

Bahrain crown prince volunteers in Covid-19 vaccine trial

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MANAMA: Bahrain's Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad on Wednesday took part in the third phase of COVID-19 vaccine trials underway in the kingdom.

The clinical trials are being conducted in collaboration with Abu-Dhabi based G42 Healthcare using a vaccine developed by Chinese pharmaceutical firm Sinopharm CNBG, the sixth-largest producer of vaccines in the world.

Up to 6,000 volunteers will participate in the Bahrain trials, selected from those who meet the required medical criteria.

The trial involves administering a vaccine to the selected volunteers, in order to study the effectiveness of antibody production and its protection against the virus.

"Today I was privileged to stand together with our vaccine volunteers, each one of them determined to play their part in working to protect others, not just at home in our kingdom, but right across the globe" and "this global crisis requires a global response," the crown prince, said.

He added: "In Bahrain we are proud to say we have stepped forward and shouldered responsibility, first in sharing in treatment and testing best practice, and now in support of safe vaccine testing and development."



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[Bahrain' Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad Al-Khalifa](#)

UAE approves COVID-19 vaccine for health workers
Turkey begins Phase III trials of Chinese coronavirus vaccine

Why world leaders should listen to what Simon says

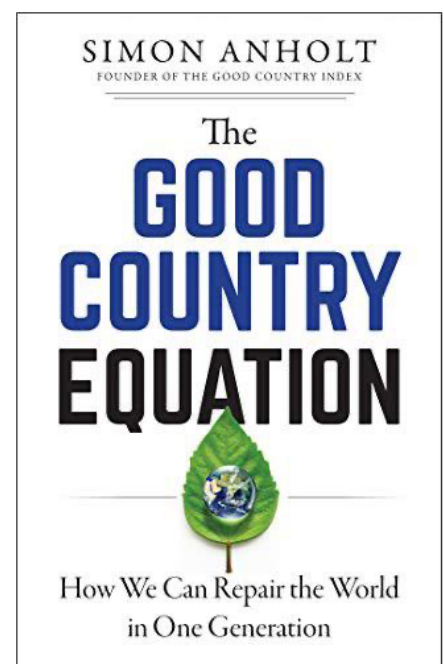
Wed, 2020-09-16 23:11

When I start to read a book, I follow a simple rule for deciding whether to continue; if it fails to grab my attention in the first 90 seconds, I put it down and never pick it up again.

That is why I briefly hesitated when my good friend, the internationally renowned government adviser Simon Anholt, asked me to review his new book, "The Good Country Equation." I have known Simon since 2008, when he was giving talks all over the world and being interviewed by major news outlets while I was still cutting my teeth as a junior section editor with Arab News's sister publication, the London-based daily Asharq Al Awsat. Simon was kind enough to offer to discuss his work.

The result was a page-long interview titled "The Man Who Sold the World" (I was a Nirvana fan growing up, though the title didn't sound quite so cool in Arabic). It was the first Arabic-language explanation of "nation brands," a term Simon himself had coined in 1998. By the time I met him he had also developed the Nation Brand Index (NBI), which scientifically measures public sentiment about country brands.

Of course, the topic itself is fascinating, and the interview gained much attention in the Arab world. But what has been more fascinating for me was to closely watch the evolution of this concept; something I was lucky enough to do at first hand, since Simon and I remained in touch, and became friends.



Thus my hesitation. What if I had to implement my rule and discard Simon's new book after 90 seconds? As a friend, I am delighted to report that I did not; in fact, it captured my attention almost immediately. "Have you noticed how much time we spend worrying about the state of the world these days?" the book's preface reads. As editor in chief of a major regional newspaper, a large part of my job is to worry about the state of the world.

Indeed, anyone who is not concerned with what is going on around us today is either naive or selfish. There has been a catastrophic global failure to deal with the coronavirus pandemic. This year's series of monstrous natural disasters included horrific fires in Australia and California, and Hurricane Sally in the eastern US. At any time in human history, have we ever been so confused about what is true and what is not? What about the international rise of far-right movements? Heck, even the Pentagon encouraged belief in extraterrestrial life by publishing videos of unidentified flying objects.

OTHER BOOKS BY SIMON ANHOLT

Another One Bites the Grass Making Sense of International Advertising (2000).

Brand America The Mother of All Brands (2005).

Brand New Justice How Branding Places and Products Can Help the Developing World (2006).

Competitive Identity The New Brand Management for Nations, Cities and Regions (2006).

"The Good Country Equation" does not offer a solution to all the world's problems, nor does it try. What it does, however, is give us an opportunity to reflect on how government thinking has evolved in the past two decades. What is fascinating, particularly if you have read Simon Anholt's previous books, is how his theories evolved, and not necessarily in the same way as many world leaders.

In this context, "good" is not the opposite of "bad," but the opposite of "selfish." For a country to be classified as "good" (and score high in the Good Country Index the author created), it needs to be good not just for its own people, but for others too. This is the polar opposite of the "my country first" wave that politicians in many established democracies (and non-democracies) have been riding for the past few years; and while this wave may win you popular support, it is not necessarily sustainable or healthy for global well-being.

If we have learned anything from the COVID-19 pandemic, it is that we all need each other to survive. (You disagree? OK – but how would you feel if the country that created the first effective coronavirus vaccine refused to give it to anyone apart from their own citizens?)

An evolving concept

In the wise words of the late Steve Jobs: "You can't connect the dots looking forward; you can only connect them looking backwards." This crosses my mind every time Simon speaks of the first time he used the term "nation brand," in a marketing journal in 1998. Little did he – or anyone else – realize that those two words would have a lasting global impact, and take on a life of their own. The argument was simple; countries with a positive image (Japan and Switzerland, for example) can trade at a premium, and find it easier to

attract tourists, foreign investment, international events and consumers for its exports.



Anhold coined the term “nation brands” in 1998

In the years that followed, people who used to sell detergents and shampoo suddenly reinvented themselves as “nation branding” consultants. A whole industry was created, embracing international conferences, publications and annual awards, with the single purpose of teaching government officials the “art” of winning hearts and minds.

You may assume that Simon was proud of his original article and its impact, but if you read “The Good Country Equation” or listen to him speak you get the sense that he considers it his original sin!

He will tell you the term he used was “nation brand,” not “nation branding” – a concept he opposes.

Marketing tools such as advertising, PR and sales promotion have their place in positioning cities, bringing in foreign investment or promoting tourist destinations; but if you are a country, Simon believes actions speak louder than words.

“Bragging about your own country is like a standup comedian who goes on stage and tells the audience how funny he or she is,” he writes. “Don’t tell them to laugh. Be FUNNY. And likewise, for countries, don’t tell them to admire you. Be admirable.”

Soon after defining “nation brands,” Simon created a new term (and wrote a book about it too) called “Competitive Identity.” As you can read in his new book, the concept evolved to that of a “Good Country.” The heart and soul of this new argument is that what the world needs is cooperation, not competition, between countries.

DEFINING NATION BRAND

According to Anholt, there are six pillars that define a brand of a nation



“All governments in the 21st century have two tasks: Taking care of their citizens and participating in a bigger community of nations,” he argues. And if you think this is unattainable, the author provides examples of how countries that want to be good can find ways to combine these two tasks and juggle priorities and interests, although it is far from straightforward.

There are several ways to read this book. One is to see it as a collection of personal experiences and memories of a veteran adviser to nearly 50 governments. Another is as if it were a manual for officials to reflect and learn from other countries’ experiences, and possibly implement what Simon says. A third way, perhaps the most interesting one, is for readers – whether marketing practitioners, academics or government officials – to challenge everything they think they know about “nation brands.”

And if you accept that challenge, be ready to be surprised to learn that spending on PR could make your image problem worse; that we have been using buzzwords such as “soft power” all wrong; and that contrary to what many think, global sport events don’t necessarily make a country more likeable.

• *Faisal J. Abbas is Editor in Chief of Arab News.*

•• “The Good Country Equation,” by Simon Anholt, is published by Berrett-Koehler and is available in online bookstores and Amazon worldwide.



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[Libya's Tripoli-based PM Al-Sarraj to stand down](#)

Wed, 2020-09-16 23:15

TRIPOLI: The prime minister of Libya's Tripoli-based government Fayez Al-Sarraj announced his intention to step down by the end of October in a speech delivered on state television on Wednesday.

"I declare my sincere desire to hand over my duties to the next executive authority no later than the end of October," he said.

"Hopefully, the dialogue committee will complete its work and choose a new presidential council and prime minister," he added.

Al-Sarraj is head of the Government of National Accord, based in Tripoli, while eastern Libya and much of the south is controlled by a rival administration.

He has headed the GNA since it was formed in 2015 as a result of a UN-backed political agreement aimed at uniting and stabilising Libya after the chaos that followed the 2011 uprising that ousted Muammar Qaddafi.

His resignation could add to political uncertainty in Tripoli or even infighting among the rival factions in the coalition that dominates western Libya.

However, it also comes in the context of a renewed push towards a political

solution after the GNA in June ended the rival Libyan National Army's 14-month assault on Tripoli and forced it to retreat from the capital. The war has drawn in regional and international powers with the United Arab Emirates, Egypt and Russia backing the LNA and Turkey supporting the GNA.



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Egypt discusses resuming oil exports with Libyan officials
Libyan commander agrees to lift oil blockade: US embassy

[Gargash: UAE-Israel relationship will help Palestinians, but they must](#)

engage

Author:

Wed, 2020-09-16 22:56

DUBAI: The UAE's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs has promised that his country's relationship with Israel will be comprehensive and deep, and will ultimately help the Palestinian cause.

In an online briefing attended by Arab News on Wednesday, Anwar Gargash discussed his country's commitment to wide-ranging diplomatic, economic and cultural exchanges with Israel, made possible by the Abraham Accords signed on Tuesday.

The Abraham Accords will normalize the relationship between the UAE and Israel, and have been widely hailed as a "historic moment" in the story of the modern Middle East.

On the future relationship, Gargash said: "This will be a very, very warm peace. There will be normal diplomatic relations – our diplomats throughout the world have already been inundated with requests to meet with Israeli diplomats. We have authorized many of these meetings."

This extensive diplomatic opening, he said, "will be done within days, rather than months."

In a wide-ranging discussion hosted by the UK's Emirates Society, Gargash also said that the UAE "is determined that this will be an across-the-board relationship," incorporating "tourism, banking, trade, investment, health and technology," into a wide-ranging bilateral relationship.

He said this will "break the taboo of a Gulf state having relations with Israel."

Gargash also rallied against tribal differences that obstruct regional peace and prosperity.

Fundamental in overcoming this, he said, is the importance of "shattering the psychological barrier" of Muslim and Jewish coexistence.

Once this barrier has been broken, "other tasks will not be easy, but they will be more manageable."

He said the Palestinian question is one such issue.

The UAE remains committed to a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict, but Gargash said it is "difficult to have leverage over somebody without communication.

"From our perspective ... in the medium-term (the Palestinians) will find out that the UAE, through its new links forged in this relationship, will be able to help them more."

However, Gargash made clear that it is “extremely important that the Palestinians engage.”

He said their “empty chair approach” has not been helpful thus far, and will not be in the future, and warned that Israeli annexation of up to 30 percent of the West Bank – an initiative suspended as a result of the Abraham accords – could resume within five years if the Palestinians do not re-engage diplomatically.

While the Palestinians are chiefly responsible in this regard, Gargash also pointed to key players in the international community that can assist in the pursuit of this goal.

In particular, British and US recognition of a Palestinian state “would be both admirable and important,” he said.

“Fundamentally, it is the Israelis and Palestinians that must solve this issue,” he added.

This cooperation, he hopes, will lead to the peaceful coexistence of both an Israeli and a Palestinian state.

“I think we are all better off with a two-state solution, and I think we should all work towards that,” Gargash said.



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UAE and Bahrain start a new chapter in Arab-Israeli ties UAE official says
Israel accord should dispel doubts over F-35 sale

[Egyptian minister discusses agreements to finance Sinai Development Program](#)

Author:

Wed, 2020-09-16 22:42

CAIRO: Egypt has signed three agreements worth around \$885 million with Arab funds since the start of the year to finance the Sinai Peninsula Development Program.

Egyptian Minister of International Cooperation Rania Al-Mashat said on Tuesday that the agreements would finance the program, support structural reform and improve the efficiency of the government's public financial management, as well as strengthen the Ministry of Health's capacity to combat the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

The agreements are part of the International Cooperation Ministry's efforts, through economic diplomacy, to provide financing for development projects in accordance with the priorities of the National Development Agenda 2030 and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, and to enhance cooperation with development partners and strengthen economic relations with international and regional organizations.

Al-Mashat said in a statement that an agreement worth \$637.9 million was signed with the Arab Monetary Fund to support structural and institutional reform to raise the efficiency of public financial management in line with the country's economic reform program.

She added that this agreement falls within the framework of the economic reform program begun in 2016 to protect the economy and has five main objectives: To enhance the preparation and implementation of the state budget; develop tax administration; strengthen government procurement management; improve the social protection system; and enhance general debt management.

The minister highlighted another agreement worth about \$243.2 million with the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, which will be used to establish a clean-water system for the Bahr Al-Baqar drain, within the Sinai Peninsula Development Plan.

She emphasized that the project will increase agricultural production, link the Sinai Peninsula with the Delta region, and provide job opportunities and improved services. A navigation channel of 20 square kilometers will be established, as will pumping stations to transport Bahr Al-Baqar sewage water from the west of the Suez Canal to the east; a treatment plant; farms; facilities for agricultural processing and preparing studies, designs and tenders; and consultancy services to oversee the project.

The estimated cost of the project to establish the Bahr Al-Baqar drainage system is about \$1 billion. The Ministry of International Cooperation had previously signed three agreements in the same framework, one with the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development worth \$238 million and two with the Kuwait Fund for Development worth \$255 million.

Al-Mashat added that a grant agreement worth \$3.3 million had been signed with the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development to support efforts to combat COVID-19.

Egypt's cooperation with Arab funds began in 1974, since when deals worth a total of roughly \$12.5 billion have been signed, including a current portfolio of \$6.9 billion, which includes the Kuwait Fund for Development, the Saudi Fund for Development, the Abu Dhabi Fund for development, the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, and the Khalifa Fund for Enterprise Development.



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Women in Egypt's restive Sinai makes Bedouin face masks Egyptian forces kill

21 militants in North Sinai