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Trends. The Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and Economic Recession: Global Crises that Turn Right Thinking On Its Head

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When the Cold War ended, so did history. According to Fukuyama there was a right way of thinking about the world, that way was right for all the world, and that way had won.

And yet take the crisis of nuclear weapons proliferation arising from Indian and Pakistani nuclear testing. Perhaps recent speeches at the United Nations by Pakistan's Nawaz Sharif and India's Atal Behari Vajpayee have lessened this crisis, however, there may still be a crisis in the validity of the West's thinking. This thinking contains the premises that 5 countries should retain nuclear weapons--the rest of the world (save for Israel) not; that the more weapons available the more likely that "something (untoward?) will happen.) Yet the West's track record is hardly inspiring. The United States (US) has dropped nuclear bombs on the Japanese, caused the demise and damaged the health of its own citizens in unethical experiments, and contaminated its own and other's territory through its nuclear weapons industry. Russia has done the same as the US on a larger scale save for "dropping the bomb." A conservative estimate would suggest that the People's Republic of China (PRC) has transferred materiel and technology for nuclear weapons delivery vehicles to countries supporting terrorism. Security officials related to France's "force de frappe" have made frappe out of Greenpeace assets and have insisted on nuclear testing after the other members of the nuclear club ceased and desisted. The United Kingdom is implicated in reinforcing the exclusive club--a club that has not performed admirably. India has more than a point that the club is supporting nuclear apartheid--especially since the club rejects India's proposition to support a global disarmament policy. What policies besides nuclear apartheid, global disarmament, and global armament might support a new multilateral deterrence?

The US, a majority of its First World allies, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and many first-tier investors have long advocated that a country in dire economic trouble should increase interest rates and decrease spending along with engaging in fundamental infrastructural change. Yet a strong case can be made that these prescriptions may have prolonged recovery and even exacerbated the current economic crises in Asia and Russia with a potentially noxious impact for Latin America and eventually the US and Europe. Other prescriptions recently have seemed less hurtful. The strongest economy in Asia is currently a PRC that is communist at least formally with a currency that is not completely convertible. Malaysia has improved its economic position considerably--at least in the short-term--through currency controls among other mechanisms.

A new world--post-Cold War, globalized--may require new thinking, even if new, old thinking as opposed to old, new thinking. Cognitive flexibility, however, has never been a strong point among most political leaders who use what has worked and--with advancing age--use what ceases to work. The world may be turning right thinking on its head. But who will have the head for the new right thinking? (See Anderson, C.A., & Lindsay, J.J. (1998). The development, perseverance, and change of naïve theories. *Social Cognition*, 16, 8-30; Carnevale, P.J., & Probst, T.M. (1998). Social values and social conflict in creative problem solving and categorization. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 74, 1300-1309; Dugger, C.W. (1997). For Pakistan and India, Atom pact is a hard sell. *The New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com>; Fukuyama, F. (1997). *The end of order*. London: Social Market Foundation;

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