

INTERNET REVOLUTIONIZES COMMUNICATIONS AFTER GUJARAT EARTHQUAKE

Mathew Cherian In the immediate aftermath of the killer earthquake on 26 January this year, many Indian groups emerged with websites and email groups. In previous disasters, big international agencies were usually the only sources of reliable information. The Gujarat earthquake shows how communication tools like VSAT and the Internet are changing the way information is gathered and disseminated.



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EARRS (Earthquake Relief and Rehabilitation Service), instituted by the earthquake relief groups and yahoo.eq and run by a consortium of NGOs, became an email subscription service for all those interested in relief and rehabilitation in Gujarat. Another initiative from Kutch was www.panjokutch.com, which worked from a broken-down building and provided village-

level information on the Internet, including contact information and working telephone numbers. They received several congratulatory messages from people abroad who were able to establish contact with their relatives only because of www.panjokutch.com.

Volunteers from Hughes Software Systems and its Communications Unit set up VSAT (very small aperture terminal) systems in Bhuj, Rapar, Anjar and Bhachau for direct satellite communication with affected towns and villages. These VSATs were the only source of direct access for officials and government bureaucrats wanting to contact the area. Many other sites like www.lavochka.com,

www.causeneffect.org and www.dryindia.org gave up-to-date information on the earthquake and relief activities. This meant that people could just log on to the Internet and obtain up-to-date information in real time.

The site www.helping.org was able to muster considerable financial support through a credit card window for non-resident Indians. Much more giving than usual took place on the Internet, helping money to reach areas of need more quickly. However, the sites still have a long way to go as regards reliability in terms of speed of transfer, validation of recipient NGOs and accountability for their utilization of funds.

'VIRTUAL VERTICAL' - THE INTERNET AND HIGHER ORDER CIVIC ORGANIZING

Alan Fowler Life operates at many levels of association and action – from local to global. However, an abiding problem for multiple tiers of organizing is how to finance them. Compared to government and business, civil society has always been at a disadvantage in organizing vertically – until the Internet arrived.

Governments solve the problem of financing organizational tiers by using the power of taxation. Taxation can occur corresponding to the tier – town, region, province, state, nation, etc – or be collected nationally and then passed back down. Businesses typically finance tiers by extracting profits from lower-

level transactions with clients, accumulating and re-allocating them according to the structure they have chosen.

When it comes to multi-tiered civic organizing, finance from remittances from lower to higher levels are notoriously limited and unreliable: there is no power to tax, nor profits to distribute. However, 'vertical' tiers of civic organizing can now occur more easily because financial transactions between levels are not necessarily needed. Higher levels can derive their tasks, position and mandates from lower levels that 'network' through the Internet but mobilize their resources in a more 'horizontal' way from grants or other means. The

overall construction is 'virtual' in the sense that it need not be a legally formed arrangement, but one that simply follows rules and divisions of labour agreed between separate – and often diverse – civic organizations. Moreover, such multi-level virtual set-ups – increasingly found in international advocacy work – need not be permanent: they dissolve when their task is complete.

We need to be on the look out for and learn from the innovative and dynamic ways in which the Internet is enabling 'virtual vertical' civic organizations to appear on the institutional landscape and track the impact they are having.

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DEMAND-ORIENTED PHILANTHROPY TO MATCH IDEAS AND INVESTMENTS

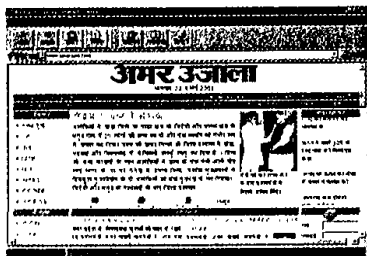
Kanwal Rekhi of the TIE Foundation in California's Silicon Valley sees India as 'a first-rate nation with third-rate systems'. Rekhi and other non-resident Indians have been focusing on social venture philanthropy as a way of giving back to India.

CAF India plans to identify innovative schemes in India that may be of interest to them and other philanthropists.

CAF India, along with the Rockefeller Foundation, is embarking on a 'demand-oriented' approach to philanthropy. 'The purpose is to produce a bank of innovative ideas,' according to Lincoln Chen, Rockefeller Foundation Senior Vice President. CAF India hopes to bring together ideas and investments for social purposes and to create a network of philanthropists and NGOs that will in time grow beyond social investment into social partnership. They see this as a way of removing the road blocks to India's development.

At the first meeting under the new scheme, several leaders in ICT for development expressed interest in looking at language-based software. Indian language-based browsers and connecting rural schools to the Internet. CAF-initiated dialogues will be held in Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Bangalore and Hyderabad through this year and early next year.

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IN BRIEF

ICTs for development

There is a strong social, economic and political case for investing social venture capital in ICTs (information and communication technologies) for poor rural areas. This is the principal thesis of a newly published booklet called *A Social Investor's Guide to ICTs for Development*. While acknowledging the likelihood that initially ICTs will disproportionately benefit landowning elites, the booklet argues that 'in the long term social investment in rural ICT projects could prove to be one of the most effective means of driving change'. The 26 case studies provide a wide range of examples of what is already being done.

A Social Investor's Guide to ICTs for Development was prepared by the Centre for Knowledge Studies - Bangalore for CAF India. For a copy, please email adsod@vsnl.net or gopinath@cafmail.org

Multilingual browser to help connect India's non-English-speakers

In the last six years, India has achieved only 5 million Internet penetration, largely among the English-speaking population. A New Delhi-based 'knowledge technology' company, 4Cplus, has now developed a multilingual web browser that will enable literate but non-English-speaking Indians to access the Internet and to publish relevant content in their own language. 4Cplus has already developed the browser in Hindi, and hopes to make it available in 11 other Indian languages. According to IRS (Indian Readership Survey), more than 80 per cent of Indian newspaper readers speak regional languages.

For more information, see the website at www.4cplus.com

Simputer to enable poor and illiterate to surf Internet

One of the ICT projects featured in CAF India's *ICTs for Development* is the Simputer. This hand-held computer, powered by three AAA batteries, will cost only £140 when it comes on the market in India next year. But what is really revolutionary about it is that it eliminates the biggest single barrier to computer use in developing countries – illiteracy. Almost 50 per cent of India's population is unable to read or write. Engineers at the Indian Institute of Sciences in Bangalore have developed a piece of text-to-speech software that allows the Simputer to translate English text into a variety of Indian languages and read the information aloud to the user.

The shortcoming of the Simputer, as *ICTs for Development* points out, is that it is designed for use by one person. When it comes to connecting whole communities, fixed public-access desktop PCs of more conventional design may be more useful.

For more information, see the website at www.simputer.org

KnowNet Initiative

The KnowNet Initiative aims to catalyse knowledge networking in developing countries through the use of information and communication technology (ICT). The KnowNet website at www.knownet.org includes a database of over 170 different ICT-related projects/initiatives and 60 case studies on the use of ICT in the development sector, plus articles and information on upcoming ICT and knowledge networking events.

OPEN SOURCE – TECHNOLOGY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Glen Tarman The debates about harnessing the benefits of information technology (IT) in the public interest have centred on issues such as Internet connectivity and computing hardware. To date minimal attention has been paid to the central role of software. Open source software is being seen as a way of providing tailor-made software to help civil society organizations achieve their goals and to contribute to meeting the needs of developing countries.

The majority of non-profits have very few resources available for investing in IT. What spending power they do have is usually directed towards proprietary software, for which the licences, especially for the latest upgrades, are prohibitively expensive. In addition, the software has often been developed for commercial use and does not match the specific needs of non-profits.

Collectively, unless the non-profit sector can find a way to reduce the costs of accessing software, it will be trapped into a spiral of increasing IT costs. Corporate responsibility might lead to software giants giving away their products. So far, however, there are no signs that this will happen on any widespread basis beyond some discounting.

What is open source software?

The term 'open source' refers to software where the source code – the instructions programmers write to create the software – is distributed as well as the programme itself. Unlike with proprietary or closed source

software, anyone can modify and redistribute it.

Open source software and its associated business model have become more widely known through the success of operating systems like Linux. The initial creation of Finnish hacker Linus Torvalds in 1991, Linux has been developed through the collaborative networks the Internet facilitates to become a serious challenger to the dominance of Microsoft. Many large computer companies, for example IBM, have moved to invest in open source. They, like the hacker community, see it as one of the best ways of promoting open standards and developing high-quality software quickly and efficiently.

Companies and other organizations developing open source software turn traditional software merchandising on its head. One of a variety of funding methods, for example, is building a market position by giving away the software their programmers produce and generating income through value added services. More than simply a business model, open source is a growing social movement and a worldwide community, with a core of socially conscious hackers. The voluntary impulse is one of its hallmarks. 'Open source is as much a mindset as it is a movement,' says one enthusiast.¹ 'It stems from a belief that software is a resource to be shared and developed collectively and not restricted by private ownership or copyright.'

Realizing the potential

If the potential of open source software in the cause of social and economic justice is to be realized, more decision-makers must become aware of its existence. In parallel, the open source community needs to share knowledge about the needs of civil society so that new kinds of service providers – trusted intermediaries dedicated to non-profits – can emerge.

Open source desktop applications are beginning to be developed with the user-friendly interfaces of household brands, and they do not bar reading most familiar formats such as Windows documents. For servers and databases, few would argue that open source products are inferior to closed source software. If non-profit investment in technology continues to be in largely proprietary software, then the growth of a stronger overall open source market that will generate low-cost, adaptable software for non-profits will be weakened, along with all the long-term gains that will provide.

Michael Litz, Chief Technology Officer at the Benton Foundation and Director of OneWorld US, sees a crucial interest for the funding community:

'It makes little sense for foundations and other donors to have to support licence fees, across the sector and in perpetuity, for software that cannot become assets to be adapted and freely shared. Strategic investment in the open source model for the non-profit sector would leverage benefits that could be shared across thousands of non-profits the world over.'

¹ James Plummer, Director of Prospectus, a London-based digital economy recruitment and talent management company that is setting up a new division focused on non-profits.

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For further information about open source software, see the following websites: www.opensource.org www.communitytechnology.org/osp-oss/ www.oneworld.net/thinktank/iktools/ www.techsup.org

Soros network expands into new regions

William Kramer

West Africa and South East Asia don't spring to mind when one hears the name George Soros. Yet these newest areas of Soros activity reflect the Soros foundations network's commitment to promoting and facilitating open societies in the countries and regions that need it most. This expansion also shows a strong interest in providing seed grants to establish programmes in new areas before much of Soros's funding comes to an end in 2010.

2000 expenditures

Total expenditure: \$494,053,000

Former Soviet Bloc countries: 60%

Other regions of the world: approximately 20%

US programmes: approximately 20%

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For more information about the Soros foundations network, visit the website at www.soros.org

The Soros network launched the Open Society Initiative for West Africa last year. Based in Abuja, Nigeria, it will serve 18 countries in the region. By funding start-up projects, developing partnerships with other foundations and international organizations, and making grants to local NGOs, the initiative aims to strengthen civil society and democracy in the region. Reconciliation and conflict resolution, public health, community radio and library modernization will be key areas of activity.

Indonesia is the central focus of another main Soros effort, the Southeast Asia Initiative. Tifa, or 'drum' in Indonesian, is an independent foundation, which will receive limited support from the Open Society Institute (OSI) to help introduce OSI programmes into Indonesia. Working with a variety of already established local, regional and international partners, the initiative will support programmes for independent media, legal reform, women's rights and civil society development.

Expanding Soros philanthropy

These initiatives are just two more steps in an ongoing process of taking Soros philanthropy beyond Central and Eastern Europe and the countries of the former Soviet Union. Since 1996, OSI has supported a variety of programmes in the United States. In 1993, the Soros network established a foundation in South Africa, followed by the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa in 1997. The Burma Project, based at OSI New York, was founded in 1994 to increase international awareness about conditions inside Burma and help the country make the transition from a closed to an open society. And in June 2000, the Soros network agreed to support the NGOs participating in a new intergovernmental body, the Community of Democracies (CD). CD, which is committed to the promotion of free media, multiparty elections and

respect for minority rights, was initiated by Poland and the US and is directed by a steering group that includes Chile, the Czech Republic, India, Korea, Mali, Portugal and South Africa.

Network activities in CEE/NIS countries

The bulk of Soros network activities continue in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union (see 2000 expenditures box), yet changes are occurring here as well. In countries such as Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary, where democratic political structures and economic reforms are well established, Soros foundations and programmes are increasingly addressing long-term policy issues such as EU accession. The foundation in Slovenia finished its work in 2000.

In areas that are still undergoing political transition or recovering from conflict like the Caucasus or South East Europe, the Soros network continues to support a wide variety of programmes. The New York-based Central Eurasia project works with Soros foundations and local NGOs in the region to promote the rule of law, the free flow of ideas and information, women's rights and ethnic tolerance. The project also maintains one of the most comprehensive and authoritative websites on the region, www.eurasianet.org. The Soros network remains heavily involved in the Stability Pact process for South East Europe, particularly Working Group One, which focuses on human rights and civil society issues.

So what of the future of the network? George Soros said in 1997 that much of his funding would come to an end in 2010: his goal was never to establish a network of programmes and foundations completely dependent on one individual. OSI President Aryeh Neier, writing in the network's 2000 Annual Report, remarks: 'Our hope is that . . . the essential programmes of the foundations network will be able to continue without Soros support. An important criterion for measuring our success will be the extent to which that goal is reached.'

New network aims to add value to foundations' work

Three European and three US foundations have joined forces to set up the International Network on Strategic Philanthropy (INSP). A core group of 60 foundation executives will serve as a think-tank on key questions of philanthropy. The aim is to provide a forum for discussing and developing innovative approaches to the role of foundations as agents of change.

INSP funding partners

- ▶ Bertelsmann Foundation (Germany)
- ▶ Charles Stewart Mott Foundation (USA)
- ▶ Compagnia di San Paolo (Italy)
- ▶ Ford Foundation (USA)
- ▶ German Marshall Fund of the US (USA)
- ▶ King Baudouin Foundation (Belgium)

The working groups

- ▶ Foundations as transparent investors in the public good and agents of change
- ▶ Organizational and governance structures in philanthropic institutions
- ▶ Innovative programme design, evaluation and communication
- ▶ Venture and e-philanthropy/new donors

As the foundation sector grows, there is an increasing need for professional standards and the capacity to innovate. Some pressing questions are facing the sector. How can we identify best practice and the 'stories to be told'? How do we expect to sustain our efforts at effective, strategic grantmaking? How can we disseminate best practices and innovative approaches to foundation management?

Acting as a decentralized think-tank, the INSP network will enable foundations to address these questions, to place issues of philanthropy and foundation activities on national and global agendas, and to design innovative implementation mechanisms for new approaches in strategic philanthropy.

What is strategic philanthropy?

As understood in this project, 'strategic philanthropy' means both a values-based approach and a commitment to innovation. It

means being driven by a vision of the desirable society of the future and a commitment to achieving greater social justice rather than mere grantmaking to address social problems. It also involves a conviction that foundations should serve as laboratories to develop model solutions and new ways of thinking that can then be adapted more widely, and a belief in capacity-building and organizational learning.

How will the network function?

INSP will have 50-60 members representing organizations committed to strategic philanthropy. These will be operating as well as grantmaking foundations, plus think-tanks and consultants active in the philanthropic field. Participants will come primarily from North America and Europe, with a smaller number from other regions of the world. They will be organized in four working groups, which will meet twice a year and exchange results at an annual plenary meeting. All members will be expected to play an active role in the working groups and other network activities, and to play a part in producing resource materials. English will be the only working language of the network.

The working groups will constitute the core of the network. It is their discussions and meetings that will generate the materials the project hopes to produce. The aim will be to develop innovative approaches systematically and share them with other foundations.

Overall management and coordination of the project will reside with the Bertelsmann

Foundation. Project direction will be guided by a steering committee representing the funding partners.

Dissemination and evaluation

INSP is committed to being open and transparent to the philanthropic sector and the public at large. It will encourage involvement with its working group and plenary meetings through the Internet. The results of its work will be released in print, on the Internet and in management seminars. *Alliance* will produce regular updates on progress and summaries of key findings over the next three years. A new website will provide easy access to INSP's discussions and results. Groups to be targeted include potential donors (entrepreneurs, businesses, wealthy individuals), consultants working with donors and foundations, foundation leaders and staff, policy-makers and the media. The project will work closely with the European Foundation Centre in Brussels.

Evaluation will form an integral part of the project design from the very beginning. There will be an external evaluator, working with a clear set of criteria to be developed by the network management and the evaluator. The most important level of evaluation will be the outcome evaluation, which will be looking for a clear account of stakeholder groups stating the value added to their work and a record showing the transfer of project results into practice.

For more information, visit the website at www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/INSP. To voice comments, criticisms and suggestions, email insp@bertelsmann.de

Towards Financial Self-Reliance: A handbook on resource mobilization for civil society organizations in the south Richard Holloway
Earthscan/CIVICUS/Ag Khan Foundation £14.95/\$25
 Developing countries £3.95

Nilda Bullain

magic recipe to find the sources that will provide us with money for the next 20 years and leave us alone, thank you very much. Then comes the inconvenient although suspected answer: no sir/madam, in order to even start becoming self-reliant, you have to work hard. What's more, you've got to believe.

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Note on the cover price
 In order to ensure the handbook is affordable in the developing world, AKF and the publisher, Earthscan, agreed on a formula by which pre-sales guaranteed by a certain date would lower the cover price. With the help of two grants from the Ford Foundation and two bulk orders, AKF pre-sold 6,100 copies before the agreed printing date, thereby bringing the cover price down from £14.95 (now the developed world price) to £3.95 for developing countries.

is wrong. In fact, its roots go back to the 1930s, finding favour in the 1940s, and becoming part of most postcolonial development plans in Africa and Asia from the 1950s on.

Much of the writing is truly dreadful. Here is one example (page 154) that struck me as particularly imprecise: *'Postcolonialism can usefully be seen as referring to a condition and/or a critique, in the sense that ontologically a given community can be considered postcolonial while postcolonial criticism attacks epistemologies that have privileged Western ways of knowing.'*

I could have chosen many more examples. The book is laden with jargon, academic turns of phrase and pompous assertions validated only by references to other published work. It is a pity that academics feel that they have to use language like this. There is a case about the tyranny of participation to be made, but this book fails to make it. I was left with feelings about a different kind of tyranny altogether – that of never using a short word when a long one fills up the page better.

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Such a title should appeal to any civil society organization. We desperate non-profit managers are always keen to know the developed not only in relation to foreign aid in the last decade but also in relation to the state at least over the last half century. Our 'learned helplessness' (as Hungarian social psychologist György Csepeli put it) means that we start from the assumption that the state should take care of us. Many NGOs in CEE were inspired not so much by the positive feeling of wanting to achieve something as by frustration and disappointment at the state's failure to provide.

'Holloway's bugaboo is the foreign institution. Mine is big business. Our different spectres rise from our different regions: his, mainly Africa and Asia, mine, mainly Latin America. The effects are the same: dependency and behavioural modification.' So writes Daniel Q Kelley, President, Global Work-Ethic Fund, in his comment at the end of the book. For Central and Eastern Europe we could add: central government.

Once we manage the leap of faith, the book is an exciting and useful guide. It looks at various opportunities for self-financing, organized in two main categories:

accessing wealth from existing public and private donors with a new understanding of partnership, and generating new wealth – meeting the double bottom line of mission and money through, for example, production and trade, microcredit programmes or building reserve funds.

Overall, this is a very needed and highly practical book. It constantly suggests ways you can apply the theory to your own organization, providing exercises and occasionally concrete tools as well (eg a proforma fundraising brochure for approaching individual donors). It also contains a good selection of case studies. A novel idea has been to ask a wide pool of practitioners and opinion leaders to read the book and comment on it. These provide further interesting viewpoints and information, though a closer screening might have avoided some repetition and irrelevance.

Reading Holloway's book undoubtedly means more thinking and more work, but it will also be a promising step towards the financial self-reliance of your organization.

**Books
 in
 brief**

Think Tanks & Civil Societies: Catalysts for ideas and action James G McGann & R Kent Weaver (eds)
Transaction Publishers \$59.95
 An analysis of the growth and scope of think tanks, and the constraints they face, in the different regions of the world, with case studies from each region.

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Private Charity and Public Inquiry: A history of the Filer and Peterson Commissions
Eleanor L Brilliant
Indiana University Press \$39.95

Elan Garonzik

of the legal and fiscal environment in which a sector exists. Eleanor Brilliant's new book will be of interest to any country that is drafting or revising its foundation and association laws. It focuses on a roughly ten-year period when the legal and fiscal environment for the US foundation community was in serious jeopardy. These years begin with the Peterson Commission and end with the dissolution of the ensuing Filer Commission and the creation of its stepchild, Independent Sector.

In America, commissions are like temporary think-tanks that focus on a single issue, hold hearings and perform research, and result in public policy recommendations. The Peterson and Filer Commissions had certain similarities. Both were

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Across the globe, non-profit leaders consistently note the importance

private, initiated by John D Rockefeller 3rd; both focused on tax laws and related philanthropic issues; both commanded the attention and scrutiny of the US Congress. But the Filer Commission had a far greater public presence, and it still resonates in the American non-profit sector today.

Brilliant begins by setting the two commissions in the context of Congressional scrutiny of the foundation field. The point of this scrutiny was clearly to examine the independence and impact of large foundations and to make relevant tax laws.

The Filer Commission, formally called the Commission on Private Philanthropy and Public Needs, met in the mid-1970s and aimed to assist in this examination. It was named after its chairman, John Filer, head of one of the country's leading insurance companies. Its story makes for the most engaging reading in the volume. Twenty-six individuals from a variety of professions and backgrounds sat

on the commission, and it had an advisory committee of 120.

With so many participants, consensus was hard to achieve. It became harder to achieve when an external group, the 'Donee Group', began to criticize the commission's lack of concern for poverty, social justice and pluralism. This group would evolve into the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy, which exists today and strives to make philanthropy more just and democratic.

This is a scholarly book, but Brilliant constantly illustrates the personalities behind the stories and this keeps the text engrossing. Spanning the entire volume are the concerns and personality of John D Rockefeller 3rd. Brilliant also manages to include a sense of humour. When the call was made to Filer's office to ask him to head up the commission, his secretary said to him, 'There's a John Rockefeller on the phone for you. Do you know him?'

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Perspectives on the New Economy of Corporate Citizenship
Simon Zadek, Niels Hojensgard and Peter Raynard (eds)
The Copenhagen Centre

Delwin A Roy

corporate citizenship? The editors of this work choose to construe the possible and probable impact on a for 'good' or 'ill' basis, for one of its findings is that 'business behavior will [not] necessarily be better or worse'. This 'on the one hand' and 'on the other' approach may leave the reader somewhat dissatisfied and yearning for - as a popular joke has it - a 'one-handed economist'.

But this would be missing the point with respect to the value of this work

What impact is the New (and Global) Economy having on the definition and practice of

and its important contribution to understanding what is after all a body of very complex phenomena. Markets define opportunities, and generally set in motion business responses seeking to capitalize on these opportunities. The practice of corporate responsibility is a by-product of the success of some businesses in this regard. Its fortunes are very much tied to the market performance of the firm, its bottom line. Change the principles that guide business in responding to market stimulation, and you change the manner in which firms perceive their economic and, ultimately, their social options and priorities. The New Economy

is about change; implicit in this is change in the way that a business perceives the need to be a 'good' citizen. It is all a matter of changing market dynamics, and globalization, however defined, has changed dynamics.

Does it then change the corporate citizenship dynamic? And, if so, in what way? The answer posited in this work is that it does. An overview is put forth by the editors. One must read this, for without this framework one is left having to sort out a considerable array of opinions and insights that follows from the some 16 contributors to this work. Some of these contributions strike me as no more than 'journalistic sound bites',

