularly via the online blog that contains all of the articles printed in the paper edition.

With a limited forum for alternative voices, student campaigning groups and politically conscious individuals on campus, Dissident Warwick fulfils a real need for a means of free discussion, analysis and exchange of ideas that provide an alternative perspective, contrasting with the new corporate hegemony that Warwick has been at the forefront of - a critique famously developed by E. P. Thompson in *Warwick University Ltd* (1971). The trend has not ceased to intensify since then and Dissident Warwick plays an important role as a counter-weight to the mainstream media and university focus on the one-dimensional career-driven consumer-student, by providing an alternative expression of the student body's drive, interests and beliefs.

It also stands in stark contrast to the media and publications operating on a more hierarchical model, and with the rise of alternative media, particularly through the internet, Dissident Warwick plays an important part in exploring these alternative models.

Methodology:

As a pre-existing project with the first issue published in November 2007, the second and third issues were, for the most part, building on that, expanding the presence of Dissident Warwick across campus, the university and the local area in order to increase readership, interaction, debate and discussion, and interest in contributing to future issues.

Given the practical nature of this project, it largely followed an empirical and needs-based approach, firstly in terms of the process of producing research and knowledge in the articles for the second and third issues of Dissident Warwick and secondly in implementing a non-hierarchical editorial process of those articles. This project essentially arose out of practical experience of individuals involved in progressive politics, campaigning, activism and the dissemination of information and analysis relating to these activities. Many of the ideas and organisational techniques have drawn from other student publications and independent and alternative media, such as the Independent Media Centre (Indymedia) as an alternative to corporate media – hence the practical and experiential nature of the project.

First, the production of research and knowledge comprised an extensive and intensive process of producing the articles for the second and third issues. The process began with the research for many of the articles, most notably in a critique of the neo-liberal model of universities, a libertarian socialist defence of freedom and equality, an exposition of India's development, and an analysis of the Blackwater Corporation in the second and third issues.

Second, the articles were subjected to a rigorous but consensual and collaborative editing process through comments and discussion on the Dissident Warwick Edit blog (www.blogs.warwick.ac.uk/dissidentwarwickedit), which results in the high quality articles exhibited in the three issues of Dissident Warwick. But ultimately, according to Dissident Warwick's principle of writer autonomy, the writer retains control over their work, incorporating changes only as s/he sees fit, which contributes to an inclusive and respectful environment.

After the design and layout was completed the magazine was sent to print (by a workers co-op on recycled paper) and the print copies were disseminated around campus, university and the local area. Concurrently, the articles were published on the Dissident Warwick blog (www.blogs.warwick.ac.uk/dissidentwarwick), establishing a link between author and audience and encouraging feedback, comments, debate and discussion on the issues addressed.

The chronology of the project is summarised below:

Dissident Warwick Issue 2:

January 20 th 2008	Article Submission Deadline
January 21 st – 27 th 2008	Collaborative Editing Week
January 28 th – February 10 th 2008	Design and Layout
February 11 th – 24 th 2008	Printing and Dissemination

Dissident Warwick Issue 3:

April 13 th 2008	Article Submission Deadline
April 14 th – 20 th 2008	Collaborative Editing Week
April 21 st – May 4 th 2008	Design and Layout
May 5 th – 25 th 2008	Printing and Dissemination

Results:

The first major research outcome was the knowledge and research that came about directly as a result of the articles produced for the second and third issues of Dissident Warwick.

The second and third issues of Dissident Warwick are available at the online blog (http://blogs.warwick.ac.uk/dissidentwarwick/entry/dissident_warwick_issue_1/ and http://blogs.warwick.ac.uk/dissidentwarwick/entry/dissident_warwick_issue/ respectively) and in hard copy.

Some of the most prominent research outcomes and knowledge creation in the second and third issues can be found in the following articles:

- ‘The Neo-Liberal University’ (Vidal-Folch Duch), which analyses the trend of marketisation of education and the social consequences of the proliferation of the logic of the market in this arena.
- ‘The Non-Negotiable Human Right’ (Pace), a critique of torture with a particular focus on US detention facilities, such as at Guantanamo Bay.
- ‘Human Capital: Our New Chancellor on Education’ (Hall), an analysis of human capital theory and the social and educational implications of the recent appointment of Richard Lambert, Director-General of the CBI, as Warwick’s new Chancellor.
- ‘Freedom and Equality’ (Dhaliwal), a libertarian socialist defence of positive liberty combined with critique of the classical liberal and (right-wing) libertarian argument for negative liberty.
- ‘Interview with Howard Zinn’ (Rossdale), an interview with American historian, political scientist and activist, Howard Zinn, on student activism and social change.
- ‘Blackwater: The Rise of Private Armies’ (Carrigan), an analysis of Blackwater Corporation and other private mercenary armies and links to the political establishment, reminiscent of Eisenhower’s reference to the ‘military-industrial complex’ and C. Wright Mills’ exposition of the inter-relatedness of the political, economic and military elites in *The Power Elite* (1956).
- ‘The Other India’ (Levinson), an investigation of India’s economic development with a particular focus on the inequities of contemporary neo-liberal globalisation and economic growth
- ‘Free Tibet?’ (Taylor), a measured and nuanced look at the reality of the Free Tibet movement and the nationalism prevalent in the struggle.

Secondly, the comments from the Dissident Warwick Edit blog and the Dissident Warwick blog serve as evidence for the horizontal, collaborative and consensual production process behind every article and for Dissident Warwick’s function as a forum for free debate and discussion. An example of each aspect is given below.

The Editing Process

The editing process for the article 'Free Tibet?' from the third issue of Dissident Warwick is shown in Appendix I. As can be seen from the comments, the editing process encompasses changes from minor spelling, punctuation and grammar issues to more substantive and ideational issues relating to the actual topic matter, thereby yielding articles that are of a high quality, well-considered and rigorously scrutinised. In spite of all this, however, ultimate discretion over a piece of work rests with the author who incorporates only those changes which s/he feels are necessary, resulting in an editorial process that is at once effective and democratic. Articles are judged based on their merit and in the case of a surplus of articles (as was the case for the second and third issues), each contributor votes on an equal basis for two articles that would be cut if necessary.

Indeed, the open and democratic process of contributing to Dissident Warwick is exemplified by this article, whereby the contributor himself became involved after reading and commenting on an article from the second issue ('The Third Way in Israel and Palestine', http://blogs.warwick.ac.uk/dissidentwarwick/entry/the_third_way/).

Debate and Discussion

The article 'The Other India' from the third issue of Dissident Warwick and the accompanying comments from the online blog are shown in Appendix II, illustrating the sort of debate and discussion that has arisen from articles. As the comments show, the online blog serves as an effective forum for rigorous yet respectful debate and discussion over the issues addressed and raised by the articles. Articles receive comments from critics as well as supporters and the blog therefore provides an excellent opportunity for bridging the gap between the author and his or her audience and developing skill in writing and debate.

These two articles are, of course, only two examples of the processes at play in Dissident Warwick, though they give an idea of the outcomes and contributions this project is and has been capable of, evidenced by the editing process and feedback for many of the other articles.

Conclusion and Outcomes:

One of the key aims of Dissident Warwick was to provide a forum for the progressive anti-neo-liberal movement on campus. This has been a successful aspect of the project, realised in several distinct areas. The structure of the magazine is such that it has come to be seen as an activist 'community magazine', which fuses relevant content with an organisational structure that allows those involved to work together and develop valuable relationships. The content of the magazine has dealt with issues directly concerning students, such as Vidal-Folch's article about the neo-liberal university system, and Hall's article on the Chancellor Richard Lambert. There is also a section for campus news that relates to activists, and a 'Radicalendar' on the last page which gives the details of upcoming events that may be of interest to progressive students. The culture of debate inherent in the articles encourages a level of intellectual engagement with peers often missing from the student-as-consumer education model which is often felt to characterise the University of Warwick. Likewise, the relationships formed and employed in the production and dissemination of the magazine have strengthened ties amongst the progressive community at Warwick; the Radicalendar facilitates communication, and the sense of ownership appears to have introduced a new level of cohesion and identity between the sometimes disparate activist community at Warwick.

One major feature of Dissident Warwick has been the non-hierarchical production process. This format has produced a very different experience for the contributors than would many other publications. In a society where most organisations involve some level of subservience to an employer or other, the capacity for collective ownership and power over such a project has been both liberating and empowering for those involved. The strength of Dissident Warwick is that it has shown that alternative forms of production can and do work. Collective organisation here has led to the production of a high quality publication. The non-hierarchical structure has also meant that the interests of those who actually produce the magazine are prioritised. This has led to a focus on the exploration of ideas and enabled the avoidance of business prerogatives that so often limit the content of media publications, as explored by Herman and Chomsky in *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (1994). Contributors have designed their articles with relative autonomy, in an inclusive environment which has begun to see an increasing level of collaboration between authors on articles (the next issue features a two-way debate on the promise afforded by Barack Obama's presidency).

The collaborative editing process, another important feature of the project, has also been relatively (although not wholly) successful. As the appendices show, comments have been respectful and most decisions have been mutual. The problems which have developed have been where contributors have not been available to take part in the editing process. When this problem was first encountered, there was considerable hesitancy on the part of those involved in editing that issue to alter an article without the express consent of the author, because the principle of individual ownership has been so fundamental to the project. In the end, a decision was taken that the article should not appear in that issue; whilst individual ownership was seen as crucial, involvement in the communal editing process was also seen as necessary for inclusion.

Issues have also arisen when the number of articles submitted has exceeded the available space in the magazine. Discussion in the group led to the method we subsequently adopted. In situations of excess articles each person involved was invited to send a first and second choice for exclusion to the graphics designer who put the magazine together. Although the exclusion of any article is unsatisfactory, this method involved all members and was administered by someone who was not themselves a contributor of articles. We used this method for the second and third issues of *Dissident Warwick*, and managed to achieve relative satisfaction with both the system and the outcome.

The reaction to the magazine from the wider student populace has been difficult to gauge, however there are many positive signs. There has been increasing feedback on the public blog, both in the form of questions and critique. There has also been increasing interest from individuals wishing to submit future contributions. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the appearance of a publication which puts forward alternative and uncommon viewpoints has stimulated fresh discussion on campus. It would also appear that the readership of the magazine spans the student-teacher divide, and several academics have commented on the articles within. It is clearly difficult to ascertain the true extent of these conclusions, and more active investigation into such matters is an important future concern.

The project's contribution to the individual development of contributors would appear to be significant. Many have welcomed the opportunity to combine independent research with knowledge learned from their courses, citing it as a welcome break from the perception that university learning has become too geared towards ticking boxes and achieving grades. The inclusion of article footnotes and references on the blog has maintained the academic flavour of the articles, whilst allowing knowledge to be exercised in a productive, accessible and progressive fashion. The project has also enabled students to write essays for the approval and consumption of their peers rather than their teachers.

The dissemination of *Dissident Warwick* is an area of clear importance; the implementation of this has been largely successful, but it has also presented challenges. Our principal method of distributing the magazine has been to leave piles in various strategic points around campus, often next to the *Warwick Boar*, in locations well known to students. Most importantly, we left issues in faculties and in the Students' Union. This process, however, did raise some difficulties. The actual distribution has been fairly time-consuming and difficult for busy students. Efforts have been made to mitigate this concern by broadening the number of people involved. In addition, the timing of the third term release was problematic. Despite it being released early in the term, lectures had finished for revision and so there were relatively few places that students actually visited. Alongside this problem, students tend to have less free time towards the end of the year, and so the readership of the third issue was below what we had expected. We aim to resolve this problem in the next year by releasing the second and third issues at the beginning and end of the second term, thereby avoiding third-term complications.

References:

Callinicos, Alex (2006) *Universities in a Neoliberal World*. Bookmarks Publications: London.

Dissident Warwick, <http://blogs.warwick.ac.uk/dissidentwarwick/>

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Herman, Edward and Chomsky, Noam (1994) *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*. New York: Vintage.

Independent Media Centre, <http://www.indymedia.org.uk/en/>

LibCom, <http://libcom.org/>

Thompson, E.P. (1970) *Warwick University Ltd*. Penguin Books: Middlesex.

Appendix I

Editing Process

April 02, 2008

Free Tibet? 🗳️

As we move towards the handover of the Olympic torch to China, witnessing the massacre of monks on the streets of Lhasa, it's easy to see why so many people sympathise with and support the demands for Tibetan independence. The "Free Tibet" movement has gained great momentum and its supporters clearly have wholly altruistic motivations, but I struggle to assent to it all.

There can be no doubt that the Chinese occupation of Tibet has been severely detrimental to the people of Tibet, particularly in terms of the curtailing of religious freedom and the catalogue of human rights abuses that has resulted. Nevertheless, we shouldn't offer mindless support to their resisters without taking into consideration their methods and motivations. The mainstream media have enshrined the Tibetan peripheral protesters in a mythology that characterises them as peaceful, pro-democratic activists. But it is just that: a myth. The protesters are not new, they are not peaceful and they are not demanding democracy.

The protesting monks are not non-violent. Since the Red Army first attempted to occupy the Tibetan region in 1949, protesters, most notably in the Yunnan province, used military force to resist the Chinese imperialists. From the early 1950s onwards, the Tibetan protesters have received financial and military support from the CIA and other military groups. Consequently, violence continues to prevail. When the propaganda machines of our nations portray this matter in terms of black and white, we should not shy away from drawing attention to shades of grey.

More importantly, however, the issue at stake in Tibet is not democracy. A large proportion of the nationalist protesters, or "splittists", are strong advocates of returning to the former hierarchical Buddhist theocracy under leadership of the Lamas. Indeed, in the broadcasts of those protesting, they are almost always doing so with the iconic image of the Dalai Lama. The current Dalai Lama is shrouded in a romanticised image perpetuated by Westerners such as Richard Gere as a saintly figure free from flaw. This is far from true. Tenzin Gyatso, the current Dalai Lama, actively supports thermonuclear testing carried out by the Indian government. He has advocated collaboration with the Chinese oppressors. He has been just as subject to criticism from rights activists as many of the Chinese officials, particularly with regard to his view on queer and women's rights. Although some notable advances have been made since the early 1980s towards furthering the cause of women's rights in Tibet, the monastic system remains highly patriarchal. A return to this style of government would hardly lead to the creation of a democratic nation with security of human rights.

The crux of my inability to give full support to the "Free Tibet" cause comes from its nationalist overtones. Certainly, its supporters also advocate respect for human rights and creation of democracy, but it does so on the basis that a free state necessarily

implies a free people. It is naive to believe that an imagined border will somehow lead to peace and social justice. The nationalist ideology unites people on the basis of a common ethnicity, rather than on the basis of common interests and shared oppression. It pushes people into a false sense of identity and away from genuine human desires, such as those of personal freedom and acceptable living standards.

Nationalism, in the context of Tibet, divides people on the grounds of their presumed race on an issue where unity is paramount. Tibet itself is an area of disputed borders, born out of nationalist expansion into its three major regions: Kham, U-Tsang and Amdo. It comprises various historic ethnicities, with the Khambas having historically remained independent from the rest of 'Tibet'. It is clear that what is most at stake is not a national identity but human freedom, as applicable in Tibet as it is in China itself. Thus the anti-statist dream of a world without borders is particularly pertinent to an issue such as Tibet. Human rights transcend nationality; they are universal and applicable to every area of the world. It is for this reason that we should not treat Tibet as exceptional, but as a small part of the wider-reaching problem of the Chinese government's oppressive activities.

We should be wary, too, of making the nationalist conflation of a free people with a free state. In addition to the logical flaws in such an assertion, we should remember that such mistakes led to the installation of Mugabe in Zimbabwe. Conversely, however, where campaigners for freedom have seen their struggle in terms of wider-reaching issues and ideologies, such as the Zapatistas in Mexico and the Zikists in post-colonial Africa, outcomes have tended to be far more favourable.

It is for these reasons that I feel very reluctant to give my support to the protesting monks or to their pro-independence supporters around the world. I cannot help but feel that the campaign for Tibet's national sovereignty is misguided. Our fight should be one of respect for human rights, individual liberties and acceptable living conditions, regardless of the invisible borders that divide people. It should be a fight against the institutions and systems that do not promote these. Until we can see the struggle in such terms, real freedom may never be achieved.

Let us demand freedom for the Tibetan people, not freedom for a Tibetan state.

Sources

Barnett, Robert; Akiner, Shirin. *Resistance and Reform in Tibet*. London: Hurst & Co., 1994.

Grunfeld, Tom A. *The Making of Modern Tibet*. London: Zed Books, Ltd., 1987.

Gyatso, Janet; Havnevik, Hanna. *Women in Tibet*. London: Hurst & Co., 2005.

Patterson, George N. *Tibet in Revolt*. London: Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1960.

Salon Newsreal: His Material Highness-

<http://www.salon.com/news/1998/07/13news.html>

San Francisco Chronicle- <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/1997/06/11/MN24029.DTL>

Sun Valley Online-

http://www.sunvalleyonline.com/news/article.asp?ID_Article=1146

New York Times-

<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9C0CEFD61538F931A35753C1A96E958260>

CanTibNet- <http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/tib/nytimes.htm>

Rogue State: A Guide to the World's Only Superpower-
<http://members.aol.com/superogue/intro.htm>

Free Tibet- <http://www.freetibet.org/aboutus/freetibet.html>

Amnesty International - <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/features-stories/migrants-rights-are-human-rights-20071218>

Amnesty International - <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/news/crackdown-activists-and-minorities-china-20080313>


Amnesty International- <http://www.amnesty.org/en/for-media/press-releases/china-net-tightens-beijing-activists-olympic-games-approach-20080307>

Guardian News- <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/apr/02/china.tibet>

Office of Tibet New York-
http://www.tibetoffice.org/en/index.php?url_channel_id=8&url_publish_channel_id=2275&url_subchannel_id=57&well_id=2

Office of Tibet New York-
http://www.tibetoffice.org/en/index.php?url_channel_id=8&url_subchannel_id=12&url_publish_channel_id=1887&well_id=2

BBC News: Tibet's Unsettled Borders- <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/7304825.stm>

 Lev Taylor : [02 Apr 2008 22:18](#) | [Comments \(42\)](#) | [Write follow-up](#)
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1. [Chris Rossdale](#)

Interesting, very thought provoking, although I disagree with some of your summations and assumptions. There are a few grammatical issues, i'll post them up tomorrow. Good article.

82.16.138.159 - 03 Apr 2008, 00:32

2. Lev Taylor

From exchanges with Puneet and personal reflection, I've realised where some of your disagreements may come from. Some bits of the article are a bit misleading and generalised, so I'm going to reword some bits and add another paragraph or two to explain why the anti-nationalism. I'll do all that tomorrow if I ever get to sleep tonight.

Look forward to hearing your views,

Lev

xx

137.205.32.135 - 03 Apr 2008, 01:10

3. Mark Carrigan

Generally I like it. I have problems with free tibet as well given that (a) it's a national liberation movement and they shouldn't be uncritically supported (b) the nation being liberated largely suffered under a theocratic state (c) a lot of the people in it seem to have a very romanticised view of tibetan buddhism and the way it finds expression as a social system. On the other hand, I think there's a few points you implicitly make which I disagree with: supporting national liberation in tibet and working against chinese human rights abuses are not mutually exclusive, national liberation movements are not wholly bad (the zapatistas for one) and there's often more to a sense of nationhood than ethnicity. Like I say I thought these points were made implicitly and if they are, I think you need to argue for them and, if they're not, I think you need to make it clear that you don't assent to them.

I also don't like this paragraph:

"At times, no doubt, peaceful resisters are needlessly slaughtered by the Chinese police force."

Obviously it's just a stylistic thing but I think people outside the DW blog are going to take this as trivialising to needless slaughter.

...and I think this is (a) based on a premise which you really need to argue for because if you condemn "guerilla militarism" as a category (I'm not saying anything about specific instances) you undermine the possibility of people to fight back autonomously against oppressive states – so you're left with saying 'freedom for the people, not a nation' and then condemning their "guerilla militarism" when, say, the zapatistas fight back against the mexican state – the result being, I'd suggest, a bit of a contradictory attitude (b) opens up a HUGE can of worms by bring Israel/Palestine in, which might cloud people a bit in terms of reading your nuanced article in a nuanced way...

"We cannot ignore, however, that the campaigners for independence often use the same guerrilla militarism that we so readily and rightly oppose when it is committed by Palestinian protesters against Israelis or terrorists anywhere in the world"

Perhaps you could also do with explicitly defining what a nation and what a state is? The terms are often used very loosely and people unfamiliar with their definitions might get confused by your switch from nation to state in the last line.

Otherwise well done mate. That's an extremely nuanced piece and it's a difficult idea to get across well.

82.17.212.58 - 03 Apr 2008, 09:49

4. Lev Taylor

Thank you for your thoughts!

I'm drafting another paragraph to include to explain why anti-nationalism and to articulate some of the vaguer areas, and to make clear certain parts. At present I fear it's in danger of appearing as though I'm pandering to the neocons or something. I'm glad you mentioned the Zapatistas. The Zapatistas will be a good one to mention, as well as African Zikism and other revolutionary anti-imperialist movements. I will tack on a bit about positive alternatives (although really they deserve an article or more on their own.)

You're right about Israel/Palestine. I'm going to cut that out. I think I probably need to clarify the fourth paragraph, and explicitly say that I'm not against violent resistance- something the current article shies away from, but that may be imperative to understanding.

Oh yeah and I'm going to rephrase the bit about "doubtless... needless slaughter" etc. to refer specifically to the 15 peaceful protesters who were arrested yesterday.

Thank you for your comments and ideas. They've been a massive help and I'm going to make the necessary changes later on today.

Lev
xx

137.205.32.135 - 03 Apr 2008, 13:14

5. Lorenzo Vidal-Folch Duch

it's an original article. i agree with marks comments, also i think that the whole violence and non-violence debate is not really necessary for the main point you are arguing and might even detract from it. just an opinion though. nice work!

137.205.17.133 - 03 Apr 2008, 14:05

6. Lorenzo Vidal-Folch Duch

also, it would be good to reference the sources you used, especially concerning tibetan “guerallia militarism”, contacts with the CIA and Japanese terrorist cults... as well as the Dalai Lama’s position on nuclear testing, human rights, complicity with the Chinese etc.

137.205.17.133 - 03 Apr 2008, 14:30

7. Lev Taylor

I still don’t know how to upload sources!

I’ll just post them up in a comment and give notes about to which points they refer.

Lev
xx

137.205.32.135 - 03 Apr 2008, 16:04

8. Lev Taylor

General Books:

Barnett, Robert; Akiner, Shirin. Resistance and Reform in Tibet. London: Hurst & Co., 1994. (Great info on militarism, CIA involvement, politics of Tibet and the ideology behind Tibetan nationalism.)

Grunfeld, Tom A. The Making of Modern Tibet. London: Zed Books, Ltd., 1987. (Didn’t use this book that much, but still worth a gander for historical insight.

Gyatso, Janet; Havnevik, Hanna. Women in Tibet. London: Hurst & Co., 2005. (Charts the progress of nuns and women’s rights activists in bringing women’s issues into the monastic system and challenging its patriarchy. Interesting stuff in this book, and in the Barnett one, on female Tibetan soldiers and the impact they have had on challenging gender stereotypes in Tibetan Buddhism. Generally, however, not the most relevant book to the overall discussion. Contains an implicit bias and romanticisation, perhaps caused by the author’s last name?)

Patterson, George N. Tibet in Revolt. London: Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1960. (This book is very interesting, particularly Part 3, and the last two chapters. Good info on early relations with India and the reasons for the Tibetans’ current political allegiances. Doesn’ discuss it, because written before the event, but gives an interesting insight into why the current Dalai Lama is supporting thermonuclear testing.)

Websites specifically dealing with criticisms of the Dalai Lama and the Dalai clique:

Salon Newsreal: His Material Highness-
<http://www.salon.com/news/1998/07/13news.html>
San Francisco Chronicle- <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/1997/06/11/MN24029.DTL>
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New York Times-
<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9C0CEFD61538F931A35753C1A96E958260>
CanTibNet- <http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/tib/nytimes.htm>

Rogue State: A Guide to the World's Only Superpower-
<http://members.aol.com/superogue/intro.htm> (Similar in themes to Chomsky's Understanding Power, but gives specific reference to how that relates into Tibet.)

Guardian News- <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/apr/02/china.tibet> (If you read all of the above, it might then be worth reading this Guardian article and seeing the lies on both sides. Worth noting, however, that the Dalai Lama does advocate nonviolence and collusion over violence towards independence. Important to draw a distinction between the monks and general protesters and the government in exile itself, which many news reports fail to do.)

More sources to follow..

137.205.32.135 - 03 Apr 2008, 16:36

9. Lev Taylor

Have made the proposed changes and restructured slightly.

If there's anything I've forgotten, please let me know.

Also, if there are any areas where it doesn't look to have been sufficiently sourced and referenced, again, please say so.

Lev
xx

137.205.32.135 - 04 Apr 2008, 01:12

10. Douglas Linssen

Nice article! I'm a little confused by the end though. The flow towards an anti nationalist sentiment and a more 'grey area' considered view is very nice, but it seems a little inconclusive to me. The article is a nice consideration of how the two positions have been polarized, and a nice challenge of the conventional wisdom around the 'Free Tibet' cause, but to me it seems to fall off the issue of Tibet when you begin to talk about Nationalism. I agree with what you say about how the issue should

have a broader base than only national sovereignty, but it seems that the conclusions work as a discussion point, but don't necessarily state a viable solution for Tibet itself. Us standing in solidarity is not enough of a conclusion for me, it felt like the article needs a mention of the alternatives to the nationalist banner, that you mentioned, for Tibetans (and for that matter any oppressed people).

What do you think?

Also, there's a little typo in the fifth paragraph, it says 'Tenzin Gyatso, the currently Dalai Lama' instead of the 'current Dalai Lama'.

Otherwise, very interesting article.

212.159.77.131 - 04 Apr 2008, 16:24

11. Lev Taylor

Hey Doug,

The conclusion does have that ambiguity and openness, I know- the article was written really to stimulate responses and trigger debate on the matter- on the matter of whether a free nation does entail a free people (the article only really scratches the surface, and I know some people even within the Dissident have quite varied views on this) and as to what the solutions are. I think, really, both matters need their own article (if not a dissertation!) to fully discuss them. Tried hinting at it by mentionin pan-Africanism and the Zapatistas...

Thing is, I think you might be right, the last three paragraphs do feel like they trail off a little, and I know the conclusion isn't as solid as it could be... have you got any suggestions on how to rectify it? I'll give it another few reads and see if I can come up with something, but any ideas you have on it would be really appreciated!

Perhaps it's the "standing in solidarity" bit... should I make reference to more specific campaigns? I'm not sure that bringing internationalism, socialism, social libertarianism and all that into it overtly is such a good idea- given the limit on words, it might just end up leaving the article feeling more open-ended than before. Perhaps though... no, I don't know.

Please, any suggestions would be really, really helpful!

Lev

xx

137.205.32.135 - 04 Apr 2008, 19:40

12. Mark Carrigan

Perhaps talk about the ongoing human rights campaign re: china? You're advocating "standing in solidarity" with the Tibetan people but in the context

of overarching criticisms of the chinese political system as a whole, rather than focusing solely on a national liberation movement?

82.17.212.58 - 04 Apr 2008, 21:19

13. [Vincent Carroll-Battaglin](#)

“conscribe”?

“his view on queer and women’s rights.”
er,...excuse me?

You discuss mention methods several times, appearing to take a dim view of violence, and then say it’s not the crux of your point. The use of violence is a massive debate. It can’t be taken up here. I’d note the media portrayal as a study of media portrayal, but go no further into the violence discussion since your other point is in fact much stronger, and as you say, is the crux of your argument.

The issue of nationalist overtones is an important one, and you take it up well. Some areas of confusion, however.

“Nationalism divides people on the grounds of their presumed race...” is an incorrect inference. The USA has never made any claim and remains the most influential nation-state.

Secondly, the southern African issue...

No of us can really remember Mugabe being “elected” in any real sense. What we can remember is other regimes propping him up, and a distinct lack of interference from the West. I’m not sure why this is a consequence of conflating human rights and nationalism. The appeal to human rights is lacking somewhat.

I don’t know what “higher ideologies” means.

“conscientious”, or “reluctant”?

The other thing is, you waste quite some length repeating conciliatory comments that I guess are an insurance policy, prudent given the activism of the Chinese community on campus in the past. This could all be tightened up though. A concise conclusion could say this in a quarter of the space, say, and avoid repetition.

The argument is a good one. If you have another look and edit out stuff that isn’t pertinent, you might find you have more space to build on your argument to make it even stronger.

Regards,

62.56.107.218 - 05 Apr 2008, 17:50

14. Lev Taylor

Vince,

Thank you for the comments- obviously a lot to think about there and a lot that needs changing.

Regarding the matters of language, I will make all of the changes suggested. Can totally see where they are misleading or inaccurate, so will adapt those bits.

A few questions about some bits of that, though:

the “queer and women’s rights” bit... is it that it needs backing up some more? Because if it’s not enough to have it in the sources bit, then it might even be worth taking out altogether, since that’s a whole essay in itself. Or is it grammatical? Or is it the language used?

The violence debate: surely it’s still worth keeping in the info about the protesters’ methods? You’re right that such a discussion needs its own space, though. Just not sure what to do there. Would really like to keep in the “shades of grey” stuff. Not that I’m arguing, just don’t totally understand which bits you think should be taken out and which bits left in.

The Mugabe bit is pertinent, I think it just needs rephrasing. I’ll try and reword it then see if you still disagree?

Will definitely expand on the antinationalist idea if you think it’s OK to go a little longer. Initially, I had more on that, specific to Tibet, but I cut it down because I thought otherwise it would be too long. Perhaps if I do as you say and cut the concluding three paragraphs down into one, then there’ll be space to add in another two.

Will make all the other changes tomorrow, then look at the rest, hopefully with your feedback from these questions, and try and get a better re-working sorted.

Lev

xx

137.205.32.135 - 05 Apr 2008, 22:59

15. [Vincent Carroll-Battaglino](#)

queer = LGBTU (or whatever it’s called nowadays) was my point there.

The point about the violence was that you mentioned it (and only mentioned it) several times. mention media portrayal in connection with violence *once*, then move on?

Goes with your next question about length. It’s not about you getting more

length, it's about removing repetition and "into"ish sentences and replacing with more argument. Over half of your article is introduction. Not so much about the last few paragraphs as it is the first half.

62.56.107.218 - 06 Apr 2008, 14:50

16. Lev Taylor

>Queer=LGBTU.

Depends who you ask, actually. (Warwick Pride uses LGBTUA, Union Council uses Minority Sexualities and Gender Identities, campaigning groups like OutRage and Stonewall tend to use Queer.) Arguments over language in gay politics are ongoing and can't really be won. Used queer because it is the most academically accepted term, is broader than LGBTU and matches the reasoning of the criticisms aptly. Generally fairly pointless to quibble over it and wouldn't achieve much to change it.

The rest of it will all be changed in the next five minutes when as I do a bit of cut and paste.

137.205.32.135 - 08 Apr 2008, 15:48

17. Lev Taylor

Think I have now made all the necessary changes. It's cut down slightly and more compact (you were right, Vince, I did repeat myself quite a lot), so it's now within the word count.

Hope that's all OK!

Lev
xx

137.205.32.135 - 08 Apr 2008, 16:23

18. [Vincent Carroll-Battaglin](#)

I similarly have no interest in arguments about word use in gay politics, which is why I suggested changing it. I think without background it's more comfortable to use a term a bit more universally understood.

How do you mean it's most academically accepted term? Is that true?

62.56.107.218 - 08 Apr 2008, 16:44

19. Lev Taylor

Yes.

Well, queer is kind of different to just "gay". The word itself is summarised as meaning "anything that does not conform to hetero-normative values." In the context of the Dalai Lama's views, among which are the view that only

vaginal-penetrative sex for reproductive purposes should be practised, this felt the more appropriate term.

Just putting gay would be misleading. I think the word 'queer' is probably equally, if not better, recognised as/than the acronyms (LGBT/LGBTU/LGBTUA/LGBTQQ/MSAGI/SGI/LGBTO... the list goes on, and there are even divisions over what each letter should stand for.)

Some do find it dirisive but the people who you'd normally hear in uproar about such things are the most likely to understand the meaning of the word and why it was used. Others will immediately recognise its meaning, if only accompanied by a little confusion. (Like in Scrubs, where the WASPy bloke in hospital goes: "It's black again? Not African American? I didn't know they'd changed it back!")

In terms of activists, as well, queer is often exclusively used. Queer Mutiny and the Anarqueers are the two anarcho-socialist "gay" groups. Campus activists tend to identify as "queer". If you cast your mind back to the Tatchell speech, he used the word "queer" exclusively without ever mentioning the acronyms.

It's a whole discussion in itself, really, and people will have complaints regardless of which term is used. So I figure best to use the most accurate word.

137.205.32.135 - 08 Apr 2008, 17:13

20. **Lev Taylor**

Another great source to throw in that fits with the changes made:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/7304825.stm>

137.205.32.135 - 08 Apr 2008, 17:43

21. **Barnaby Pace**

Lev: for uploading sources just go back into the entry using the edit button, and copy and paste them into the end of the piece, in the future if you are using word 2007 use their referencing function and put the work cited at the end, or if you are using an older version of word again the referencing function is quite effective, put the sources as an endnote and copy and paste them into the blog.

208.69.225.61 - 09 Apr 2008, 17:39

22. **Vincent Carroll-Battaglino**

I am well aware of it's use. I'm not sure about the extent of understanding of it, I've not seen anything confirming this.

It's a colloquialism, and if you have a situation where "Some do find it dirisive...", and there's a substitute which does not have this quality, we might want to make decisions on that. If the Dalai Lama is basically talking about homosexual relations, we can say that quite easily without bringing in our project to use a certain word.

62.56.107.218 - 09 Apr 2008, 19:01

23. Lev Taylor

Thank you Barnaby! Will do tomorrow.

Fair dooz, Vince. I can see how use of the word might put the project in jeopardy; hadn't considered that. On a minor point of self-defence, it isn't a colloquialism. Type it into Google scholar. But yes there is great misunderstanding. May just put gay but will attempt to come up with a better word. Have talked to others: opinion is divided but better words are hard to find. Will try to come up with something better before the deadline.

137.205.32.135 - 10 Apr 2008, 02:47

24. Mark Carrigan

No it's not a colloquialism, Vince – it's an academically accepted term.

137.205.246.45 - 10 Apr 2008, 14:08

25. [Vincent Carroll-Battaglino](#)

lookin good, fella.

62.56.107.218 - 11 Apr 2008, 00:57

26. Lev Taylor

Thank you.

Have uploaded most sources, although think I still have some to add.

Also, just realised that this bit:

“For instance, the Kham region, which comprises a large part of the ‘Tibetan’ region, did not become so until British imperialists orchestrated an invasion of the area in 1910. For the forty years leading up until the Chinese invasion, the Khambas vehemently resisted Tibetan nationality.”

is slightly wrong and a bit misleading so will replace with something about Tibet being born out of imperialist invasions into its various regions and about the different historic ethnicities in Tibet.

Will try v v hard to get it all sorted by tomorrow midnight!

137.205.32.135 - 11 Apr 2008, 02:35

27. Lorenzo Vidal-Folch Duch

i dont think that PolPot is the best example to use, apart from it being one of the most extreme cases to choose and thus even mentioning it next to the movement for a Tibetan state blows the dangers unnecessarily out of proportion, it was justified not only by nationalism but by “higher ideologies” too, so it doesnt really reinforce your point. id pick another example of nationalism gone wrong.

137.205.17.117 - 11 Apr 2008, 12:44

28. Lev Taylor

Oh yeah, I was meant to get rid of the “higher ideologies” bit! Will replace soon.

Good point on the Pol Pot. Will have a think...

Thank you!

137.205.32.135 - 11 Apr 2008, 14:25

29. Lorenzo Vidal-Folch Duch

o a couple of things i picked up

“subject to criticism from rights activists ” should that be human rights activists?

“More importantly, however, the protesters are not demanding democracy. A large proportion of the nationalist protesters, or “splittists”, are strong advocates of returning to the former hierarchical Buddhist theocracy under leadership of the Lamas.”

this is one of your main statements, do any of your sources back up this claim that the majority of protestors are not asking for democracy?

if not, then i would say something like “not all protestors are demanding democracy”...

137.205.17.117 - 11 Apr 2008, 14:35

30. Lev Taylor

Yeah, I'll stick in the “human” bit.

The aims of the protesters are well documented in The Making of Modern Tibet. It is almost universally acknowledged, but remains undiscussed in most instances. Their aim is to reinstate the government in exile, which is “a Buddhist theocracy under leadership of the Lamas.”

The only area that might cause some confusion is that two years ago, other exiled Tibetans were allowed to vote for their representatives in the Assembly of Tibetan People's Deputies from a list authored by the Dalai Lama .

http://www.tibetoffice.org/en/index.php?url_channel_id=8&url_subchannel_id=12&url_publish_channel_id=1887&well_id=2

(Will add this source in, is a list of current cabinet officials and it states, in some cases, how they obtained their statuses.)

Some use this as evidence that if Tibet were given autonomy it would work towards democracy in Parliaments, with the Lama heirarchy running alongside it.

Of course, it is difficult to discern what all of the protesters' motivations are, which is why "a large proportion...". Information from Tibet has been sketchy and scarce of late and some of my most recent sources on the matter date back to the nineties. So I can see the need for clarification in that line. Will have a think and edit later.

(In case it isn't obvious, I didn't realise we'd need to cite all sources, so have been rummaging back through my website history, searched terms, etc. to find the sources used. Should have been more prepared!!)

Lev
xx

137.205.32.135 - 11 Apr 2008, 16:19

31. Lev Taylor

Right. Have given it due thought, and you're right. The change is necessary. I just don't want to detract from the overall meaning of the article by watering it down but you are quite right. Will make that change later, along with the others. The trouble is that historical and contemporary accounts from all different countries give severely binarily opposed views, so on those grounds it is hard to find "the truth". The article intended to give a more balanced view of the matter, so in that spirit I will most certainly make that change.

137.205.32.135 - 11 Apr 2008, 16:39

32. Mark Carrigan

Wait, are you changing the bit where you talk about theocracy?

137.205.246.42 - 11 Apr 2008, 17:05

33. Lev Taylor

No. That bit's undisputed.

Just talking about changing “The protesters are not demanding democracy” to “Some protesters aren’t demanding democracy”.

Actually, I think the best and most accurate solution would be to put: “The protesting monks are not demanding democracy.”

What do you reckon?

137.205.32.135 - 11 Apr 2008, 17:15

34. Mark Carrigan

Yeah something like that sounds good. Maybe: “the issue at stake in Tibet is not democracy” or something like that? It’s probably best to avoid being too categorical with this sort of claim.

137.205.246.42 - 11 Apr 2008, 17:35

35. Lev Taylor

Actually, Lorenzo, I’m struggling to see why that bit needs changing. There are enough sources to back up the assertions of the protesters’ aims and it is clear that I’m not talking about all the protesters from the overall content and the safeguard “a large proportion...” There probably are pro-democratic protesters and others who’ve joined under the same banner, but there is no evidence of them. On the ground, there is only evidence of desires to reinstate the Government in Exile and return to Lama rule.

I’m trying to make it balanced, but by making such changes as safeguards, the whole article could end up saying nothing. There is room for expansion on each sentence, surely, but that would mean writing a book!

Do you reckon you could explain why you reckon it needs changing, like if there is evidence to the contrary or something?

Not trying to be too assertive in this, but I’m wavering back and forth over it. Do you think perhaps maybe it’s best left as something that can provoke reaction and discussion, that I can then back up?

There is a danger in being too safe. What do you reckon?

(All other changes have now been made.)

137.205.32.135 - 11 Apr 2008, 17:39

36. Lev Taylor

Mark, sorry, spent so long writing back! Your idea is a good one.

Perhaps: “The major alternative being proposed by the protesters is not democracy.”

It is accurate without detracting from overall meaning.

137.205.32.135 - 11 Apr 2008, 17:42

37. Lev Taylor

*spent so long writing back that I didn't get to see your suggestion.

137.205.32.135 - 11 Apr 2008, 17:43

38. Lorenzo Vidal-Folch Duch

i just reckon that “not all protestors...” goes better with a “large proportion” rather than

“the protesters are not demanding democracy” and then toning it down to a “large proportion”

i like Marcs suggestion “the issue at stake in Tibet is not democracy” too, i dont think changing that makes the article end up saying nothing, but its completely up to you, its your article.

dont worry about not knowing about the sources, we shouldv probably made it more explicit in the zine. it would be good if you could link them up to each of your claims in a footnote style, but if its too much of a hassle to try to find them again then dont bother, next time you write an article you can just do it as you go along.

137.205.17.117 - 11 Apr 2008, 17:49

39. Lev Taylor

OK, will have a think and sort it out.

137.205.32.135 - 11 Apr 2008, 18:00

40. Alice Smith

Hey Lev

Really great and thought-provoking article – really enjoyed reading it as it really made me think about what I think about the issue

Minor point – 2nd para – maybe have a sentence explicitly making the point – just because the opposition to Chinese rule is understandable, doesn't make it justified.. (just to explicitly highlight the distinction)

Are you saying that the tyranny is the border system etc (no borders woo!) – and that it would make no difference to have a tibet run by the tibetans than the chinese? Do you think that there would be no difference in legitimacy between the two?

82.16.192.248 - 11 Apr 2008, 21:32

41. Lev Taylor

Legitimacy is a tricky one. I can't help but feel like the term itself is born out of statist assumptions and neoliberal justifications. It tends to be a term used to justify statism and pressing for capitalist democracy, most particularly in post-Soviet Eastern Europe. I think the terms of what creates "legitimacy" are so ambiguous and contrived that they're difficult to bring in, unless you are talking from another standpoint, such as that of the "Free Tibet" movement itself.

A Tibet run by Tibetans would be the ultimate desirable result- if, by Tibetans, you mean the Tibetan people, as would a China run by Chinese people. At present, China is not run by the Chinese people but by a repressive government and a large proportion of the Free Tibet protesters are not advocating such a change in Tibet. Do you see where I'm coming from?

No borders feeds more into the problems with the solutions than it does to the tyranny itself. The tyranny is intended to be the human rights abuses, poor living conditions, religious repression, etc. No borders is part of many positive solutions to dealing with Tibet.

Do you think that any of these matters need clarifying in the article itself? If so, can you suggest where and how? Or should it be left open to discussion?

Thank you for your thoughts. Sorry I haven't articulated very well.

137.205.32.135 - 12 Apr 2008, 13:55

42. Lev Taylor

Changes made :)

137.205.32.135 - 12 Apr 2008, 13:58

Appendix II

Blog Discussion

May 16, 2008

The Other India

By Michael Levinson

In recent years, coverage of India in the mainstream media of the Western world has narrated a compelling story of 'India Shining'. India's economy is booming, with growth rates of 9 and 10%. [1] In 2003, a report released by Goldman Sachs predicted that over the next four decades the economies of Brazil, Russia, India and China will overtake those of the UK, Italy, France, Germany and Japan. [2] But the type of development India is experiencing is sharply imbalanced. Neoliberal hopes of 'trickledown' are not happening; the vast majority of the population has not seen the fruits of this growth, and the suffering of the poorest of the poor has increased.

The stories of India's poor do not reach the ears of Western publics. Nevertheless, in the past year or so, two news items have forced their way into at least the margins of the Indian print media. The first is the huge increase in farmer suicides. More than 166,000 Indian farmers have killed themselves since 1997 – a death almost every half an hour. [3] The roots of this tragedy lie in the post-1991 liberalisation of India's agricultural sector. Indian farmers now struggle to compete with produce from US and EU agribusiness, subsidised by these governments then sold below production cost onto the Indian market. [4] Despite the evidence that these suicides are due to indebtedness caused by plummeting crop prices, some state governments point the finger at the farmers themselves, suggesting they hope to 'gain' from the compensation. [5]

The second news item is the growth of extreme left militancy known as Naxalism. Security experts speak of a 'red corridor' extending from Nepal in the north to Andhra Pradesh in the south, populated by a dispersed guerrilla army of 10 000 Maoists supported by 50 000 active sympathisers. [6] spread across 165 of the country's 602 districts. [7] These militants feed off the rural poverty and suffering of which the farmer suicides are a particularly dramatic symptom. [8] Rather than address the causes of rural suffering, the state's response has been to increase funding for internal security and anti-insurgency. In Chhattisgarh, the state organises and supports local anti-Naxal civilian militias, and overlooks the atrocities they commit. [9]

Why aren't the benefits of economic growth reaching India's poor? There are many reasons, but two major factors are the state's willingness to let the interests of big corporations dictate its policies, and its failure to hold these corporations to account. The recent return of Dow Chemical to India highlights these factors.

Dow Chemical is the US-based MNC responsible for the Bhopal gas tragedy of 1984, the biggest industrial disaster the world has ever seen. This industrial disaster resulted in the death of over 15 000 people in the first month alone, and at least 5000 more

since then due to the effects of exposure to the chemical spillage in the early hours of December 3 1984 in the city of Bhopal; over 500 000 people were exposed and over 120 000 continue to suffer the effects. To date Dow has refused to even admit its liability for the disaster, has not compensated the vast majority of the victims, and has not cleaned up the toxic waste remaining in Bhopal that continues to contaminate land and water and cause new health problems.[10]

In late 2007 Dow made a statement of intention to move 50% of its core research and development activities to India over the next 5 years.[11] Dow's liability stands as a potential obstacle to Dow's proposed investment, an obstacle the Indian government seems to be helping Dow to avoid.[12] Since December 2007 there have been a number of agitations in and around the city of Pune by villagers, people's movements and other civil society groups over the proposed construction of a unit for Dow Chemical on a site in Shinde village near to Pune.[13] Dow claims the unit is a research and development centre and not a manufacturing plant, but activists have used the Right To Information Act (2005) to uncover documents which suggest this may not be the case.[14] As was the case with the plant in Bhopal where the disaster took place, local people have not been consulted nor adequately informed of the nature of the unit to be constructed, despite the fact that 40 hectares of the land given to Dow by the state government to construct the unit was grazing land relied upon by dairy farmers from over 10 villages.[15]

But the Dow case also showcases a range of strategies of resistance currently being utilised by opposition groups both in India and internationally. In addition to the protests in and around Pune, survivors of Bhopal marched 800km to meet Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and remind him of the unfulfilled promises he made to them when they made their first march from Bhopal to Delhi two years ago. The protestors arrived in Delhi on March 28.[16] At the time of writing, the PM has still not granted them an appointment.

Meanwhile, the success story of the year belongs to students from the prestigious Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), who have prevented Dow from recruiting on their campuses in 2007.[17] The organisation active in the IITs – Students for Bhopal – is an international students movement with groups in India, the US, Australia and several other countries.[18] Their successful campaign against Dow provides a replicable model for challenging Dow and other MNCs and, more broadly, the structures and processes of contemporary neoliberal globalisation.

[1] V. Phani Kumar "India's GDP expanded at fastest pace in 18 years", Market Watch <http://www.marketwatch.com/news/story/indias-economy-grows-best-pace/story.aspx?guid=%7BDD148070-EA3F-4E40-AAEB-A9B6A96868F4%7D>

[2] Dominic Wilson and Roopa Purushothaman "Dreaming with BRICs: The Path to 2050", Goldman Sachs Global Economics Paper No: 99 <http://www2.goldmansachs.com/ideas/brics/book/99-dreaming.pdf>

[3] Randeep Ramesh "India pledges £7.6bn to combat rural suicides", The Guardian <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/mar/01/india>

- [4] Jaideep Hardikar “Subsidising suicides”, Infochange India
http://www.infochangeindia.org/TD_article04.jsp
- [5] P. Sainath “When Farmers Die” India Together
<http://www.indiatogether.org/2004/jun/psa-farmdie.htm>
- [6] Sudeep Chakravarti, Red Sun: Travels in Naxalite Country, 3-4
- [7] Sudeep Chakravarti, Red Sun, 10
- [8] Sudeep Chakravarti, Red Sun
- [9] “Press Release: Fact-finding report on the Salwa Judum, Dantewara District”, PUCL Bulletin 2005, <http://www.pucl.org/Topics/Human-rights/2005/salwa-judum-report.htm>; “When the State makes war on its own people”, report by People’s Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) <http://www.pucl.org/Topics/Human-rights/2006/slawajudum.htm>
- [10] “The poisoning of Bhopal”, <http://www.bhopal.net/alienvspredator.html>
- [11] (<http://www.bhopal.net/dowindia/archives/2007/09/index.html>,
<http://www.indiatime.com/2007/11/22/dows-new-pals-eager-to-forget-bhopal/>,
<http://www.ibnlive.com/news/bhopal-tragedytainted-dow-returns-to-india/53521-3.html?xml>)
- [12] “Saving Dow?”, Down To Earth
http://www.downtoearth.org.in/popup_full.asp?foldername=20080331&filename=news&sid=7
- [13] (<http://www.expressindia.com/latest-news/Dow-Chemical-takes-police-help-to-end-40day-blockade/277464/>, <http://www.livemint.com/2008/02/02000346/Dow-Chemical8217s-RampD-p.html>)
- [14] Vinita Deshmukh, “RTI exposes Dow”, Intelligent Pune Friday March 7 2008 (available on request)
- [15] Nidhi Jamwal “Pune protests Dow research facility”, Down To Earth
http://www.downtoearth.org.in/full6.asp?foldername=20080331&filename=news&sec_id=4&sid=6
- [16] “Bhopal Survivors Arrive on Foot to Remind PM of Unkept Promises ”
<http://aidindia.org/main/content/view/573/190/>
- [17] “Blacklist Dow: IIT Alumni, Students Demand”
http://www.bhopal.net/blog_pr/archives/2007/10/blacklist_dow_i.html; Arijit Sen “IITs boycott Dow Chemicals for Bhopal Gas Tragedy”, IBN Live
<http://www.ibnlive.com/news/iits-boycott-dow-chemicals-for-bhopal-gas-tragedy/52998-3-1.html>; “IITians decline Dow Chemicals jobs on moral grounds”, Zeenews <http://www.zeenews.com/articles.asp?aid=410994&sid=NAT>

[18] <http://www.studentsforbhopal.org/>

 Chris Rossdale : [16 May 2008 01:31](#) | [Comments \(19\)](#) | [Report a problem](#)

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1. Thomas Wales

Your entire case is based upon the inequalities resultant from shameless subsidisation of farming in Europe and America. The answer? Get rid of the CAP and American protectionism and allow free trade to help farmers across the developing world. I'd much rather consume Tomatoes grown in Ghana (for example) than those from Italy which require much more money and energy to produce under current conditions. Capitalism isn't the problem, Government Subsidy is. You seem to infer that all the 'poor' in India are agricultural poor, and ignore the massive rise in jobs in urban areas.

What is your answer? Further protection? India was a protectionist socialist nation for years, and it didn't help the poor one iota. If you look at the Millennium Development Goals you will find that India is now climbing up with better healthcare, schooling and many other factors for all in the nation.

19 May 2008, 20:13

2. Angus Moir

I dont think you can suggest the growth has not helped India's poor, the percentage of India's population living on less than \$1 a day and \$2 a day (the world banks measure of poverty) has fallen from 51.8 to 34.3% from 1981 to 2004, and from 88.9 to 80.9% respectively. In addition looking at there HDI scores India has form 0.143 to 0.590 form 1913 to 2001 (maximum score being 1). Presumably most of that growth coming in the latter part of the 20th century. Yes growth has created social problems, as it has in many nations, but overall all it appears to have, and is likely to continue to benefit the poor to a significant extent. I would concede however, the effectiveness of Indian growth at alleviating poverty has not been to the same extent as china, however one could argue that may be a result of the differing sources of economic growth of the two nations.

23 May 2008, 19:05

3. Mark Carrigan

Thomas,

“Capitalism isn’t the problem, Government Subsidy is. You seem to infer that all the ‘poor’ in India are agricultural poor, and ignore the massive rise in jobs in urban areas.”

While it’s certainly true that the CAP distorts the market value of European agricultural produce and that this has an inevitable knock on effect of the competitiveness of third world produce, you seem to be under the illusion that opening up Indian markets to foreign capital is some quasi-magical cure for all social ills. I’d be really interested to see if you have any reasoning for this or whether it’s simply something you repeat as an article of faith.

For what it’s worth: the massive rise in jobs in urban areas are driven by the influx of foreign capital, a dynamic domestic information technology sector and, I’m guessing, a burgeoning service sector driven by a growing middle class who are celebrating their new found affluence by spending shit loads of money they don’t have. Meanwhile the financial sectors rubs its hands in glee as it doles out credit with no thought of economic sustainability, egged on by neo-liberal ideologues who are peddling exactly the same rubbish that you are. It’s a speculative bubble of exactly the same sort that’s probably going to lead to the next recession in the west. While this would be a horrible thing it would (hopefully) have the solitary upside of teaching people that the proliferation of fictitious capital is NOT a good thing, even if it makes some people very rich.

Yes some Indians are getting very rich and conspicuous consumption inevitably has some degree of trickle-down effect. However the “massive rise in jobs in urban areas” that result from this (ditto the influx of foreign capital eager to exploit the ultra-competitive labour conditions offered) has a whole host of deeply negative features: (a) the quality of the jobs (b) the conditions of the jobs (c) their effect on the rural economy. Why not go look into why Indian farmers keep topping themselves or engage substantively with some of the points in the article rather than simply repeating vacuous free market clichés?

23 May 2008, 20:09

4. Mark Carrigan

Angus,

I wrote a long reply to your post but Internet Explorer chose a really fucking irritating point at which to crash so I apologise for brevity. Essentially I took the point of the article to be an attack on the myth of neo-liberal development leading to the “Indian miracle”. To call this a myth, to argue that it’s a deeply ambiguous phenomenon which has produced many entirely new social pathologies, doesn’t entail claiming that “growth has not helped India’s poor”. It’s simply calling attention to the deeply ideological nature of the Washington Consensus, the means through which it’s imposed and the glaring fact that few of the empirical claims made on its behalf as a model of economic

development actually stand up to scrutiny. There's nothing necessarily (or even probably) anti-capitalist about it: you can reduce it to a set of academic arguments about developmental economics.

23 May 2008, 20:23

5. Michael Levinson

Thank you to Thomas and Mark for your comments. I don't know who Angus is.

Having read Thomas's comment, my only regret is the wording of the following sentence in my article: "The roots of this tragedy lie in the post-1991 liberalisation of India's agricultural sector." I did not intend to suggest that what is happening now is solely due to post-1991 liberalisation. The roots of the current situation are obviously a lot more complicated and older.

As Mark suggests, I wrote this piece as an invitation for readers to look deeper beneath media reports that focus on the India that is Shining – which is a very small proportion of the population (in both rural and urban areas) that is getting much richer very fast. I cannot provide all the answers, but I would tend to agree with most of Mark's points. In particular I would recommend that Thomas look beyond the Millennium Development Goals, World Bank data (by way of explanation as to why World Bank data is inadequate, I recommend Michael Goldman's book "Imperial Nature"), and neoliberal economic ideology if you want to get a grasp of what is going on and what some positive moves might be from the current situation.

Finally I would like to reiterate something that both Thomas and Mark neglected in their comments: the fact that there are individuals, organisations and movements trying to resist and challenge neoliberal dominance.

24 May 2008, 15:56

6. Thomas Wales

Thanks for your courteous reply Michael. I completely agree that there are people and organisations that try to resist neoliberal dominance. I, however, believe that such people are mistaken. Therefore I believe that such anti-neoliberal forces themselves need to be challenged for the benefit of the world's poor.

Mark – your comments verge on the imbecilic. "are celebrating their new found affluence by spending shit loads of money they don't have." If you are so against the concept of 'borrowing' which has existed since Ancient times then why the hell are you taking out a student loan to come to university and invest in your education? Or are you going to tell me that mummy and daddy have enough money so you don't have to borrow? And if you are trying to make an inference on high levels of borrowing in India, the savings ratio of around 30% is one of the highest in the world.

26 May 2008, 16:37

7. Mark Carrigan

I'm not against the concept of borrowing, Thomas. If you'd actually understood what I was arguing you'd realise this. A major part of the Washington Consensus (the neo-liberal development program effectively imposed in many areas of the world) is the liberalisation of financial sectors. When, as in India, this takes place in a country that (a) is experiencing massive growth rates (b) has a burgeoning middle-class with a developing culture of conspicuous consumption (c) had a previously tightly controlled financial sector, this can result in said burgeoning middle-class borrowing unsustainably to fund an increase in consumer spending, itself leading to a large growth in service sector jobs which furthers the impression of an economic boom. The impression of widespread financial succession encourages unsustainable lending and unsustainable spending because, as SOME arch-capitalists such as George Soros and Joseph Stiglitz are happy to admit, market actors will inevitably operate under conditions of imperfect knowledge. Unsustainable lending and spending can only go on for so long before the bubble bursts. As is happening in America and, to a lesser degree, in Europe.

“if you are trying to make an inference on high levels of borrowing in India, the savings ratio of around 30% is one of the highest in the world.”

The isolated statistic is rather meaningless because (a) you've not differentiated between the household savings ratio (22%) and corporate savings (b) only the former has at least SOME relevance to a discussion of personal debt and consumer spending (c) the relatively high rate of household savings is attributable to fairly fortuitous demographic conditions that aren't going to be repeated (d) the fact that there has been undeniably large growth rates in the recent past will inevitably lead to a higher household savings ratio: it doesn't say WHO is saving, just that people are, which given the economic growth isn't exactly surprising (e) given it's measured as a percentage of GDP it isn't an indicator of the sustainability of PERSONAL debt and CONSUMER spending (f) vast swathes of the Indian population work in the informal economy (88% according to one estimate I just found) so I'd question how reliable or meaningful that statistic is anyway. Seriously, Thomas, if you have an argument to make then please make it.

26 May 2008, 17:45

8. Mark Carrigan

“I, however, believe that such people are mistaken. Therefore I believe that such anti-neoliberal forces themselves need to be challenged for the benefit of the world's poor.”

If you think they are mistaken then, please, for the sake of the informed and reasoned debate that is DW's raison d'être EXPLAIN WHY they are mistaken. Literally all you've offered so far is a misreading of my post so stupid that I

can only assume it was disingenuous, an observation about the CAP that NO ONE would deny and a set of unargued quasi-theological claims about the capacity of free markets to solve all ills.

26 May 2008, 17:53

9. **Lorenzo Vidal-Folch Duch**

“I, however, believe that such people are mistaken. Therefore I believe that such anti-neoliberal forces themselves need to be challenged for the benefit of the world’s poor.”

I think the poor who organise themselves in anti-neoliberal movements such as the peoples health movement in india know very well what is in their benefit and what is not. The example used in this article couldnt be clearer, they are opposing an unregulated corporation that has caused 20 000 deaths in the recent past with complete impunity, from settling in their local area. It is difficult to see how they are “mistaken” in resisting this, and a model of growth which is exclusively designed along these lines. It is quite paternalistic and ignorant to believe that you know best than the people at the grassroots that have to face these events on a daily basis, i am sure you would not like to live near a Dow Chemical site and neither do they.

26 May 2008, 19:23

10. **Thomas Wales**

The latest Savings rate in India are in fact 32%, with investment at 34% of GDP. If you study economics then you would realise that this demonstrates a very sustainable level of investment given savings. An ‘informal economy’ will not skew savings figures considerably as they are accounted for at the financial institutions where they are held.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/6544111.stm

Growth levels have not leaped up to unsustainable levels either, with Real GDP per capita rising from 6.7% in 2003 to 7.1% in 2007 despite a yearly increase of Investment of about 15% of GDP during that period. The Indian Finance Minister, Palaniappan Chidambaram has labelled investment as only one of the four most important reasons for India’s success, along with increased domestic consumption, employment and the productivity of capital and labour. In comparison, the high levels of public and private debt we see in the UK are far more unsustainable, with little fiscal or monetary flexibility to avoid a recession.

<http://www.iie.com/publications/papers/paper.cfm?ResearchID=810> & World Bank Data

On the development front, child mortality (data for under fives) has fallen from 125 per 1000 in 1990 to 75 per 1000 today. As I’ve said in another article, 95% of children now have a full primary-school education compared to only 70% in 1990!

In response to Lorenzo, I completely agree that states should insist on a certain level of safety. As a pragmatic Conservative I believe the State must always balance safety with the need for a dynamic economy. It was the Conservative Government of Anthony Eden that brought in the Clean Air Act of 1957 for example. And lets not forget the effects of the Chernobyl disaster in 1986 within the Communist USSR. Consequently, disasters can occur under Governments of all colours. However, without dynamism in the economy the disaster of poverty will never be addressed.

27 May 2008, 01:12

11. Mark Carrigan

That's more like it! It's good to see that we're on the same page now as your last response left me somewhat confused. While you've still to explain why/how the savings ratio is in itself an indicator of sustainable growth*, I'd definitely accept (for obvious reasons) that rate of investment as proportion of GDP is such an indicator however there's no necessary link there given the vast range of extrinsic factors that impact on how a high rate of investment translates into economic growth. I hasten to add that I'm not particularly attached to the idea that consumer borrowing & spending (in particular) or recent growth (in general) is necessarily unsustainable – surprisingly enough I'd rather their economy doesn't crash and burn. The Goldman Sachs report cited in the article concluded that:

“The recent growth spurt was achieved primarily through a surge in productivity, which we believe can be sustained. India is well-positioned to reap the benefits of favourable demographics, including an ‘urbanisation bonus’, and a further rise in capital accumulation, in part from an upsurge in foreign direct investment”

This seems plausible but its plausibility takes us back to the overarching issue. Foreign capital flocks to India as elsewhere because conditions are ultra-competitive relative to the western liberal democracies. One key reason for their competitiveness isn't particularly sinister***: a population boom, particularly one so large that the growth of jobs can't possibly keep pace with it, leads to a growth in labour supply with a corresponding downwards pressure on wages and conditions. Likewise there's an enormously significant structural incentive to keep wages and conditions at their abhorrently low levels while actively tearing down what regulatory structures are still in place. Corporations aren't held responsible and citizens are actively disenfranchised because to do otherwise would threaten economic growth.

As I said in my initial post to you: you seem to be under the illusion that opening up Indian markets to foreign capital is some quasi-magical cure for all social ills. I'm not questioning the economic growth and, as I said to Angus, I'm not questioning that this growth has helped India's poor to some degree. It would be absolutely stunning if it had failed to do so at all. Rather I'm questioning your claim that Government subsidy is the problem and rampant neo-liberalism is the solution. The growth is contingent on a set of structural

trends that serve to actively oppress and disempower the very people who, its claimed, are having their lives enriched by Indian economic development. As Michael said in the article: the vast majority of the population has not seen the fruits of this growth, and the suffering of the poorest of the poor has increased.

*Given this is the point of contention.

**Though is rather unfortunate for those who have to suffer its consequences.

27 May 2008, 02:23

12. Mark Carrigan

“In response to Lorenzo, I completely agree that states should insist on a certain level of safety.”

Even when it undermines the growth rate? Unfortunately the pursuit of dynamism necessarily has all sorts of unfortunate social consequences: it calls for labour market flexibility (i.e. as little job security as possible) and freedom from government regulation (i.e. freedom from the sorts of pesky laws that make it unlikely Dow could fuck over as many British people as they have Indians). This is the ethical conundrum at the heart of the debate: the less you regulate markets, the more growth you’ll see but that growth will inevitably be deeply one-sided and produce a whole host of social pathologies in its wake. Neo-liberalism is what’s being imposed on India’s population at present and it’s something which should be aboherent to a pragmatic conservative, at least going off the beliefs of others I’ve known who’ve used that description.

27 May 2008, 02:35

13. Thomas Wales

“you’ve still to explain why/how the savings ratio is in itself an indicator of sustainable growth”.

I have already made two points on this which I will reiterate. 1) High levels of savings infers cash held by individuals which can be used to stimulate the economy should it go into a short-term demand-slump. Consequently interest rates are high and can be lowered to increase the demand for money (and decrease the demand for bonds). Compared with the UK India can do this without worrying about already high borrowing levels. The Indian economy does not, therefore, demonstrate the traditional pattern of mass consumer spending seen before many if not all slumps.

2) I demonstrated how recent increases in investment have not overheated the economy – inferring that similar decreases in investment would not lead to the collapse of the Indian economy.

The fact remains that

I fail to see how a pragmatic conservative can ignore the income gains of recent years and hark back to the years of low growth experienced under its socialist government. India has benefited from foreign direct investment and

national investment because of a smaller burden of Government and a enterprise-friendly economy. This is not to say that I am against all forms of Government – pragmatism itself requires a balance. You may say that the idea of having both a Government and Neo-Liberal economics are mutually exclusive. However, India has benefited from increased spending on education, with literacy rates up from 44 percent in 1981 to 65 percent in 2001... I could go on.

It is precisely because of India's investment in Human Capital that it is able to develop at the pace that it does. India call-centres replace those in the West – quite rightly! The protectionism that I oppose more than any other is that of the West. Clinton and Obama have threatened the future of NAFTA because of the threat they see on American jobs, whilst the only real impact is a change in skills within western nations. Unemployment statistics have barely changed.

“here's an enormously significant structural incentive to keep wages and conditions at their abhorrently low levels while actively tearing down what regulatory structures are still in place”

The development spurred on by neo-liberalism has exactly the opposite effect. Prior to the employment opportunities offered by many western firms (so-called 'sweat-shops') many workers in India and China come from conditions much worse, with long hours and little pay. Once firms start investing wages and conditions cannot be kept at 'abhorrently low levels' forever. As development spreads and more firms tap into the workforce the demands of workers will rise and the supply of labour, especially those with desired skills will decline and firms will have to provide more to attract labour. The knock on effect is higher wages, conditions, skills and human capital. All of these create a wealthier India which allows greater public and private investment in the long run into better infrastructure, schools, hospitals etc.

India has failed to achieve such gains under a more socialist and autarkic government. Perhaps its time for a the strategy we see today, one which has much to support it.

27 May 2008, 23:14

14. Mark Carrigan

Thanks for your reply. I probably won't be online again for a few days but just quickly:

“As development spreads and more firms tap into the workforce the demands of workers will rise and the supply of labour, especially those with desired skills will decline and firms will have to provide more to attract labour.”

This assumes that:

- (a) job creation can keep pace with population growth
- (b) the supply of skilled and unskilled labour remains static

Both of these assumptions are very obviously false.

27 May 2008, 23:35

15. [Barnaby Pace](#)

“The development spurred on by neo-liberalism has exactly the opposite effect. Prior to the employment opportunities offered by many western firms (so-called ‘sweat-shops’) many workers in India and China come from conditions much worse, with long hours and little pay. Once firms start investing wages and conditions cannot be kept at ‘abhorrently low levels’ forever.”

Firstly are there any statistics to back up the claim that sweat shop workers come from worse conditions? Secondly are you saying that “abhorrently low levels” of wages are conditions are a good thing in the long term? If so may I suggest you tell the person far below the poverty line working in appalling sweat shop conditions that its all for the good?

Sorry to be sarky but thats what it sounds like you’re saying in that paragraph, I honestly hope you’re not.

28 May 2008, 00:48

16. Thomas Wales

I too have limited time (I have an exam tomorrow), but I will respond to a couple of points:

First, Mark is quite right to bring up the issue of population growth. Population growth in NICs is generally high and has an effect on general levels of income, but growth rates are generally quelled when incomes and literacy rises. I haven’t got time to back that one up, but I’m sure you’ll at least agree with the literacy point!

Second, despite this growth millions of people are being pulled out of poverty by liberal economic policies. Barnaby wants statistics, so here you go – “Spectacular growth in China and India has pushed the number of people around the world living on less than a dollar a day below the 1 billion level” <http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2007/apr/16/china.india>

Sorry, got to go and revise!

28 May 2008, 21:32

17. [Barnaby Pace](#)

Thomas, thanks for a response and good luck on your exams. What I was really after was data drawing a direct causal relationship between sweat shops and bad living conditions and long term benefit to those workers in the sweat shops btw. don’t just say china look, please address the fact that there are a huge number of instances of sweated labour around the world and I can think

of very few where those appalling conditions have caused good conditions for those workers in the future.

28 May 2008, 22:18

18. Michael Levinson

Thomas: your points about population growth are valid. However I take issue with your comment that “millions of people are being pulled out of poverty by liberal economic policies”. Firstly, I already warned you about the accuracy of World Bank data such as the statistics to which you refer to back up this comment. Secondly, I feel that by continuing to talk about growth in the simplistic way you do – as prescription and as already-existing reality – you continue to miss the main point of my article. Just now I read an article which seems a fitting response to your point about growth, and which maybe makes my point better than I can. The article is the acceptance speech for the Jonathan Mann Award by Ilina Sen, delivered in Washington D.C. on May 29 2008 at the Awards Banquet of the Global Health Council. The speech is available in full at <http://www.binayaksen.net/2008/05/acceptance-speech-for-jonathan-mann-award-ilina-sen/>

“In India, nutrition surveys of the National Nutrition Monitoring Bureau have shown that over 33% of the population have a Body Mass Index (BMI) of less than 18.5, considered to be the minimum level for less than starvation standards. Translated to demography, this means that over 400 million people are exposed to near starvation conditions. To add to this catastrophic situation, we are confronted now with a new set of crises. Between 1990 and 2005, the daily per capita availability of foodgrains has fallen from 510 grams to 438. World food prices have risen, and the concentration of land ownership in a few hands has intensified.

These poverty stricken communities are not mere statistical data sets for us. For the last quarter of a century, it has been our privilege to work with, and share the lives of many such communities in a part of Central India called Chhattisgarh. Our experience with these communities tells us that in the kind of situation we have been describing, it is the communities’ access to common property resources – grazing lands, water, forest resources, biodiversity- that mitigate to some extent the baleful effects of an alienated economy. Unfortunately in the recent past, the pressures of ‘development’ have seen to it that these resources have become increasingly sequestered in private and corporate hands. This new round of resource acquisition has placed major stresses on the modalities of democratic discourse that the civilized world has come to cherish after the bloody history of colonial conquest and intolerance. In our part of the world, Peace has been a major casualty, with official policy often privileging the interests of the few over the well being of many. The work of Rupantar and other groups has attempted to uphold a more convivial model of development, but in the face of contradictory tendencies that are much larger, it becomes very hard to preserve even small islands of common good.

The roots of extremism in many of our societies lie in this kind of a situation. It is impossible to seek a purely law and order or vigilante solution to what are basically the problems of non-inclusive growth. The Salwa Judum in Chhattisgarh has actually increased the fissures and increased the violence in our society. Behind the 8% growth rate of the Indian Economy, there are major subsets of the population that are totally disenfranchised. We are firmly committed to Peace: but to a Peace animated by justice and equity and based on the values of life and liberty. In the absence of these, restoration of peace through military action can only lead to the graveyard of peoples' aspirations. I end with a plea that in the twenty first century let us not repeat the bloodshed that our ancestors inflicted upon populations across large areas of the globe. The resources of the world are for us all to share. Let us affirm our faith in that common cause."

31 May 2008, 18:45

19. Thomas Wales

Those who have a BMI of 18.5 are 'clinically underweight', rather than 'near starvation'; it may sound the same but it isn't quite. I would also hesitate over the use of BMI statistics because of the limits in transcending the scale over different races. It is well known that different peoples have different levels of bodyfat and that Indians can be under-estimated using the BMI system:

<http://www.nature.com/ijo/journal/v24/n8/full/0801353a.html>

"Singaporean Chinese, Malays and Indians were under-predicted by BMI, sex and age when an equation developed in a Caucasian population was used... These differences could be ascribed to differences in body build"

Other documents show the opposite picture to that which you paint:

<http://www.icddrb.org/images/ASCONX-OralSession-07.pdf>

(Amongst Indian Children) "There was a distinct improvement in the prevalence of underweight (77.5% in 1975-1979 to 47% in 1998-1999)" I'm afraid I cannot find newer data though.

I will converse with my father, who is far more medically trained in this area and I will get back to you if anything I have said is inaccurate. But personally I doubt the testimony of Mrs Ilina Sen and much rather rely on statistics. No matter how biased you may feel World Bank statistics are, they appear to be regularly corroborated by other studies by other institutions with differing biases.

01 Jun 2008, 17:55