IN THIS ISSUE:
The Arctic and Its Future

April 2009
The **SGI Quarterly** aims to highlight initiatives and perspectives on peace, education and culture and to provide information about the SGI’s activities around the world. The views expressed are not necessarily those of the SGI. The editorial team (see inside back cover) welcomes ideas and comments from readers.
“It is a land of sublime beauty, humbling terror, and natural wonder. If not there, what place in our world will we dedicate to silence and solitude? To look upon or even only consider those vast horizons stretches both the imagination and the soul.” —Alvah Simon, North to the Night

The Arctic, with its forbidding climate and rugged beauty, has long been seen as the ultimate wilderness; a place whose very severity has isolated it from the ravages of industrial society. But the world is changing. And nowhere is the magnitude of that unfolding change more apparent than in the Arctic. Here the cultural, political, economic as well as environmental impacts of global warming are playing out in stark clarity.

As the Arctic warms and melts, access to previously inaccessible resources will become possible, and major new international shipping routes could be opened. Who will benefit, and what do we stand to lose? Buddhism sees our lives as an integral and inseparable part of the natural environment. We all have a role to play in creating the future, and from this viewpoint, the SGI Quarterly considers how we can ensure that a sense of responsibility—to the natural world, the 4 million inhabitants of this unique and fragile region, and to all humanity—guides our actions from now on.
Managing the Arctic
Interview with David Leary

David Leary is the author of Looking Beyond the International Polar Year: Emerging and Re-emerging Issues in International Law and Policy in the Polar Regions, the report and recommendations from an international expert symposium held at the University of Akureyri, Iceland, in September 2008 and chaired by Dr. Leary. The symposium was convened by the United Nations University (UNU) Institute of Advanced Studies (Japan), in conjunction with the University of Akureyri (Iceland). Dr. Leary, formerly a Postdoctoral Fellow at UNU, is currently a Senior Research Fellow at the University of New South Wales Law School in Sydney, in his native Australia.

SGI Quarterly: Why is there so much political interest in the Arctic now?
David Leary: Climate change is making the Arctic much more accessible than it ever has been. With the melting of the ice there are new sea lanes opening up that would cut global shipping times considerably. There’s interest in the possibility of access to new oil and gas resources which lie under the sea—Norway and Russia are already opening up oil and gas fields in their own territory including on their continental shelf. There are also a lot more tourist vessels now going further into the Arctic.

A number of new strategic, geopolitical and environmental issues are emerging that have until now been, for lack of a better term, frozen, due to the fact that the Arctic has always been so inaccessible. There’s the question of whose territory the new oil and gas resources are in; how the environmental impact of exploitation of these resources is going to be managed; who’s going to be responsible for rescuing vessels when there are shipwrecks; if there are shipwrecks there are going to be oil spills and environmental damage . . . all those sorts of issues that have been opened up by climate change, as well as the threat of the extinction of Arctic species, like the polar bear.

SGIQ: Is there a real possibility of military conflict developing?
DL: The rush for resources and the new grab for territory in the Arctic that we hear about repeatedly in the media—that does not necessarily have any basis either in fact or in international law. It’s a much more complicated picture than the frenzy the media is portraying.

Reference is often made to the fact that the Russians planted a Russian flag at the bottom of the ocean at the North Pole. So the argument is, is that a grab for territory by Russia? Well, as a matter of law, no, it’s not. The days are long gone when countries could just claim territory by planting a flag. There is now a very clear process and mechanism for how countries’ claims to the continental shelf for example are managed and how disputes over territory are to be resolved, and Russia, in particular, has been following that process very closely.

In fact, at the Akureyri symposium in Iceland we heard that the planting of the flag wasn’t directed by the Russian government but was a publicity stunt by scientists to draw attention to their research.

SGIQ: So there is clear cooperation happening in terms of sorting out the territorial claims?
DL: Yes. The main areas of interest in terms of oil and gas are on the continental shelf, and there’s a process under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea for countries to lodge their claims to the
continental shelf. Those claims have to be backed up by a lot of scientific data which is then assessed by an international body of experts under the Law of the Sea Convention.

Russia was one of the very first countries to go through that process, which is still under way, and has adhered to both the letter and the spirit of the Law of the Sea provisions. So this media frenzy over the planting of the Russian flag is not matched by the reality.

Other countries are taking a considerable interest in what’s happening in the Arctic. China, for example, is very active in scientific research in the Arctic and interested in what’s happening with exploration and exploitation of oil and gas. So it’s very much a period of change, but I think the media portrayal is more about selling newspapers.

There are a lot of issues that have to be worked through, certainly on the environmental front, such as preventing and cleaning up after pollution, as well as about safety and sea and air search capacity to rescue vessels.

**Opposing Views**

**SGIQ:** Are existing mechanisms adequate to deal with these issues?

**DL:** There’s a divergence of opinions. The Arctic states, for example—Canada, Denmark, Norway, Russia and the U.S.—in May 2008 issued the Ilulissat Declaration, in which they basically said we don’t need any more treaties or institutions for the Arctic; as Arctic states we have a special stewardship role in managing the Arctic, and we’re perfectly happy that existing international law is adequate to deal with that. And in particular they referred to the Law of the Sea as providing the framework.

But some states outside the Arctic and the nongovernmental organizations suggest more needs to be done to manage environmental issues in the Arctic. That was certainly the view supported by many of the participants in the Akureyri meeting. The World Wildlife Fund, for example, is putting forward the argument that there is a strong need for stricter environmental regulation in the Arctic, for new treaties and new institutions especially when it comes to managing offshore activities such as oil and gas exploitation.

There was a lot of debate at this meeting in Iceland about whether we needed a whole new treaty or whether we could work within existing mechanisms like the Arctic Council or some of the bodies associated with other regional structures such as the Nordic Council of Ministers, or whether we needed something similar to what we have in Antarctica, where there is a dedicated series of treaties that deal with issues there.

The Madrid Protocol to the Antarctic Treaty, for example, sets out detailed regulations about what you can and can’t do in Antarctica, how environmental impacts are to be assessed, and who’s got authority to determine what activities should occur.

In the Arctic it’s essentially up to each individual Arctic state to determine what they do in their own areas of jurisdiction, and the limited area that’s beyond national jurisdiction is like the rest of the ocean beyond national jurisdiction, essentially unregulated.

**Antarctica Comparison**

**SGIQ:** What is the essential difference between the Arctic and the Antarctic, and could a system similar to the Madrid Protocol work for the Arctic as well?

**DL:** Antarctica is international space. The Antarctic Treaty effectively froze territorial claims. It basically says that for countries that claim parts of Antarctica, we’re not going to admit that your claims are legitimate, but also we’re not going to deny that they might be. What we will do as the international community is to work together in the future to manage Antarctica in the best interests of all of humanity. The whole environmental management regime that has grown up in Antarctica and the Southern Ocean has been made possible by the way these treaties have dealt with the dispute about the territorial status of Antarctica.
In the Arctic it’s a very different scenario. There’s almost no disputed territory, with the limited exception of some minor territorial disputes and the debate over some areas of the continental shelf. The overwhelming majority of land areas and considerable areas of ocean space are clearly recognized as the sovereign territory, or otherwise under the jurisdiction, of those Arctic states, which they have jealously guarded for a long time.

During the Cold War there was no discussion about what was happening in the Arctic. But with the end of the Cold War and the initiative of Gorbachev that led to the creation of the Arctic Council, the Arctic states through the Arctic Council and other bodies have been looking at and responding to some of the environmental issues I have mentioned.

The debate at the moment is whether we should continue with these mechanisms. There’s been a lot of criticism about the things that have not been done, but the Arctic states themselves maintain that the only thing they will agree to is the continuation of the existing mechanisms.

I think it’s not something in which we’re going to see a change overnight. There’s going to be a long debate on many of these issues. And some of these issues won’t even be decided by the Arctic states; they’re going to probably be dealt with in other forums like the International Maritime Organization, a UN organization which has the main responsibility for regulating international shipping.

**SGIQ:** Wouldn’t an international environmental treaty for the region be a natural way to go?

**DL:** It’s an emerging debate. To be fair to the Arctic states, when they say that mechanisms or forums like the Arctic Council would be the appropriate place to deal with some of these issues, that doesn’t mean that they’re not going to deal with the issues. Their view is that it should be that measures are proposed and implemented by the states that are active in the Arctic.

**SGIQ:** I understand that there are a number of new environmental threats that will present themselves once the Arctic opens up.

**DL:** One of those issues would be a threat to fish stocks. At the moment there’s no regional management of fisheries in the Arctic, so there is a real risk of overfishing.

When you have more ships coming into the Arctic, you also have the problem of alien invasive species that are contained in the ballast water that ships discharge. Globally, alien invasive species are a huge environmental problem.

The Akureyri symposium also looked at some of the human rights challenges that the Arctic region faces. There was a referendum late last year that approved greater autonomy for Greenland and set up a process for it to possibly become an independent state in the very near future. That raises some interesting questions in terms of the sustainability of a new state in the Arctic. Whether there’s capacity in Greenland to manage some of the new environmental challenges the Arctic faces is unclear.

On the positive side, though, there’s a strong argument that this is the end of a process of righting hundreds of years of colonial injustice.

**SGIQ:** What role do you see for the UN in all of this?

**DL:** The obvious role for UN processes really goes back to what’s causing some of these issues to arise, and that’s climate change. We need an effective and rapid response negotiated through the forums of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

I think what we’re going to see—and this is not necessarily a negative thing—is a more robust regional approach to some of the other issues. We may see different responses, different structures, for different issues. I don’t think the Arctic states will be able to ignore the concerns of the rest of the world and stick to this argument that they have a special role as stewards in the region to manage what’s going on. Clearly there are other outside actors who are increasingly interested in what’s going on in the Arctic. 

The Akureyri symposium report and recommendations can be downloaded at www.ias.unu.edu/.
British explorer Pen Hadow is the first man in history to trek solo and unaided to the North Pole. Now, though, he is embarking on a very different expedition. In February he left northern Canada to trek more than 1,000 kilometers to the North Pole, but this time he is traveling with fellow polar explorers Ann Daniels and Martin Hartley, and they will be dragging with them 100-kg sleds laden with equipment to take up to 12 million readings of the depth and density of snow and ice beneath their feet.

Very little is understood about the depth and density of the Arctic sea ice. Hadow’s Catlin Arctic Survey hopes to provide the much-needed data about how much ice is left, and so help work out how much time we have to prepare for what is probably the most immediate, truly global threat of climate change.

Measurements of sea ice began in the 1960s, but for three decades there was too little data to be sure what was happening. Since the 1990s, satellite maps have been used to calculate the height of snow and ice above the waterline, but experts have to make assumptions about the roughly five-sixths of mass underneath. Few scientists have the inclination, physical endurance, time and money to do the training necessary to spend months in the Arctic.

Early polar explorations left a trail of graves, men killed by hypothermia, scurvy, gangrene—and for all the advances in modern technology, many risks still remain.

“Some people talk about the Arctic as a monotonous wilderness of white, but if you open your eyes and look at the landscape, especially in spring, you realize that there are no whites whatsoever,” says Hadow in his autobiography Solo. “Everything is in shades and tones of pastel colors—cream, grey, blue, green, yellow, orange, pink.”

“All the time there is the ever-present grinding cold.”

Nor is the Arctic a great flat glass to glide over. Hadow will have to clamber over steep walls of frozen slippery ice rubble which test both his strength and patience.

Then there are the wind and currents, which constantly work on the great floating, constantly changing landscape, grinding ice together, pulling pans apart. Not infrequently travelers have to make huge detours or backtrack over a ridge or rubble field because of an impassable lead, a channel of open water in the ice; occasionally they wake to find they have drifted south of the point they began walking the previous day.

At night, they lie with their heads on the ice and listen to it. “You wouldn’t conceive such random movements could produce such metronomic sounds,” says Hadow. “It’s disconcerting because it tends to be the ice breaking up around your tent. You have to take a view: will this open up and will we be falling in in the morning, or will it be little hairline cracks rather than major fractures?”

And all the time there is the ever-present, grinding cold. In temperatures as low as -50°C, with windchill that can sink to -90°C, travelers cannot stop for more than 10 minutes to mend equipment or they start to freeze—mucus dries like gravel in the nose, contact lenses would freeze to eyeballs, and as the temperature drops the human brain begins to slow, making people less responsive to problems.

As they travel across the ice pans, a specially designed radar will take a measurement every 10 cm. The team will also regularly drill cores of snow and ice and take measurements of the ocean temperatures below. The data will be fed back via satellites to scientists every night, and they hope that early results will be available before the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, Denmark, in December, when the world’s governments will be asked to agree on an ambitious treaty to cut greenhouse gas emissions and so, it is hoped, reduce global warming and the resulting climate change.

This article copyright Guardian News & Media Ltd 2009

Follow Hadow’s progress at www.catlinarcticsurvey.com

©John Rasmussen

©AFP
Climate change is being experienced particularly intensely in the Arctic. The Arctic average temperature has risen at almost twice the rate of that of the rest of the world in the past few decades, and there has been widespread melting of glaciers and sea ice and thawing of permafrost (frozen soil). These changes provide an early indication of the environmental and societal significance of global warming. These Arctic changes will, in turn, impact the planet as a whole. For this reason, people outside the Arctic have a great stake in what is happening there.

Climate change is taking place at the same time as many other changes in the Arctic, including an increase in chemical contaminants entering the Arctic from other regions, overfishing, land-use changes that result in habitat destruction and fragmentation, as well as cultural, governance and economic changes. Impacts on the environment and society result from the interplay of all of these changes.

Sea Change

While there are regional variations due to atmospheric winds and ocean currents, with some areas showing more warming than others and a few areas even showing a slight cooling, for the Arctic as a whole, there is a clear warming trend.

The Arctic is warming faster than lower latitudes largely because as Arctic snow and ice melt, the darker land and ocean surfaces that are revealed absorb more of the sun’s energy, creating a self-reinforcing cycle of warming.

In Siberia, Alaska and western Canada, winter temperatures have increased as much as 4°C in the past 50 years. Snow-cover extent over Arctic land areas has declined by about 10 percent over the past 30 years.

Arctic sea ice is a key indicator and agent of climate change. Changes in sea ice also have enormous environmental, economic and societal implications. Over the past 30 years, sea ice extent in September (the yearly minimum) has decreased by 31.5 percent or 2.34 million square kilometers, about the size of Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom combined, and the melting trend is accelerating. Sea ice has also become thinner in recent decades. It is thought that the Arctic Ocean could be ice-free in summer within decades. Because the Arctic plays a special role in global climate, Arctic changes have global implications.

Climate change causes sea levels to rise because water expands as it warms, and because land-based ice melts, adding water to the oceans.

Studies suggest that the Greenland ice sheet is melting more rapidly than anticipated. Climate models indicate that the local warming over Greenland is likely to be as much as two to three times the global average, and ice-sheet models project that sustained local warming of that magnitude would eventually lead to a virtually complete melting of the ice sheet, with a resulting sea-level rise of about seven meters.

Carbon is currently trapped as organic matter in the permafrost that underlies much of the Arctic. During the summer, when the surface layer of the permafrost thaws, organic matter in this layer decomposes, releasing
methane and carbon dioxide to the atmosphere. Global warming increases these releases, and can create an amplifying feedback loop whereby more warming causes additional releases, which causes more warming, and so on.

An Altered Ecology

The major Arctic vegetation zones include the polar deserts, tundra and the northern part of the boreal forest. Rising temperatures will promote the expansion of forests into the Arctic tundra. The shrinking of the tundra will greatly reduce the breeding area for many birds and the grazing areas for land animals. Not only are some threatened species very likely to become extinct, some currently widespread species are projected to decline sharply.

Many animal species from around the world depend on summer breeding and feeding grounds in the Arctic. For example, several hundred million migratory birds migrate to the Arctic each summer and their success in the Arctic determines their populations elsewhere.

In the marine environment, the sharp decline in sea ice is likely to have devastating impacts on polar bears. Other ice-dependent species at risk include ringed seals, walrus and some species of marine birds.

Terrestrial animal species also face threats due to warming. Caribou and reindeer herds depend on the availability of abundant tundra vegetation and good foraging conditions. In winter, lemmings and voles live and forage in the space between the frozen ground of the tundra and the snow, almost never appearing on the surface. Mild weather and wet snow lead to the collapse of these under-snow spaces, destroying the animals’ burrows, while ice-crust formation reduces the insulating properties of the snow pack vital to their survival.

Well-established population cycles are no longer seen in some areas. Declines in populations of lemmings, for example, would be very likely to result in even stronger declines in the populations of predators that specialize in preying on lemmings, such as snowy owls, skuas, weasels and ermines.

As water temperatures rise, spawning grounds for cold-water species will shift northward and are likely to be diminished. As southerly fish species move northward, they may introduce new parasites and diseases to which Arctic fish are not adapted. The implications of these changes for both commercial and subsistence fishing in far northern areas are potentially devastating, as the most vulnerable species are often the only fishable species present.

The effects of rising temperatures are already altering the Arctic coastline. Thinner, less extensive sea ice creates more open water, allowing stronger wave generation by winds, thus increasing wave-induced erosion along Arctic shores. Dozens of Arctic communities are threatened by these changes, and some are already planning to relocate. Hundreds more could be at risk in the future. The costs of protecting or relocating these communities will be enormous. Coastal erosion will also pose increasing problems for some ports, tanker terminals and other industrial facilities around the Arctic.

Marine Access

As summer sea ice retreats, new shipping routes will open, and the period during which shipping is feasible through existing routes will expand.

The Northern Sea Route across the north of Eurasia represents up to a 40 percent saving in distance for journeys from Europe to Asia and the northwest coast of North America compared to southerly routes via the Suez or Panama Canals. The navigation season for the Northern Sea Route is projected to increase from the current 20–30 days per year to 90–100 days by 2080; for ships with ice-breaking capability, the season could expand to 150 days. This could have major implications for transportation as well as access to natural resources.

On the Canadian side of the Arctic, home to the fabled Northwest Passage, near-term benefits are less clear. Recent sea-ice changes could, in fact, make the Northwest Passage less predictable for shipping. High year-to-year variability can make planning for transport very difficult. In addition, a warming climate could lead to more icebergs and greater ice movement in the Northwest Passage, presenting additional hazards to navigation. Thus, despite the widespread retreat of the sea ice, the Canadian Arctic
Archipelago is likely to have complex and challenging ice conditions for the decades ahead.

Increased marine access also raises new issues relating to sovereignty, security and safety—for example, the risk of oil spills and other industrial accidents in the challenging Arctic environment.

Across the Arctic, indigenous people are already reporting the effects of climate change. Local land-, sea- and icescapes are becoming unfamiliar. Climate change is occurring faster than indigenous knowledge can adapt. Unpredictable weather, snow and ice conditions make travel hazardous, endangering lives. Impacts of climate change on wildlife are having enormous effects, not only for the diets of indigenous peoples, but also for their cultures and their very identities.

The changes already under way in the Arctic provide an early indication for the rest of the world of the environmental and societal significance of global climate change. Changes in climate and their impacts in the Arctic are projected to become much greater. These changes will also reach far beyond the Arctic, affecting global climate, sea level, biodiversity, and many aspects of human social and economic systems.

The Arctic may be seen as geographically isolated from the rest of the world, yet the Inuit hunter who falls through the thinning sea ice is connected to melting glaciers in the Andes and the Himalayas and to the flooding of low-lying and small island states. What happens in foreign capitals and in temperate and tropical countries affects us dramatically in the North. Many of the economic and environmental challenges we face result from activities well to the south of our homelands; and what is happening in the far North will affect what is happening in the South.

Inuit are experiencing firsthand the adverse effects of global environmental changes. But we are not powerless victims. We are determined to remain connected to the land, and sufficiently resilient to adapt to changing natural forces as we have for centuries.

Discussion of climate change frequently tends to focus on political, economic and technical issues rather than human impacts and consequences. We need to be aware of the dramatic social and cultural impacts indigenous peoples face in coming years.

Eroded Lives

For generations Inuit have observed the environment and have accurately predicted weather and sea-ice conditions, enabling us to travel safely on the sea ice to hunt seals, whales, walrus and polar bears. Talk to hunters across the North, and they will tell you the same story: the weather is increasingly unpredictable. The look and feel of the land is different.

“Talk to hunters across the North, and they will tell you the same story: the weather is increasingly unpredictable. The look and feel of the land is different.”
ing difficulty navigating and traveling safely. We have even lost experienced hunters through the ice in areas that, traditionally, were safe. As a result of melting glaciers it is now difficult, sometimes even dangerous, for us to travel to many of our traditional hunting and harvesting sites.

Several Inuit villages have already been so damaged by global warming that relocation, at the cost of hundreds of millions of dollars, is now their only option. Melting sea ice and thawing permafrost have caused damage to houses, roads, airports and pipelines; erosion, slope instability and landslides; contamination of drinking water; coastal losses to erosion of up to 30 meters per year; and melting of natural ice cellars for food storage.

For instance, residents of Sachs Harbour, a tiny community in the Canadian Beaufort Sea region, report melting permafrost causing beach slumping and increased erosion; increased snowfall; longer sea-ice-free seasons; new species of birds and owls, robins, pin-tailed ducks and salmon invading the region; and an onslaught of mosquitoes and black flies.

Plans are well under way to relocate certain Arctic communities. Climate change is not just a theory to us in the Arctic; it is a stark and dangerous reality. Climate change is undermining the ecosystem upon which Inuit depend for their physical and cultural survival.

The Arctic is of vital importance in the global debate on how to deal with climate change because the Arctic is the barometer of the globe’s environmental health. We are indeed the canary in the global coal mine.

“Climate change is not just a theory to us in the Arctic; it is a stark and dangerous reality.”

The Arctic Climate Impact Assessment projects dramatic and drastic depletion of sea ice. In the next few decades year-round sea ice may be limited to a small portion of the Arctic Ocean around the North Pole. The rest of the Arctic will be ice-free in summer.

Polar bears, walrus, ringed seals and likely other species of seals are projected to virtually disappear. This is not to mention the millions of Arctic seabirds and fish. Our ecosystem will be transformed, with tragic results. Climate change in the Arctic is not just an environmental issue with unwelcome economic consequences. It is a matter of livelihood, food and individual and cultural survival. It is a human issue.

What can Inuit—only 155,000 of us—do about this global situation? First, we refuse to play the role of powerless victim. Responding to climate change has split the nations of the world. Our plight and the Arctic Assessment show the compelling case for global unity and clarity of purpose to forestall a future that is not preordained.

Our rights, our human rights, to live as we do and to enjoy our unique culture as part of the globe’s cultural heritage, are at issue.

Short-term business interests must change, and people must take stock of whether or not a way of life based on consumption is ultimately sustainable.

What is happening now to Inuit will happen soon to people in the South. The experience of Inuit in the Arctic is shared by residents of small island states in the Pacific, many people in the Caribbean and elsewhere.

We are working on many fronts to convince the world to take long-term action. Climate change is not about scoring political points. It is about families, parents, children and the lives we lead in our communities throughout the world.

Patricia Cochran, an Iñupiaq Eskimo from Nome, Alaska, is chair of the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC), formed in 1977 to defend the rights and further the interests of the 155,000 Inuit who live in Alaska, Canada, Greenland and Russia. ICC has a seat on the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and is a “permanent participant” to the eight-nation Arctic Council.
The opening of Arctic waters creates enormous profit potential from shorter international trade routes and access to seabed oil, gas and marine resources.

The Law of the Sea gives countries territorial jurisdiction within 200 nautical miles of their coast, but outside these zones nations are taking measures to ensure access, rights and, in some cases, sovereignty over portions of the seabed. Territorial claims and counterclaims will be a source of tension that could degenerate into open conflict.

Naval operations of both Russia and the United States, the two nuclear powers in the region, will increase when there are open waters, creating a potential for military confrontation, especially because both have nuclear-armed submarines. Nowhere else are the two major nuclear powers in such close proximity to each other. There is a potential for additional nuclearization of both sea and land.

Nuclear weapons in the region present a multifaceted danger to the Arctic lands and peoples, and preventive measures must be taken before it is too late.

The creation of legal structures and procedures is already beginning to be discussed, and it is important that nuclear weapons issues are put on that agenda; otherwise the status quo will become ingrained. Existing agreements and the present status in the Arctic provide a hopeful start because:

- There is a seabed treaty in force that prevents stationing of nuclear weapons on the Arctic Ocean floor.
- Strategic bombers in Arctic air-space are much less significant now than during the Cold War.
- Some parts of the Arctic are de facto nuclear weapon-free zones, and these could be gradually extended.
- Negotiations could begin now on military confidence-building measures. Of note is the Antarctic Treaty, where each contracting party has the right to send observers to every base of any country in that region, thus producing a very powerful confidence-building measure for ensuring full compliance.
- It is hoped that strategic arms reduction talks between the U.S. and Russia will begin again.

There are, however, serious obstacles to a nuclear weapon-free Arctic. The United States and Russia both regularly deploy nuclear-capable submarines in Arctic waters. Russia’s naval base at Zapadnaya Litsa maintains their most advanced ballistic missile submarines, and patrol areas are mainly in the Arctic. Thus, negotiations for an Arctic Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (NWFZ) could only be attempted after complementary disarmament measures by the United States.

There is new mainstream support for abolition. Former high-level officials in the U.S., U.K., Italy, Germany and others have called for immediate comprehensive steps to reduce the nuclear danger, continuing to abolition of nuclear weapons. A conference at the Hoover Institute in the U.S. in October 2007 recommended a 500-warhead limit for both the U.S. and Russia. If such a reduction were to be achieved, it would be in the best interests of Russia to place its reliance on mobile land-based Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles. The result could be closure of nuclear submarine facilities in the Arctic, or alternatively, retention of nuclear-powered submarines not outfitted with nuclear arms. Either of these alternatives would clear the way for a NWFZ in the Russian Arctic.

The Russian Reality

A most important distinction between Russia and the other Arctic nations is that Russia has nearly 4 million people in the region, and many are not indigenous. The geopolitical reality, as seen from Russia, is that military security is inseparable from energy security. In preparation for greatly enhanced activity in the Arctic, billions of dollars have been or will be spent by both the East (Russia) and the West (U.S. and Canada) for icebreakers, Arctic patrol ships, oil plat-
forms, army bases and similar equipment and infrastructure. At present, Russia appears better prepared than the West.

Over a 14-year period, five Central Asian states negotiated the Central Asia Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (CANWFZ), assisted by the UN. The 2006 Treaty of Semipalatinsk, which has not entered into force, involves former nuclear weapon states that have agreed to International Atomic Energy Agency site visits for inspection and verification. Only Russia and China, so far, are signatories to the protocol respecting the CANWFZ. The CANWFZ offers experience applicable to an Arctic NWFZ: negotiations require a significant period of time. Work should start now.

A Regional Treaty

A potentially productive approach would be for all nonnuclear Arctic states to work together on a regional treaty, as allowed for in Article VII of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, “to assure the total absence of nuclear weapons from their respective territories.” Norway, Sweden and Finland, all with sovereign territory north of the Arctic Circle, are nuclear weapon-free. Greenland has a U.S. military base at Thule, but Denmark is a nonnuclear weapon state (NNWS). Canada is already a de facto nuclear-free country. The Northwest Passage, a shipping channel which passes many islands of the Canadian Arctic Archipelago, is a very unfavorable passage-way for submarines because it is narrow and shallow, posing severe difficulty to both the maneuverability and undetectability of a submarine. This passage is very probably a de facto nuclear weapon-free zone. Regarding surface travel through the Northwest Passage, maritime safety in these dangerous waters would certainly dictate obtaining an international agreement to ban nuclear fissile materials.

Declaring only a portion of the Arctic regions and waters to be a NWFZ could be problematic. On the other hand, partial solutions, taken together, could be the right path.

For the reasons outlined above, it is a realistic hope that the two nuclear weapon states in the region will make significant reductions in their nuclear arms, creating the negotiating atmosphere that would allow them to turn their attention to an Arctic NWFZ.

The issue of a NWFZ is central to the Arctic security environment. Arctic peoples have a right to be secure from nuclear weapons stationed on their land or in their seas.

Declaring a partial NWFZ in Canada, in the Northwest Passage, would be difficult because it would focus attention on assertions by the U.S. and others that it is an international waterway, whereas the mutual benefit of both Canada and the U.S. would be to keep the status quo. In this reality, it would be easier for the Canadian government to designate the whole of Canada as a NWFZ.

Declaring a partial NWFZ in Canada, in the Northwest Passage, would be difficult because it would focus attention on assertions by the U.S. and others that it is an international waterway, whereas the mutual benefit of both Canada and the U.S. would be to keep the status quo. In this reality, it would be easier for the Canadian government to designate the whole of Canada as a NWFZ.

Such a legislative act by Canada would show persuasive leadership, leading to a regional treaty between all the NNWS in the Arctic. The cumulative effect would model the process for the United States and Russia.

Once the NWFZ in Africa enters into force, as now expected, 110 countries, including the entire southern hemisphere, will be protected by NWFZs. Each NWFZ is unique, with different terms of agreement. This is a helpful precedent in that both the U.S. and Russia could, with the right political will, designate only their territories north of the Arctic Circle as nuclear weapon-free, without having to change other nuclear security strategies.

Comparison with the legal and political framework of the Antarctic is of interest, although the situation differs greatly. In 1991, the Madrid Protocol designated Antarctica as a natural reserve devoted to peace and science, and prohibited mining exploration activities indefinitely. Environmental protection, wisely seen to be necessary in the Antarctic, might serve as a useful starting point in the Arctic too.

The challenges of opening the Arctic are unprecedented. Providing an equitable governance regime calls for a high degree of international cooperation and a resolution of rivalries. An Arctic Treaty would reduce conflict and provide an opportunity to embed the expectation of a NWFZ. An Arctic NWFZ, introduced conceptually in the near future, could gradually gain support. It would be a significant step toward disarmament, and would build confidence toward a nuclear weapon-free world.

Dr. Adele Buckley is a physicist, engineer and environmental scientist. She is a member of the Pugwash Council, a cofounder and former vice president of MDS Sciex, and formerly vice president of technology & research at the Ontario Centre for Environmental Technology Advancement.
Facing a New Future

Paarma Egede Lund is a student from the town of Narsaq in southern Greenland, population approximately 1,800. The existence of a uranium deposit in the town and the ensuing debates about whether or not to mine it epitomize the challenges and dilemmas for Greenlanders as they confront a changing physical, cultural and economic landscape brought about in part by global warming. Paarma is currently studying in Denmark but returned home over the summer last year to assist in “A-21,” the local Narsaq museum and community center that uses the principles of Agenda 21—the UN-led program to promote sustainable development—to engage local children, youth and adults in projects communicating the message of sustainable development.

**SGI Quarterly:** What was your experience of participating in the A-21 project?

**Paarma Egede Lund:** I was responsible for the visitors and tourists as well as the museum itself. I learned a lot about my own hometown and our culture—things you normally don’t consider in your everyday life or learn in school. It was amazing to meet so many people from different places in the world. I also really enjoyed talking to people who had a different background from mine, and realizing that my story—the story of our unique people, culture and country—could be fascinating to visitors. A-21 is a great resource for the inhabitants of Narsaq as well. It helps contribute to increasing knowledge of the world outside Greenland as well as bringing the local citizens of Narsaq closer together.

**SGIQ:** What climatic changes have you seen in Greenland in your lifetime?

**PL:** In the early 90s, we saw obvious changes in the Greenlandic weather conditions. Before, there were long and cold winters. Suddenly it changed to warmer and shorter winters and longer periods of spring and summer. I also think it snowed more frequently when I was a child.

Because of global warming, we now see changes in our ice cap, which also affect the Arctic wildlife. Greenlandic hunters have already begun to notice changes. Some of the ice is now gone, and it is difficult for the hunters to reach the animals.

Some people feel that what is about to happen might actually be a good thing. I agree to a certain degree. I think it could improve the overall development of Greenland. Life becomes easier when it is warmer, especially for farming and agricultural work. Some of my family are sheep farmers, and I believe it will benefit them.

“We have a lot of people among us that are very proud of our culture and language.”

We will be able to produce more basic products ourselves and reduce the large amount of imports to our country. The profession of hunter is in danger, though.

**SGIQ:** Do you worry that much of Inuit culture may be lost?

**PL:** I do not think that our culture will disappear. There may be some changes, but I do not think our traditions, language and other ways of living will disappear. The old Greenlanders say that young people today have become too modern and we have changed our way of talking and writing. It is probably true, since it cannot be avoided if we want to be a part of a globalized world. But I am not afraid we will lose our language or cultural values. Fortunately we have a lot of people among us who are very proud of our culture and language, and I believe there will be even more of these Greenlanders, because the more independent we become, the more stubborn and hardworking we will turn out.

**SGIQ:** Do you see people who have no choice but to focus more on the short-term economic needs of their families
than on protecting the environment?

PL: Yes, I do. In my own hometown quite a lot of people support uranium mining without regarding the environmental and health-related problems it can cause. The local unemployment rate is high, and that is probably why some people think it is a good idea. I speak strongly against uranium mining in my hometown because I don’t think that the local citizens are being heard. We don’t receive objective information of the consequences and costs of a mine being placed so close to the area where people live.

I believe uranium is highly dangerous for public health—why else is uranium prohibited in other parts of the world? And besides being dangerous, it won’t even be Greenlanders who benefit from the mining. Instead it will be foreigners, international companies, who don’t care about the costs it will cause us Greenlanders. If the national politicians accept and open the mine, my family will leave my hometown and we will probably never live in it again. This place is where I was born—it is my home. It makes me very sad to think that they might destroy our town.

We all share a responsibility for improving the overall situation in Greenland. Our country is a young country, so I think it is important that young Greenlanders do our best to make a difference and contribute to the sustainable development of our country.

---

Reality Check

Cape Farewell is a project set up by a British artist, David Buckland, to bring together artists and scientists. The aim is to engage artists to communicate on a human scale the urgency of the global climate challenge. Between September 7 and 20, 2008, twenty-eight young people from seven countries traveled on a Russian icebreaker from Iceland, around Greenland, landing finally at Baffin Island. Organized in collaboration with the British Council, Canada, the youth were acting as ambassadors for their schools and communities, completing art and science projects while talking via the Internet to their schools. For many, the voyage was a life-changing experience. For more information see www.capefarewellcanada.ca.

---

David Smith, Glasgow, Scotland, age 17

I am a musician. I mostly play guitar but I also play a little drums and bass guitar, and one day we landed in a deserted community and made music on the rusting rubbish. The whole idea of that landing was to identify the lines of the landscape, for example where the snow ended, where the land met the sea, where the clouds met the blue sky. We then created our own line out of barrels and scrap metal where the left-behind, rusting rubbish met the beautiful Arctic landscape, and played the drums on the line.

When I returned home, my main priority was to visit local primary schools in my area to get the younger pupils thinking about climate change. We have already had members of the Scottish Parliament and the U.K. Parliament visiting our school to talk to us about what we and they are doing. My ambition is to study business at university and in the future to possibly run my own business, maybe in the green sector or at least somewhere as carbon neutral as possible.

Nico Angerstein, Hanover, Germany, age 17

I wanted to see if climate change was really happening and how the change would influence the Arctic. We talked to Inuit who told us that their life is changing and they are losing their culture. I expected a lot of ice and icebergs, but in fact there was not that much ice; instead there were many rivers: so climate change is indeed happening and it is our fault. When I got home, together with my “ground crew” who supported me, I made a music, drama and computer presentation and talked to many politicians.

George Voronov, Dublin, Ireland, age 15

I have always appreciated nature. However, before it was akin to looking at a masterfully drawn painting; now it’s like looking at that very same painting dangling over an open fire, slowly roasting. During the trip I plunged into a blue geothermal lagoon in Iceland, into liquid paradise; I saw glaciers and talked to the native Inuit of the polar region, as well as seeing the mighty polar bear. But at the same time I also saw a deserted beach strewn with old rusted barrels, bricks and even an old bulldozer, remnants of an old weather station.
I am very much part of this human race; I own a computer, my parents have cars, and we, like everyone else, burn up our carbon dioxide. But I am willing to make a change.

The change will be on a small scale; starting recycling campaigns, raising awareness around my community. No matter how miniscule and insignificant it might seem at the time, all of us have to jump on board. Once we realize how important our planet is to us, we have to make sure that the people who are running our countries recognize that fact and try to do something about it. I think that if humankind as a species is capable of flying to the moon, curing thousands of sicknesses and putting thousands of tonnes of carbon dioxide into the air annually, then we can use that same power to reverse that fact and change our habits. Of course it is always easier to destroy rather than create.

Hailey Richardson, Canso, Canada, age 17

Upon setting out on this amazing project, my motivation was to keep the planet a liveable place for my generation and the generations that will come after me. I learned how I can choose to use my voice proactively or it will be wasted. The most interesting thing for me was seeing and touching and being a part of this part of the world that is so hugely affected, being able to stand in a river made of meltwater, seeing shrubs growing where they shouldn’t, and meeting people whose way of life is threatened because of our actions.

I wanted to tell the stories of what I saw and what I experienced because it’s something that few of us will ever get to do and see. Maybe knowing someone or meeting someone who has touched a corner of the world most of us could only dream of might make it a little more relatable and real.

Louise Willneff, Berlin, Germany, age 16

I hoped to establish a tighter network with people all around the globe. I discovered that 28 youth from different backgrounds can work together easily. We are often afflicted with prejudices and worry too much, which none of us should do, including the politicians or lobbyists in high positions.

I realized that when something gets emotional, it starts to hurt. I saw the amazingly beautiful Arctic landscape, so untouched that you always feel you’re the first person when you go on land. A scenery that makes you realize how unimportant and small a human being is and how immense time is. I fell in love with the Arctic. Everyone has something in this world that he loves and doesn’t want to lose.

I went to the UN-organized Poznań Climate Change conference in Poland, in December 2008. I joined the youth network and we exchanged ideas. I think the action march on December 6 through Poznań with the slogan “Politicians stop clowning around” was a little “hint” for all politicians that young people want them to wake up and become active in an effective way. I’m now very aware of climate change, so I begin to turn off the lights or electronic appliances even if I’m out of the room only for a few minutes. I try to consume as little water as possible, and I stick to a vegetarian diet. My parents try to buy local products and do not use the car very often. I hope that humanity finally wakes up and realizes that difficult times are lying ahead and we have to work together; there definitely is no other way.
Bringing Connectivity to the Top of the World

By Carolyn Sloan

It’s been described as a small miracle. From the beginning, the provision of broadband Internet service to Nunavut’s 29,000 residents, spread out over 25 communities and 2 million square kilometers of land, has been a test of persistence, endurance and devotion.

For people like Lorraine Thomas, it’s been a life’s passion and a personal mission for the last 15 years. When she first discovered the Internet in 1992, she immediately recognized the tremendous benefit the technology could bring to people living in the remote communities of Canada’s eastern Arctic, which could only be accessed by plane or by boat.

Thomas had already spent her mid-20s in Rankin Inlet teaching television as a medium through which the Inuit could preserve their language and culture.

“It was handing tools to people, letting them do what they’re going to do, letting them do it the way they’re going to do it, and they’re going to take that technology and move it to another level that nobody’s ever expected,” she explains. “It’s the same with broadband.”

Today, Thomas works for the not-for-profit Nunavut Broadband Development Corporation (NBDC), with a team whose vision and resolve has made Nunavut broadband a reality.

In 2003, the federal government agreed to provide just under half of the required funds to build a satellite broadband network. “It’s the hardest business case on the planet,” says Jeff Philipp, president of SSI Micro, the company selected to build the network. “My original business case was not that we would make money on broadband Internet . . . I wanted the chance to build the network and to prove to people what could be done. I’ve lived my whole life in the North and I think this is a critical piece of infrastructure.”

In an effort to keep the network growing and to keep the service affordable, SSI Micro poured millions of its own dollars into additional capacity to keep the network afloat. “One of our main obstacles is that the cost of satellite is hundreds of times more than what people in the south pay for their signal,” explains Darrell Ohokannoak, NBDC chairman.

Another challenge was to educate users and the public about digital technology—to incorporate it into the local mind-set and Inuktitut language. “One issue is language and philosophies,” explains Adamee Itorcheak, an NBDC board member, “coming up with new words in Inuktitut, and even just the thought process.”

Social Connectivity

Since its creation, the Qiniq network has attracted over 4,500 users across the territory, expanding essential services in areas such as health and education, as well as facilitating an insur- gence of international research in the Arctic that will help inform public policy for years to come.

But for many Nunavummiut, the Internet is first and foremost a powerful social and economic tool. In the community of Sanikiluaq, interest in the Internet was sparked with the creation of an online store through which to sell carvings made by local artists.

“There’s hardly any tourists coming in, so it’s easier to have it online,” says Sarah Meeko, a Sanikiluaq resident.

The community has also embraced the Internet as a means of communicating with family and friends, within the territory and around the world. Teenagers also use social networking sites and email to share traditional knowledge of Inuit culture and ways of living off the land, Meeko added. “They’re taught traditional stuff, so when they learn, they’re really excited and their friends get excited and then they share it with all Nunavut.” She laughs when she describes the chaos that ensues whenever the service is temporarily down. “They call every 10 minutes, like ‘What’s wrong with the Internet?’”

SSI will be investing in significant infrastructure upgrades to the Qiniq network. With matching investment dollars from the Canadian government and additional investment in more satellite bandwidth, the future is bright.
“The Prize of the Centuries”: the centennial of the discovery of the North Pole

Matthew Henson, born in 1866, was an African-American who went to sea as a cabin boy aged 12, trained as a navigator sailing around the world and, in 1887, joined Commander Robert E. Peary as a colleague and right-hand man, undertaking many journeys, first to Nicaragua and then the Arctic, where Peary was determined to reach the North Pole. Henson learned to speak the local Inuit language, traded with the Inuit, trained the sledge dogs and undertook multiple duties as the organizer of a diverse team of explorers. Peary, Henson and four Inuit men succeeded in reaching the Pole 100 years ago. Peary often deferred to Henson’s judgment and experience, saying that he was as skillful in ice technique as the Inuit and that if he had taken another man, “he would have been a passenger.”

In the foreword to Henson’s book, Robert Peary wrote, using the terminology that was current at the time, “On that bitter brilliant day in April 1909, when the Stars and Stripes floated at the North Pole, Caucasian, Ethiopian and Mongolian stood side by side at the apex of the earth in the harmonious companionship resulting from hard work, exposure, danger and a common object.”

After the expedition, although Henson did tour and give lectures, he made his living as a customs clerk in New York City. In 1944, Congress finally awarded him a duplicate silver medal to that awarded to Peary, and Presidents Truman and Eisenhower honored him before his death in 1955.

Extracts from Henson’s book A Negro Explorer at the North Pole, published in 1912 by Frederick A. Stokes Co.

Captain Bartlett [a member of the expedition, who had to turn back before reaching the North Pole] and his two boys had commenced their return journey, and the main column, depleted to its final strength, started northward. We were six: Peary, the commander, the Esquimos, Ootah, Egingwah, Seegloo and Ooqueah, and myself.

Day and night were the same. My thoughts were on the going and getting forward, and on nothing else. The wind was from the southeast, and seemed to push us on, and the sun was at our backs, a ball of livid fire, rolling his way above the horizon in never-ending day.

The wind was from the southeast, and seemed to push us on, and the sun was at our backs, a ball of livid fire, rolling his way above the horizon in never-ending day.

The Captain had gone, Commander Peary and I were alone (save for the four Esquimos), the same as we had been so often in the past years, and as we looked at each other we realized our position and we knew without speaking that the time had come for us to demonstrate that we were the men who, it had been ordained, should unlock the door which held the mystery of the Arctic. Without an instant’s hesitation, the order to push on was given, and we started off in the trail made by the Captain to cover the Farthest North he had made and to push on over one hundred and thirty miles to our final destination.

We made excellent distance without any trouble, and only stopped when we came to a lead [an area of seawater in the middle of the ice] barely frozen over, a full twenty-five miles beyond. We camped and waited for the strong southeast wind to force the sides of the lead together. The Esquimos had eaten a meal of stewed dog, cooked over a fire of wood from a discarded sledge, and, owing to their wonderful powers of recuperation, were in good condition; Commander Peary and myself, rested and invigorated by our thirty hours in the last camp. With my proven ability in gauging distances, Commander Peary was ready to take the reckoning as I made it and he did not resort to solar observations until we were within a hand’s grasp of the Pole.

The memory of those last five marches from the Farthest North of Captain Bartlett to the arrival of our party at the Pole, is a memory of toil, fatigue and exhaustion, but we were urged on and encouraged by our relentless commander, who was himself being scourged by the final lashings of the dominating influence that had controlled his life.

Onward we forced our weary way. Commander Peary took his
sights from the time our chronometer-watches gave, and I, knowing that we had kept on going in practically a straight line, was sure that we had more than covered the necessary distance to insure our arrival at the top of the earth.

It was during the march of the 3rd of April that I endured an instant of hideous horror. We were crossing a lane of moving ice. Commander Peary was in the lead setting the pace, and a half hour later the four boys and myself followed in single file. They had all gone before, and I was standing and pushing at the upstanders of my sledge, when the block of ice I was using as a support slipped from underneath my feet, and before I knew it the sledge was out of my grasp, and I was floundering in the water of the lead. I did the best I could. I tore my hood from off my head and struggled frantically. My hands were gloved and I could not take hold of the ice, but before I could give the “Grand Hailing Sigh of Distress,” faithful old Ootah had grabbed me by the nape of the neck, the same as he would have grabbed a dog, and with one hand he pulled me out of the water, and with the other hurried the team across.

It was about ten or ten thirty a.m. on the 7th of April 1909 that the Commander gave the order to build a snow-shield to protect him from the flying drift of the surface snow. I knew that he was about to take an observation, and while we worked I was nervously apprehensive, for I felt that the end of our journey had come. Laying flat on his stomach, he took the elevation and made the notes on a piece of tissue-paper at his head. With sun-blinded eyes, he snapped shut the vernier (a graduated scale that subdivides the smallest divisions on the sector of the circular scale of the sextant) and with the resolute squaring of his jaws, I was sure that he was satisfied, and I was confident that the journey had ended.

The Commander gave the word, “We will plant the stars and stripes—at the North Pole!” and it was done; on the peak of a huge paleocrystic floeberg, the glorious banner was unfurled to the breeze, and as it snapped and crackled with the wind, I felt a savage joy and exultation. Another world’s accomplishment was done and finished and as in the past, from the beginning of history, wherever the world’s work was done by a white man, he had been accompanied by a colored man.

The four Esquimos who stood with Commander Peary at the North Pole were the brothers, Ootah and Egingwah, the old campaigner, Seegloo, and the sturdy, boyish Ooqueah. Four devoted companions, blindly confident in the leader, they worked only that he might succeed and for the promise of reward that had been made before they had left the ship, which promise they were sure would be kept.

If there was any sentiment among the Esquimos in regard to the success of the venture, Ootah and Seegloo by their unswerving loyalty and fidelity expressed it. They had been members of the “Farthest North party” in 1906, the party that was almost lost beyond and in the “Big Lead,” and only reached the land again in a state of almost complete collapse. They were the ones who, on bidding Commander Peary farewell in 1906, when he was returning, a saddened and discouraged man, told him to be of good cheer and that when he came back again Ootah and Seegloo would go along and stay until Commander Peary had succeeded, and they did. When they were absolutely alone on the trail with every chance to turn back and return to comfort, wife and family, they remained steadfast and true, and ever northward guided their sledges.
The time was August 1945, the place the Tokyo Imperial Hotel, just after the end of World War II. Someone was knocking at the door. A tall figure of a man measuring over two meters got out of bed. The 36-year-old Dr. J. K. Galbraith had come to Japan to investigate conditions following the aerial bombardment by U.S. forces. After toiling in the burnt-out ruins of Tokyo until he was totally exhausted, he had at long last managed to climb into bed.

He opened the door to find a Japanese man carrying a large basket, tightly packed with bottles of whiskey. “Hello, dear gentleman! How about one bottle?” The label on the bottle was printed in English: “Specially bottled for the occupation forces visiting Japan.” The man was trying to sell whiskey to an American—someone who had been his enemy just a few days earlier.

A smile spread across Galbraith’s face. “What amazing commercial flair!” he thought. “This scorched soil of Tokyo shows nothing but scars, yet the wisdom and spirit of the people have refused to succumb.” He was convinced that Japan’s economic reconstruction was not far away.

Less than two months earlier, on July 3, 1945, my mentor Josei Toda was released from Toyotama Prison after finally triumphing over the oppression of the military authorities. During those final days of the war, you could never tell when B29s overhead were going to unleash their bombs.

“Leaving the prison behind him, Toda boarded a train at Nakano Station. Inside the carriage, he overheard a conversation between strangers talking about the incendiary bombs.

“I wonder what it’s called, that Yankee steel. Damn good quality! I made a shovel out of it, and it’s an absolute marvel!”

“Well, I used it to make kitchen knives, and very good they are too! I could get 10 knives out of a single shell!”

Truly tenacious, Toda reflected: Japan was not in such a bad state after all!

In this way, at around the same time and in the same place, Dr. Galbraith and Josei Toda were both witnessing the strength and rugged tenacity of ordinary people. Maybe it was nothing more than a dubious bottle of liquor or a used bombshell, but in the end human wisdom had transformed them both into a means to live.

Talk of “economics” conjures up images of mathematics and statistics, but there’s also another element that cannot be quantified and measured, the drive that brings us to declare, “Whatever may happen, I’m going to get through this!” or “Without fail, I’m going to succeed!” When we make up our minds in this way, we have already won, but without such a determined purpose we will never make progress.

Dr. Galbraith has said that the motivator of economics is man. If humankind stands up, a driving force of transformation, revival and dramatic development—a force that can guide society to prosperity—will be generated. It is only when there is a “mighty ocean” of the common people that the “ship” called economics can sail forward.

From 1950, when his business was in its most dire predicament, Josei Toda personally tutored me in all branches of learning. He taught me the essence of each sub-
ject and phenomenon, and economics was the first item on the curriculum of “Toda University.”

At the time, Toda was suffering from serious debt. There were people who spoke ill of him and walked out on him, even though he had treated them with unwavering kindness and consideration. My mentor was a businessman through and through, but he was facing ruin. He never said to me, “Daisaku, I’m mortified!” but I could fully comprehend the agonizing turmoil in his heart.

Polishing the Sword

Toda used to tell me, “Unless you understand economics, you cannot undertake your life’s work, you cannot become a first-class leader.” He maintained that economic power is the modern equivalent of a sword. To be a first-rate human being, you have to polish the sword of economic power before you can accomplish any significant task.

It had always been Toda who supported the financial base of the Soka Gakkai, ever since before the war. That is why he taught the essence of economics to me, his successor. He was truly a mentor who inspired infinite gratitude. Even when things were going badly, Toda did his best to bring profit to those with whom he did business. That same spirit remains deeply ingrained in me to this day.

I repaid all my mentor’s debts, and rebuit the businesses that had failed. I paid off all the liabilities that remained with the Soka Gakkai after he passed away. Since then, I have established the Min-On Concert Association, the Tokyo Fuji Art Museum, Soka University and the Soka school system, one after the other. One of my priorities has always been to secure the finances of all these institutions. The tuition I received from my mentor lives on in all of that.

Whenever he met someone in financial distress, Toda always used to say, “Make lots of money! But it’s not for you. It’s for the world, for the people!” Throughout his life, Toda placed himself alongside the needy, and he explained a Buddhist theory of economics in a way that was easy to understand. We do not need big words. What are economics for anyway? The question is whether or not ordinary people—a mother and her child—can live happily. That is what matters.

The true meaning of economics is to support people, the people on whom society depends. If the people are forgotten, economics ceases to have meaning.

When I met Dr. Galbraith, I found myself in deep agreement with many of his statements. He declared, “Economics is a tool, a weapon to materialize the happiness of human beings.” He did not attach much importance to forecasts and predictions of economic trends, saying that even if a forecast turns out to be right, it is basically unconnected with the happiness or unhappiness of the human being. I think so too. Economics must not be used to create disparities between rich and poor. And, of course, it goes without saying that economics must not be a game or a form of gambling.

There is “Housewife Economics” for the homemaker, and there is “Managing Director Economics” for the manager of a business. They both want to enrich their lives as much as they can, and they both do whatever they can to prosper. However, that in itself does not bring true fulfillment in life.

To a greater or lesser degree every one of us shares responsibility for the destiny of society as a whole, as an individual economic person. Society will collapse if this point is neglected.

“As an economist I would like to make some contribution, however small, to the happiness of human beings.” Dr. Galbraith was unable to forgive the absurdity of the world: inequality, discrimination, the rich-poor divide and the arrogance of those who look down on their fellow human beings. Even at nearly 100 years old, he continued to fight against injustice and absurdity in society with the passion of a young man.

Josei Toda and Dr. Galbraith both advocated that the purpose of economics is to make people happy. In today’s world, there is a plentiful supply of experts and analysts in the money game, but there have not been many who really question what the true purpose of economics is. □
I was born and brought up in Calcutta, India. As a mechanical engineer I designed, built and commissioned water and wastewater treatment plants in many places around the world before migrating to Canada in 1997.

I lived and worked first in Toronto and then in Winnipeg. A week before I moved to Winnipeg, I was introduced to Nichiren Buddhism and began to apply its principles in my new workplace. I found that whenever problems popped up, by chanting for the happiness of all involved, I was able to quickly and easily bring about a resolution. I soon became accustomed to the local weather as well, which can reach −40˚C in winter.

In January 2006, I met an officer of the Government of Nunavut, one of Canada’s northern territories. Listening to him talk about the various challenges for engineers in the frozen north reminded me about a childhood dream to live in the Arctic region. He spoke about Rankin Inlet, and I could see myself moving there. Soon after that I found a position advertised online, applied, and got the job.

Rankin Inlet, with a population of 3,000, is much colder than Winnipeg. Winter temperatures range between −40˚C and −60˚C, there are no trees, and the subsoil is permanently frozen. Any excavation work needs to be scheduled between the middle of August and first week of September, when the soil is partially thawed.

The town water supply system needs to be in constant circulation; otherwise the water will freeze and break the pipeline. The water system temperature is continuously monitored, and hot water is injected from time to time to keep the temperature above 2˚C.

The wind in Rankin Inlet sometimes blows at more than 100 km per hour, and during winter there are often whiteouts, when visibility is severely reduced by snow and people are confined indoors. Most food has to be imported, with perishable products brought in daily by air from Winnipeg or Yellowknife. The local people fish and hunt caribou, cooking and preserving the meat in the traditional way.

I once had to coordinate the repair of a break in the water main, caused by frost heaving (soil movement). The temperature was −60˚C, with windchill at −90˚C, and there was no daylight. It was very challenging.

After a year in Rankin Inlet I had accumulated a lot of experience of working and surviving in extreme weather conditions, and I began to think about moving on. I chanted about my dream of living within the Arctic Circle and also began to look for a job in my profession there. Within a month, I read an advertisement for a position offered by the Government of Northwest Territories. I applied for the post, was offered the job, and moved to Inuvik in September 2007.

Inuvik is a beautiful small town with a population of 3,500. The local people are always friendly. Here the sun disappears for months at a time, but in the summer there is constant daylight. The air is fresh and pollution-free, and I enjoy skiing in the winter as well as hiking in the summer. The temperature is similar to Rankin Inlet, but there are trees.

As a regional project officer, I look after engineering projects related to the water supply and wastewater treatment systems, schools, colleges, health centers and government-owned facilities in the region. The management for these public works is challenging and different from similar projects down south. Resources and skilled personnel are scarce. I use my Buddhist practice to develop good relations and cooperation between all people directly or indirectly associated with the facilities. I always chant for the success of each project and for the happiness of all the people who are involved. I treat each obstacle as an opportunity to develop myself.
Nuclear Abolition Events in Denmark and Taiwan

A symposium entitled “Strengthening the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)” was held in Copenhagen on November 17. The event was cosponsored by SGI-Denmark and the Danish Committee of the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs (Pugwash Denmark) whose chair John Avery gave an address welcoming, among others, 150 peace scholars, activists and ambassadors.

Hans Blix, former IAEA director general, and Holger K. Nielsen, former leader of the Danish Socialist People’s Party, delivered keynote speeches and took part in question-and-answer sessions. In his lecture on “Disarmament After the U.S. Election,” Mr. Blix referred to President Barack Obama’s positive stance toward nuclear abolition and disarmament, while Mr. Nielsen urged politicians worldwide to cooperate on antinuclear issues to build a world free from the threat of nuclear weapons.

SGI President Daisaku Ikeda sent a message voicing concern that despite the passing of 63 years since the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the dangers of nuclear proliferation remain. In highlighting the necessity of constructive discussions in ridding humanity of the ever-present threat of nuclear weapons, he encouraged a resurgence of the fundamental spirit of the NPT, which appeals for efforts to avoid nuclear wars and measures for securing people’s safety.

Aiming to encourage just such a voice and raise awareness among students, Taiwan Soka Association (TSA) arranged for the SGI exhibition “From a Culture of Violence to a Culture of Peace: Transforming the Human Spirit” to be shown at one of Taiwan’s top universities, the National Taiwan University (NTU), from November 15–23. Present at the opening were NTU Vice Presidents Bau Tzong-Ho and Chen Tai-Jen George, and Legislative Yuan President Wang Jin-pyng. Mr. Wang commented that hosting the exhibition, which examines the issue of nuclear weapons from the standpoint of human security, provides students with an opportunity to ponder peace and non-violence. Some 3,000 people visited the exhibition, which has now toured 30 venues in Taiwan and been viewed by more than 80,000 people there.

International Student Festivals

On November 30, the Soka Gakkai-affiliated Min-On Concert Association cosponsored the 20th Kyoto Foreign Students Music Festival, held at the Kyoto Kaikan Hall in Kyoto, Japan. The event is part of Min-On’s wide-ranging activities to promote peace through global cultural exchange. At this year’s event, 102 students from 17 countries and territories studying at universities and colleges in the greater Kyoto area presented traditional dances, songs and music of their respective cultures. Min-On, the Kyoto City Music and Arts Promotion Foundation and the Kyoto Shim bun newspaper have cosponsored the annual student music festival for the past two decades.

On December 14, the 18th Osaka Foreign Students Festival—a counterpart to the event in Kyoto—was held at the Osaka International Exchange Center. The show featured 169 students from 19 countries and territories studying at nearby universities. Min-On cosponsored the event with the Osaka Foundation of International Exchange and International House Osaka.
Celebrating the Spirit of Martin Luther King Jr.

To mark Martin Luther King Jr. Day (MLK Day), SGI-USA members participated in events illustrating that Dr. King’s message of nonviolent activism as a vehicle of change is still relevant today.

On January 19, former United Nations under-secretary-general Anwarul Chowdhury spoke at an interfaith event at the SGI-USA World Culture Center in Santa Monica, California. The event featured music, readings and scholarship presentations. “The world is eagerly waiting for the realization of Dr. King’s dream,” Mr. Chowdhury told an audience of about 600. He stated that in order to effect a “transition from force to reason and from conflict and violence to dialogue and peace,” it is necessary to cultivate the mindset of nonviolence, tolerance and peace advocated by Dr. King.

He reiterated Dr. King’s call for a war on poverty and, drawing on his UN experience in developing countries, highlighted that poverty strips people of their dignity and hopes, feeding marginalization and human rights abuses. In conclusion, Mr. Chowdhury said promoting peace is something everyone can practice daily and designated education which imparts a “culture of peace” as the key to advancing the legacy of Dr. King. The event was co-hosted by the Martin Luther King Jr. Westside Coalition.

In New York, SGI-USA and The Temple of Understanding co-organized the Sixth Annual Youth Nonviolence Conference at SGI-USA’s New York Culture Center on January 24. The conference was tailored to attract both high school and college students and aimed to inspire action for global sustainability. Under the umbrella theme “Sustainability: Embracing a Global Initiative,” the event included films and workshops.

In Indiana, January 12–15 saw SGI-USA members cosponsoring “Yesterday’s Dream, Today’s Reality,” which began with the opening of the “Gandhi, King, Ikeda: A Legacy of Building Peace” exhibition and included recitations of the famous “I Have a Dream” speech in various languages.

On January 15, SGI youth from the Washington, D.C., area joined forces with other young people in an interfaith initiative to clean the Anacostia River shoreline, followed by dialogue groups using different prayers as a springboard for discussion of environmental issues. Having experienced the richness that diversity brings and the actuality of unifying for change, participants left determined to work for peace in their communities.

Coinciding with the spirit of MLK Day and the site’s 10th anniversary, SGI-USA relaunched its Victory Over Violence (VOV) website www.vov.com/. VOV is a youth-sponsored initiative which aims to empower young people to identify the causes of violence by promoting nonviolence through dialogue and spreading the message of the sanctity of life. The site functions as a social networking community and educational resource to promote the spirit of nonviolence among youth, families and communities. The site also includes the VOV peace pledge, which more than 1 million people have signed.
Environmental Initiatives in Hong Kong and Singapore

To raise awareness of global warming and climate change, SGI-Hong Kong and the China Polar Museum Foundation (CPMF) collaborated to organize an exhibition of the photos of Dr. Rebecca Lee Lok-sze entitled “A Call from Global Warming.” It was held at SGI-Hong Kong’s East Culture Center from October 17 to November 19. Dr. Lee is both CPMF’s managing director and founder and a renowned environmentalist in Hong Kong. The photos on display are drawn from research she conducted at both the North and South Poles and on Mount Everest.

Mentioning the pertinence of the exhibition to the International Polar Year, 2007–2008, in her remarks at the opening Dr. Lee bore witness to the actuality of the melting of the polar ice cap, having recently returned from a research trip in the Arctic where the ice-breaker on which she traveled penetrated as far as 85° N, the furthest in her experience. In conjunction with the exhibition, on October 18, Dr. Lee spoke on global warming to teachers and students from five Hong Kong schools. “A Call from Global Warming” was also shown at two other SGI-Hong Kong centers through February 2009.

In another environmental initiative, Singapore Soka Association (SSA) was one of a number of organizations that took part in a community recycling project—“Charitable Recycling @ South West” at its culture center on January 4. From collecting old clothes and paper, $60,000 was raised in support of the Institute of Technical Education’s Educational Fund.

Human Rights Declaration Celebrated

The sound of the shofar welcomes participants

The 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was celebrated at the new SGI-USA Washington D.C. Culture Center on December 2, with a ceremony that included representatives from 10 faith traditions organized by the Interfaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington, the United Nations Association of the National Capital Area and SGI-USA.

Participants were welcomed by the Celtic harp, then the Jewish shofar, or ram’s horn. SGI Vice-General Director Bill Aiken greeted the participants, noting the relevance of this observance, coming just days after the terror attacks in Mumbai, India. He stated that the world’s religions have a central role to play in providing education and sensitivity about the inherent dignity of all people.

William Davis, director of the United Nations Information Center in Washington, D.C., expressed the commitment of the UN to restore security, prosperity and human dignity in every corner of the globe. A call to action then came from Rev. John Peterson, Canon for Global Justice and Reconciliation of the National Cathedral: “We are here to remember all the people who do not have their basic human rights respected, and for them let’s redouble our efforts.”

Representatives of 10 faith traditions then expressed what in their religious practice and beliefs impelled them to support universal human rights, and final words were given by Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton, who represents the District of Columbia and is a renowned champion of civil rights.

In Japan, the Soka Gakkai Women’s Peace Committee (WPC) hosted a peace forum in Tokyo on December 20, in commemoration of the anniversary of the UDHR. WPC member Mikiko Otani, a member of the International Human Rights Law Association of Japan, delivered a lecture outlining the spirit of the UDHR and the Soka Gakkai’s support for its objectives.

Representatives of 10 major religions share their faiths’ commitment to work for human rights
SGI President Daisaku Ikeda first visited the Soviet Union in September 1974.

Japan and Russia fought bitter battles before and during World War II. In the postwar period, well into the 1970s, relations between the two countries remained strained by the failure to conclude a peace treaty and by Japan’s close relationship with the United States.

Ikeda’s decision to visit the Soviet Union was met with considerable criticism in Japan. He was asked what business a religious leader had visiting a country that renounced religion. His reply was, “I’m going because there are people there.” He also said that whatever a nation’s ideology, the people of that country—like people everywhere—desire to live in peace.

By visiting the Soviet Union, Ikeda sought to cultivate mutual understanding through the promotion of educational and cultural exchange. He acted in the belief that relations between individual human beings are the foundation of relations between countries and that the construction of goodwill depends on bonds of trust and friendship.

When Ikeda met with Soviet Premier Aleksei N. Kosygin (1904–80), the Premier asked the Buddhist leader to explain his basic ideology and he replied, “I believe in peace, culture and education—the underlying basis of which is humanism.”

Ikeda had just visited Piskarevskoye Memorial Cemetery in Leningrad, present-day St. Petersburg, where around half a million of the city’s inhabitants who died during the 900-day Siege of Leningrad (1941–44) are buried. He described to Kosygin how affected he had been by the experience and Kosygin shared that he had been in Leningrad during the siege.

Four months before his visit to the Soviet Union, Ikeda had visited China. This was at a time when relations between China and the U.S.S.R. were very highly strained. There was an atmosphere of mutual hostility and suspicion, with a buildup of military forces along the Soviet-Chinese border; even nuclear war seemed a possibility. Ikeda had been struck by the sight of schoolchildren in China digging bomb shelters in their school grounds against the possibility of a Soviet attack.

Ikeda shared with the Soviet Premier the concerns he had seen expressed in China regarding the Russians’ intentions. And then he asked bluntly: “Does the Soviet Union intend to attack China?” The Premier responded that the Soviet Union had no intention of attacking or isolating China. When Ikeda then asked if he could convey this message to the Chinese leadership, Kosygin agreed. On a subsequent visit to China, Ikeda delivered this message to the country’s leaders, contributing to the easing of tensions between the two countries.

Culture and Education

In 1975, on his second visit to the Soviet Union, Ikeda delivered a lecture at Moscow State University entitled “A New Road to East-West Cultural Exchange” on the need to build a spiritual “Silk Road” of cultural exchange linking East and West. On the same occasion, Moscow State University presented him with an honorary doctorate—the first such award conferred on Ikeda. An exchange agreement was signed between Moscow State University and Soka University, which Ikeda had founded in 1971; since that time, over 500 students have participated in the two-way exchange.

When Ikeda visited the U.S.S.R. in 1981, an exhibition of Japanese children’s dolls was held to promote cultural exchange, and during his fourth
visit, in 1987, the SGI exhibition “Nuclear Arms: Threat to Our World” was shown in Moscow. Meanwhile, a number of events were held in Japan introducing the culture of the Soviet Union to Japanese audiences, including exhibitions mounted by the Tokyo Fuji Art Museum and a visit of the All-State Folk Ensemble of the U.S.S.R., and in 1982, Natalia Sats, the Moscow State Children’s Musical Theater’s founder and president, brought her theater for children to Japan for the first time.

More recently, there has been close collaboration between the Institute of Oriental Philosophy, founded by Ikeda, and the Russian Academy of Sciences’ Institute of Oriental Studies on the preservation, exhibition and reproduction for scholarly purposes of rare ancient Buddhist manuscripts.

In 1990, Ikeda met with then Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev in Moscow, and again when Mr. Gorbachev visited Japan the following spring. The two have developed a strong friendship, meeting on numerous occasions, and publishing a dialogue entitled Moral Lessons of the Twentieth Century.

In 1994, Ikeda delivered his second lecture at Moscow State University, on “The Human Being: A Magnificent Cosmos.” In this lecture he stated: “I am one who believes that absolute and indestructible happiness in life lies only in working selflessly for others, while expanding one’s inner realm from the ‘lesser self’ caught up in the snares of egotism to the ‘greater self’ fused with universal life.”

Relations with Moscow State University have developed from Ikeda’s friendship with the late Rector Rem V. Khokhlov and his successors Anatoli A. Logunov and Victor A. Sadovnichy. Two volumes of dialogues with Rector Logunov and one volume with Rector Sadovnichy have been published in Russian and Japanese.

The SGI President also developed friendships with author Mikhail Sholokhov and Valentina Tereshkova, the first woman cosmonaut. He has published dialogues with Albert Likhanov, president of the International Association of Children’s Foundations, and cosmonaut Alexander Serebrov.

In February 2008, the Russian Federation presented Ikeda with the Order of Friendship, in recognition of his promotion of diverse exchanges. In an indication of the scope of the friendship he has developed, he was recommended for this award jointly by six people: Mikhail Gorbachev; Dr. Sadovnichy; Zinaida Dragunkina, a member of the Federation Council’s upper house; the noted Kyrgyz writer Chingiz Aitmatov; Sergey Baburinvice, speaker of the lower house; and Alexander Serebrov.

Much of Ikeda’s deep interest in Russia and her people grew out of his youthful reading of the great Russian literary masters. Tolstoy, in particular, has been an important inspiration for Ikeda. Vladimir Illich Tolstoy, great-great-grandson of Leo Tolstoy and director of the Leo Tolstoy Museum Estate in Yasnaya Polyana, the birthplace of Tolstoy, traveled to Japan in December 2008, to present the SGI leader with an award which honors individuals who have contributed to the perpetuation of Tolstoy’s spirit.

Ikeda’s efforts to build friendships with the people of Russia now span more than three decades. As he stated in August 1994, “People criticized me, asking why a person of religion would want to visit a communist country. But I was determined to open that road. Together, we have transformed suspicion into trust, and fear into friendship. I wanted to transform a fixation with the past into a commitment to the future.”

With thanks to Hajime Mizushima, Seikyo Shimbun reporter.

---

Together, we have transformed suspicion into trust, and fear into friendship. I wanted to transform a fixation with the past into a commitment to the future.

—Daisaku Ikeda

---

The Moscow State Children’s Music Theater performs in Tokyo, November 1990
Takashi Shirozu, 48, from Japan, is the captain of an oil tanker that runs between Japan and the Persian Gulf with around 25 crew.

Clifford Velasco, 35, from the Philippines, is a steward on board a cargo vessel with 20 crew members. He sails to various countries, usually in South America and West Africa.

What do you like most about being on board, and what is most difficult about it?

Clifford: This is my life, being at sea. It’s hard being away from home and family for most of the year, but I know they’re waiting for me over the horizon. I’m grateful for modern-day technology that enables us to be in constant communication. Homesickness is the greatest challenge for any mariner, but being able to communicate helps a lot.

Usually the crew gets along fine, but sometimes there is friction due to cultural or religious differences. It’s a multinational crew, with people from six countries.

Takashi: When you’re on board, you’re apart from the land, and apart from your family for a long time, which may sound like a very unsettled life, but it’s actually quite comfortable. It’s quite easy to find time for my Buddhist practice. And when I’m on leave, for about three months I can be totally free of work. I enjoy that flexibility.

Then there are times when the beauty of nature is simply stunning. How many people on land know this amazing natural beauty? On the ship I often feel that people are not simply a part of nature, and we certainly can’t conquer the natural environment; human beings and the environment are one.

The challenges of life on board all come down to human relationships. Being a captain of course means being in the top position. I am always very careful to behave humbly.

How does Buddhism influence your approach to your work?

Takashi: Buddhism has changed my outlook completely. Day to day, it helps me a lot in my relations with the crew. I want everyone on board to enjoy each voyage. Dialogue is very important. One can really see the power of one’s words in such a tiny, constricted environment.

My ideal is to be like a good parent to my crew but in reality it’s not that easy and I often fall short and get uptight about trivial things. Every day is a challenge.

The most important thing, though, is safety—ensuring an accident-free voyage—and to achieve this it’s crucial that we can work as a team. Once the ship leaves port, we’re a community unto ourselves, and any problems and issues have to be resolved amongst ourselves. Whatever happens, I want each of my crew to feel proud and glad to be part of the ship. So, I always do my best to have as much dialogue and discussion as possible, to ensure that my communication doesn’t become one-sided.
Clifford: Practicing Buddhism inspires me to work hard, and to try and be an example to others. Buddhism talks about how the place where we are right now is the “land of eternal tranquil light.” In that sense, I try to always do my best to have harmonious relationships with the other crew and to create value.

Why did you choose this line of work?
Takashi: I happened to read the high school brochures of a commercial shipping company when I was in junior high school.

Clifford: My uncle and my father were both seafarers and I used to listen to my father's stories about large cities, the beauty of the oceans, the colorful sunrises and sunsets of the South Pacific. When I was a child I dreamed about being an airplane pilot and later I studied electrical engineering but in the end I realized that my heart belongs to the sea. My Buddhist practice helped me make the decision. I enrolled in the maritime training school in Manila and passed all the exams to become a fully-fledged seaman. The first vessel I worked on was the Nippon Maru, a passenger ship, and I enjoyed it a lot. I have been working at sea for six years now.

What is a typical work day for you at sea?
Clifford: On a usual day I cook, prepare the mess hall and serve the food, and clean the accommodation for the crew and officers. I work eight hours a day and have the rest of the time off. On a cargo ship there's more free time than on the passenger liners, and less people. I enjoy my work. I think it's important to love one's work because there is dignity in labor. That's the inspiration and feeling toward my vocation that my father instilled in me. It enables me to always find pleasure in what I do.

Takashi: My duty is to command the ship, so of course I navigate and am at the helm of the ship, but I also deal with other day-to-day matters that occur on board, and with any external relations.

What are the biggest dangers in your work and how do you deal with them?
Clifford: Any emergency at sea is very dangerous. There is no one nearby to help. So our training and drills are very important. Recently, when we were crossing the Atlantic, the engineers were fixing the water cooling system, which uses seawater to cool the engine, when the seawater suddenly started pouring into the engine room. Everything shut down. I was terrified. I really thought we would have to abandon ship and was just waiting for the order. After an hour and a half, though, the engineers managed to fix it.

You really need to pay careful attention to prevent accidents at sea. Human error accounts for a lot of problems on board, so I am very concerned about avoiding accidents.

Takashi: In my work, we live alongside danger. The ship carries 300,000 tons of crude oil, which is about the same amount of oil that Japan consumes in half a day. If there was a spill, you can’t imagine the kind of suffering it would cause.

Also, recently there has been the problem of pirates near the Somalian coast. So just sailing the ship is dangerous. Buddhism teaches, though, that difficult circumstances are what enable you to develop yourself. Actually, on a recent voyage, the engine failed as we were coming into port. To give you an analogy, this is like having the brakes fail as you’re pulling into the off-ramp of a highway. I wasn’t able to slow the ship. All I could do was chant silently as the port loomed ahead of me. In the midst of my panic, I was able to calm down enough to figure out what to do. Step by step I was able to change course and maneuver the ship to a safe distance, and after about an hour the engine recovered. I’ve had lots of similar experiences!
The impact of the “once-in-a-century” financial meltdown, which started with defaults in the subprime mortgage market in the United States, has now spread to engulf the whole world. Even as policy makers struggle to find effective responses, the current financial turmoil is undermining the real economy, bringing about a global recession. If we remember that the Great Depression only fully set in two years after the 1929 stock market crash, the gravity of the current situation becomes even more apparent.

People have the right to live in peace and humane conditions, and to that end, they exert themselves assiduously day after day. It is unacceptable that the foundations of people’s livelihoods should be disrupted and devastated by the effects of “tsunami” that they could not foresee and which originated in realms far beyond their control.

The processes of globalization, buoyed by deregulation and technological innovation, have encountered a fierce backlash in the form of globalized recession. It is now apparent that the faith in free competition and markets to resolve all problems was misplaced; nothing in the world is so neatly preordained.

As an alternative paradigm to both unbridled competition and centralized control, I would like to explore certain ideas set out by the founding president of the Soka Gakkai, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, in his 1903 work *The Geography of Human Life*. Specifically, I would like to explore the possibilities to be found in his idea of “humanitarian competition.”

In the closing chapters of this work, which was published when he was just 32, Makiguchi surveyed the grand flow of human history and identified the forms of competition—military, political and economic—that have prevailed in different periods, overlapping and intertwining as they undergo gradual transformation.

Makiguchi concludes with a call for us to set our sights on the goal of engaging in humanitarian competition, a perspective he reached by tracing the inner logic of historical development.

Makiguchi describes humanitarian competition thus: “To achieve the goals that would otherwise be pursued by military or political force through the intangible power that naturally exerts a moral influence, in other words, to be respected rather than feared.”

I am reminded here of the idea of “soft power,” defined by Joseph S. Nye Jr. of Harvard University as “the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion.”

Likewise, there are resonances between the concept of a “win-win world” put forward by the American futurist Hazel Henderson and the views Makiguchi expresses in the following passage: “What is important is to set aside egotistical motives, striving to protect and improve not only one’s own life, but also the lives of others. One should do things for the sake of others, because by benefiting others, we benefit ourselves.”

I am fully convinced that the time has now arrived, 100 years after it was originally proposed, for us to turn our attention to humanitarian competition as a guiding principle for the new era.

Free competition driven by the unrestrained impulses of selfishness can descend into the kind of social Darwinism in which the strong prey on the weak. But competition conducted within an appropriate framework of rules and conventions brings forth the energies of individuals and revitalizes society.

Herein lies the value of humanitarian competition. As a concept, it compels us to confront the reality of competition while ensuring that it is conducted firmly on the basis of humane values, thus bringing forth a synergistic reaction between humanitarian concerns and competitive energies. It is this that qualifies it to be a key paradigm for the 21st century.
Beyond the Horizon

Photographs from “Beyond the Horizon,” an exhibition of photographs taken by the Hato-kai group, Soka Gakkai members who work on oceangoing vessels. Since 1987, the exhibition has been mounted annually in port cities around the world, and a selection of the photographs is displayed at the International Maritime Organization (IMO) headquarters in London, U.K. The aim of the exhibition is to present the world as seen through the eyes of sailors as a way of promoting understanding among nations.
The Soka Gakkai International (SGI) is a worldwide association of 82 constituent organizations with membership in 192 countries and territories. In the service of its members and of society at large, the SGI centers its activities on developing positive human potentialities for hope, courage and altruistic action.

Rooted in the life-affirming philosophy of Nichiren Buddhism, members of the SGI share a commitment to the promotion of peace, culture and education. The scope and nature of the activities conducted in each country vary in accordance with the culture and characteristics of that society. They all grow, however, from a shared understanding of the inseparable linkages that exist between individual happiness and the peace and development of all humanity.

As a nongovernmental organization (NGO) with formal ties to the United Nations, the SGI is active in the fields of humanitarian relief and public education, with a focus on peace, sustainable development and human rights.