

Lugar defeat sends shockwaves around the world

Thomas C. Fox | May. 25, 2012 NCR Today

This from a statesman in Canberra, Australia. He writes in part the following:

With the defeat of Lugar, and the simultaneous exit of the last Republican moderates, like Senator Olympia Snowe of Maine, who were prepared to put national interests ahead of partisanship, the Senate is unlikely to produce the 60 votes needed to ratify further US-Russia arms-control treaties, should they be negotiated. Moreover, the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, which would replace a fragile international moratorium, cannot come into force without US Senate ratification.

At a personal level, I am also afraid that Lugar's defeat may be the end of an era of enormously attractive and distinctive civility in the way that America's most senior legislators conducted themselves. As Australia's foreign minister, and a global NGO head, I met Lugar many times, and, whether or not we agreed on issues, he was always a model of gentle courtesy.

I can't help but compare that to the occasion, not so long ago, when I accompanied my then co-chair of the International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, former Japanese Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi, in a call on Jon Kyl, the most ideologically fierce Senate opponent of Obama-style arms control. On my arrival in his office, a senior Kyl staffer, after consulting the senator, said brusquely: "We only agreed to talk to the Japanese, not you. Would you please leave?"

There was nothing like a perfectly understandable, "Sorry, we misunderstood, and are only prepared now for a bilateral session. Can we see if we can possibly reschedule a joint meeting later?" I suppose that I should be grateful that he said "please." But it's the kind of experience that I had never had before in Washington, and I fear that it's not unique.

Many of those who read [this column](#), [1] will recognize the sadness it conveys, a sense that our nation is on a very wrong path, that as a people we are seemingly mindless, unable to sort out and attend to the major issues which face us as a nation and as members of the human family. Those of you who might not share these feelings might ask yourselves if, perhaps, in your zeal to force an ideological purity upon the rest of us if you just might be leading our country and planet on a path to unthinkable chaos and destruction.

Read NCR's review of a new biography of Lugar: [A GOP role model of bipartisanship](#) [2]. The biography by John T. Shaw is *Richard G. Lugar, Statesman of the Senate: Crafting Foreign Policy from Capitol Hill*.

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