

**GLEANINGS II - 754**  
**Thursday March 29<sup>th</sup>, 2018**

**Age dependency ratios** - There are three, the **youth-**, the **aged-**, & the **total** dependency ratios. One is the percentage of young (0-14 years)-, the second the percentage of old (65+)-, & the third the percentage of **both** young & old-, people vis a vis those of working age (15-64) in a population. Of these the second is the most useful. First since, whereas spending money on young people is an investment in the future, spending money on the over 65s is a cost, pure & simple with no future payback, and secondly because the higher the aged dependency ratio, the more it is believed to start acting as a 'boat anchor' on the GDP trend growth rate with the 'tipping point' seemingly in the 30% range. So it's noteworthy that in 2016, Japan's aged dependency ratio was 44%, Italy's 36%, Finland's 33%, Germany's & Portugal's 32%, Bulgaria's & Greece's 31%, while Denmark, Estonia & Latvia & the EU as a whole tottered on the edge with 30%, Canada & the US were still in relatively safe territory with 25% & 23% respectively, China's 15% & India's 10% are in 13% current global average range while the Sub-Saharan countries noted below all had ratios low enough to put real oomph in their GDP growth rates, Nigeria with 5.1%, South Africa - 9.0%, Angola - 4.6%, Ethiopia - 6.3%, Kenya - 4.6%, Tanzania 6.0%, Ghana - 7.1%, Ivory Coast 5.6% & Senegal with 6..9% <sup>1</sup> *(the difference in the table below between GDP & GNI is that, whereas the former measures domestic levels of production, the latter aggregates the income of residents & local businesses (so that from a grass roots' perspective it is likely the more meaningful one of the two)).*

**France has a hero, Gendarmerie Lt. Col. Arnaud Beltrame** - He died March 24 after swapping himself for a female hostage when the ISIS supporter hostage taker shot him during a siege in a supermarket. This resulted in him being awarded the Legion d'Honneur (established by Napoleon in 1802 for "excellent civil or military conduct"), and having the honour of being taken to the Hotel des Invalides, Napoleon's final resting place, where President Macron delivered a "patriotic, public eulogy" in which he said Beltrame had symbolized the spirit of the French resistance" & used the occasion to tell a nation that in the past three years has witnessed dozens of terrorist attacks that have claimed > 200 lives that "We will prevail thanks to the resilience of the French ... We will win by the cohesion of a united nation." - *While I don't envy North American police officers their jobs, I strongly believe that by their typical interaction with the general public they are shi\*\*\*\*\* in their own nest by alienating their most valuable source of potential support, and therefore making their job far more difficult, & dangerous, than it*

<sup>1</sup> Following are five more statistics suggesting that Trump didn't know what he was talking about when he referred to (sub-) Sahara countries as "shithole" ones :

	2000	2015	CAGR (Compound Annual Growth Rate)
Sub-Saharan countries' :			
Per capita GDP (current US\$)	368	1,607	10.33%
Population (MM)	607	1,006	2.75%
Gross school enrolment ratio (%)	81.6	98.3	1.25%
Life expectancy at birth (years)	50.5	59.9	1.14%
GNI per capita (current US\$)	504	1656	8.25%

*These numbers are the more remarkable given the still high level of corruption in many of the countries; it makes one wonder how much more spectacular the outturn could have been if African 'leaders' had not been less so obscenely greedy.*

needs to be. And I have envisaging any one of them being so public-spirited in their actions as Lt. Col. Bertmame proved himself to be.

**Global population growth rates** - Sixty years ago the global population was growing at a 2.1% annual rate whereas today it's doing so at 1.2%<sup>2</sup>. But in long-term geopolitical terms, "the devil is in the detail", as illustrated by the following :

Annual percentage population growth rate in	1960	2016
Canada	2.3	1.2
US	1.7	0.7
China	1.8	0.5 <sup>3</sup>
India	1.9	1.1
Russia	1.5	0.2
World	1.8	1.2
EU	1.0	0.4
Sub-Sahara Africa	2.2	2.7

**How many Fed rate increases?** - Patrick Harker, the President of the Philadelphia Fed, deemed a 'centrist' (although some accuse him of hawkish tendencies, who last year was, & so this year isn't, a voting member of the FOMC, said in a WSJ interview that 'given the growing inflationary trends', he had raised his rate hike forecast *for the rest of this year* from two to three.

**Kim's three day 'surprise' visit to Beijing** - While officially "informal", that claim is given the lie by the fact that he made contact with no fewer than eight of the 25 Politburo members, incl. three members of the seven member, all-powerful Politburo Standing Committee (President Xi, Premier Li Keqiang & Wang Huning, as well as Wang Qishan, an 'honorary' member thereof & generally deemed the eighth most powerful person in China - *this was obviously intended to prepare him for, and give him his marching orders for, & bolster his status* prior to the forthcoming Summits with South Korean President Minister Moon one-, & President Trump two-, month(s) from now.

**Latest US economic data** - February consumer spending was up by 0.4% MoM, i.e "modestly" & "in line with expectations", the PCE (Personal Consumer Expenditures), the Fed's favourite inflation measure, up at a 1.5% annual rate (& 'core' PCE up 0.2% MoM), both inline with expectations, and the personal savings rate came in at 3.4% (up from 2.4% in December, but still way down from 6.3% in October, 2015 & 11.0% in December 2012)

**OPEC-Russian production restraint agreement** - This has been in place for 15 months now & has been reasonably well observed by the oil producing countries involved (recently it was alleged that compliance had been 138%, no doubt partly due to the fact Venezuelan oil production has been slumping (from 2.50MM bbl/d in December 2015 to 2.18MM bbl/d one year

<sup>2</sup> Generally attributed to the fact that as women become more educated and/or start having children at a later age, they have fewer.

<sup>3</sup> On a YoY basis, its population growth rates were in 2013 - 0.55%, 2014 - 0.53%, 2015 - 0.65%, 2016 - 0.32% & 2017 - 0.43%, and this year it is expected to come in at 0.39%.

later &, at last report, in November 2017, to 1.89 bbl/d. But on March 26, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman told Reuters “we are working (*with Russia*) to shift from a year-to-year-, ... to a 10-20-, year *oil production control*- agreement (which was confirmed two days later by OPEC Secretary-General Mohammad Barkindo at an energy conference in Baghdad) - *Saudi Arabia & Russia seem to be targeting, for fiscal reasons, a US\$70 price while others say that is too high to discourage the growth of alternate energy & of US shale oil output (that so far the agreement seems to have failed to slow down) - If the IEA forecast that US oil production will increase by 7MM bbl/d over five years were to materialize, Prince Mohammad will be proven to have been ‘whistling in the wind’ & could find himself ‘up the creek without a paddle’; for that would mean that over the next five years US shale alone will meet well over half the expected growth in global demand. And the ‘potential bugger factors’ for the Prince’s dreams are that the Western oil companies have been dramatically successful in, & are aggressively continuing to work hard at, cutting their break-even cost levels (thus it was reported here recently that Statoil’s new North Sea Johan Sverdrup oil field, that will come on stream next year, two years ago was expected to produce 500,000 bbl/d at a US\$25 break-even cost, whereas recently was reported to have a start-up production target of 660,000 bbl/d & a break-even cost of US\$15 (that was still been cut back further). And, regardless of his recent visit to the White House the Prince may also be overlooking the fact that Saudi Arabia’s growing closeness to Russia may cause it to become ‘collateral damage in the US war on Russia*

**Sub-Saharan Africa, a ‘sleeping giant’?** - According to the World Bank the sub-Saharan GDP growth rate was 1.3% in 2016 & 2.4% in 2017, and will be 3.2% this-, & 3.5% next-, year. But this average is deceptive since it is pulled down by the sluggish performance of its largest three economies while, as illustrated below, some of its smaller “shithole” economies are ‘on fire’, as they chalk up China/India-like GDP growth rates that should make Western countries drool :

	2016 Population	2016 -----Actual-----	2017	2018 -----Forecast-----	2019
Nigeria	186MM	-1.6%	0.8%	1.9%	1.7%
South Africa	56MM	0.3%	0.7%	1.1%	1.6%
Angola	29MM	-0.7%	1.5%	1.6%	1.4%
Total pop.	(271MM)				
Ethiopia	102MM	8.0%	8.5%	8.4%	8.1%
Kenya	48MM	5.9%	5.0%	5.5%	6.0%
Tanzania	56MM	7.0%	6.5%	6.8%	6.8%
Ghana	28MM	3.5%	5.9%	8.9%	6.0%
Ivory Coast	23MM	7.7%	7.6%	7.3%	7.1%
Senegal	15MM	6.7%	6.8%	7.0%	7.1%
Total pop.	(262MM)				

*In 2016 Nigeria’s GDP was US\$406BN, South Africa’s US\$294BN & Angola’s US\$96BN, while the aggregate of the six smaller ones was just US\$283BN. But if the above growth rates were to come to pass, the aggregate GDP of the three majors will by 2019 have grown 3.2% from US\$796BN to US\$822BN & that of the six juniors by 30.4% from US\$283BN to US\$369BN.*

**University of Michigan Consumer Confidence Index** - On March 29<sup>th</sup> it was reported to have hit a post-2004 high 101.4, up from 99.7 in February & from 96.9 YoY, while its Current Conditions Sub-Index hit an all-time high - *but the report was headed “Record current finances clouded by trade uncertainties” and in it Richard Cartin, the Survey’s Director, noted that all the increase had been “among households with incomes in the bottom third, had been zero among*

those in the middle third, & actually negative among those in the top third” (so the ‘smart money’ is not so bullish?)

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## **REPUBLICANS PROMISED TO CUT THE DEFICIT. IT’S ONLY GETTING WORSE (Bloomberg, Anna Edgerton)**

- Congressional scorekeepers reckon the GOP’s biggest achievement to date, the tax bill, will add US\$1+TR to the deficits over the next decade, even under extremely fast economic growth conditions. And the massive US\$1.3TR bill to fund much of the government’s daily operations for the rest of this fiscal year (*ending September 30<sup>th</sup>*) that the GOP-controlled House & Senate passed & the President, *to his credit*, begrudgingly signed included more money for the military than the Republicans-, and money for domestic programs than the Democrats-, had wanted. But the biggest contributor to the US deficits, & the biggest factor in the growth of the *US national* debt in the years to come will be the entitlement programs that have no politically palatable remedy. They cost us \$2.5TR in 2017 & are projected to grow over the next decade to US\$4.3TR as the population ages & health costs soar.

*The WSJ this week reported “the US tax base is shrinking, just as its interest expenses are starting to surge and its social programs get harder to cut”<sup>4</sup>. All this untrammelled direct & indirect ‘downloading’ of the cost of our lifestyle onto future generations will in due course lead to ‘the mother of all inter-generational dog fights’ when our grandchildren will rebel against their children having to pay for our generations’ mindless kicking our financial cans down the road.*

## **U.S. ECONOMIC ‘WHEELS WERE SPINNING FASTER THAN WE THOUGHT’ IN Q4 (AP)**

- The Commerce Department reported on March 28<sup>th</sup> that in the final three months of 2017 the US economy had grown at a solid, *much better than expected*, 2.9% annualized rate (a sharp revision *from the previously estimated 2.5%*) *due to greater-than-earlier-calculated residential-, & non-residential-, real estate investment, and higher exports & spending by all three levels of government*. This followed the 3.2% in the Third-, 3.1% in the Second-, & 1.2% in the First- Quarters of 2017, thereby capping the fastest three consecutive quarters’ GDP growth in over a decade (during the Third Quarter of 2004 to the First Quarter of 2005, the rates had been 3.7%, 3.5% & 4.3% respectively).

*The above headline originated with Chris Rupkey, chief financial economist of New York’s MUFG Union Bank<sup>5</sup>, who went on to say that “There is nothing in today’s report that holds the*

<sup>4</sup> The Conservative America magazine put in more bluntly last January in an article headed “America is bankrupt and Republicans couldn’t care less - The poseurs of fiscal responsibility are about to drive debt up to its highest level since WW II”, & followed that up today, March 30<sup>th</sup>, with “The West cannibalizes itself - What civilization has ever sought to repudiate its own culture and traditions as we do today?”

<sup>5</sup> Fully owned by the Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi UFJ, it has assets of US\$150+BN & 398 branches in California, Washington & Oregon. As to Rupkey’s political views, early in his career, 35 years ago, he worked at Paine, Webber for Larry Kudlow, the new Director of the White House National Economic Council &, given the above evidence of slowing retail sales, it’s interesting that last January 30<sup>th</sup> on Bloomberg TV he counseled “sticking with the consumer”.

economy back from its historical run to beat the 10-year expansion of the Clinton years in the 1990's"<sup>6</sup> Be that as it may, there is a big difference between 3.7%, 3.5% & 4.3% and 3.2%, 3.1% & 1.2% especially on a cumulative basis, & the 2017 outturn fell well short of the "double 2.2%" that Trump had promised.

### **ALL THAT OPTIMISM FOR HOT FIRST QUARTER ECONOMIC GROWTH IS RAPIDLY FADING (cnbc.com, Jeff Cox)**

- Back in January the Atlanta Fed's GDPNow "nowcast" called for 5.4% annualized First Quarter GDP growth rate while on March 26<sup>th</sup>, *with few more days to go in the Quarter*, it envisaged a more pedestrian 1.9%. Moreover both JPMorgan & Goldman recently scaled down their forecasts from 2.5% to 2.0% & from 2.0% to 1.8% respectively This was due to 3 months in a row of retail sales declines & disappointing residential investment numbers.

*While last November the YoY retail sales growth rate was 6.5%, in February it was only 4.2%. This news came the day before the Commerce Department revised its Fourth Quarter GDP growth estimate from 2.5% to 2.9% (thus raising that for all of 2017 from 2.3% to 2.5%?)*

### **PUTIN FINALLY WENT TOO FAR (The Atlantic, Mark Galeotti)**

- When Britain on March 13<sup>th</sup> threw out 23 Russian diplomats (??) in response to the March 4<sup>th</sup> assassination attempt on British soil of the former double agent Sergei Skripal, & *his daughter Yulia*, Putin shrugged it off. But when on Monday March 26<sup>th</sup> 20 other countries from Albania to Ukraine (*incl. two of the Baltic states*) followed suit & the next day NATO sent 7 Russian diplomats packing as well<sup>7</sup>, he may have gotten a surprise. For, while he had always assumed that the West lacked unity & he could get away with almost anything, in this instance he found there was a cost from a serious blow to his global intelligence network<sup>8</sup> & from the shift in the geopolitical landscape that meant he now may have to deal with a more determined, & *united*, West, far more focused on dealing with him than even after the shooting down of Malaysia's Flight 17, *full of Dutch citizens*<sup>9</sup> (by Russian proxies in Ukraine using a Russian missile), the

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<sup>6</sup> In the post WW II period there have been 11 periods of economic expansion that lasted an average of 66.8 months. The longest one, from March 1991 to March 2001, & the one that, since it lasted 106 months starting in February 1961, has been the second longest, will in May lose that distinction, since the current one is now in its 105<sup>th</sup> month.

<sup>7</sup> At last report the number of countries that have announced the expelling of Russian 'diplomats had risen, & that the Kremlin now has treated on a tit-for-tat countermeasures had risen to 27.

<sup>8</sup> Counting the 60, incl. 12 at the UN in New York, Russian diplomats sent home by the US (which came as a total surprise to the Kremlin) their tally from all countries now is close to 150.

<sup>9</sup> Which created such fury in Holland that it prompted Putin's eldest daughter Maryia (who will 33 next month) to flee back home, amidst growing demands for her to be turfed out, from her US\$3MM apartment near the capital The Hague where she had been living with her husband, a Dutch executive of GazProm (in which Putin is alleged to be a major shareholder) who in 2010 in Moscow was involved in a traffic incident that prompted the body guards of the banker owner of the other car to attack his with baseball bats, not long after which the central bank lifted the licenses of two of that banker's five banks [who today is serving a 7½ year prison sentence for supposedly embezzling 16BN rubles (US\$ 460+MM) from other banks].

invasion of Crimea, election interference in the US (& elsewhere?) & its use of deadly force against civilians in Syria.

*One thing it has certainly also achieved is that it has driven NATO's European member states to get serious about hiking their defense budgets so as to be better able respond to US pressure.*

### **THE GERASIMOV DOCTRINE - IT'S RUSSIA'S NEW CHAOS THEORY OF POLITICAL WARFARE (Politico, Molly K. McKew)**

- Lately Russia seems to be coming at the US from all kinds of contradictory angles. But that is only so if you're not aware of or, don't understand, the Gerasimov Doctrine.
- On November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2012 Putin named Gen. Valery Gerasimov (age 62), a career tank officer, to the post of Chief of the General Staff (a position comparable to that of the US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs). And, *only three months later*, in February 2013, he published a 2,000 word article in the trade paper Military-Industrial Kurier entitled The Value of Science Is in the Foresight in which he laid out a completely new concept of war. For he took tactics developed by the Soviets, blended with strategic military thinking about total war & laid out a new theory of modern warfare that looks more to hacking into an enemy's society than attacking it head-on, writing "The very 'rules of war' have changed. The rate of non-military means of achieving political and strategic goals has changed, and in many cases, they have exceeded the power of force of weapons in their effectiveness ... All this is supplemented by military means of a concrete character." And thanks to the Internet and social media, the kinds of operations Soviet psy-ops once could only fantasize about, - upending the domestic affairs of an enemy with information alone - are now plausible. In other words, it preaches that non-military tactics are no longer auxiliary to the use of force, but now are the preferred way of winning and in fact are the actual war.

*Meanwhile, in part in response to demands for 'more toys for the boys', the Americans keep wasting their money on operating, & building more, aircraft carriers, of which they already they have more than the rest of the world put together, despite the fact that the US Navy readily admits that it has yet to figure out how to protect them against incoming 'hypersonic missiles (or whether this is even feasible) - Molly McKew is an expert on information warfare & in the past advised the Presidents of Moldova & Georgia,, is the CEO of Fianna Services, a low profile consulting firm specializing in in "advisory services, government PR & strategic messaging campaigns for international clients". She has a BA from Stanford in Russian language, history & culture & an Msc from LSE in Russian/post-Soviet Studies, and is associated with-, & a Board Member of-, Stand Up Ideas (that was founded last year "to strengthen Americans' commitment to democratic ideals and norms across the partisan spectrum" by 40 year-old CIA-, & Goldman-, alum, and Congressional staffer Evan McMullin who ran in the 2016 election as a third party candidate (& at one point had more voter support in Utah (31%) than both Trump's (27%) & Hillary (24%). With extremists on the left side of the political spectrum calling her "neoconservative" & those on the opposite end of the political spectrum calling her a 'deranged liberal', she may just be credible*

### **CHINA LAUNCHES OIL FUTURE THAT COULD TOPPLE DOLLAR (Reuters, Kate Duguid)**

- A report by Hayden Briscoe, APAC (Asia Pacific) Head of Fixed Income at UBS Asset Management, argues that the March 26<sup>th</sup> launch of China's *yuan-based* crude (oil) futures exchange is a game -changer that will enhance the yuan's clout in financial markets & could threaten the international primacy of the US dollar. And in a follow-up

phone call he said “This is the single biggest change in capital markets, maybe of all time.”

- This will be China’s first *ever* commodity derivatives market open to foreign investors & is the latest step in a decade-long push to hike the yuan’s profile in global capital markets (*the first major step in which came in late 2016 when it became the fifth currency in the IMF SDR currency ‘basket’ that previously had only held the US\$, Euro, Yen & sterling*). The only two oil pricing bench marks to date, Brent & WTI, are both denominated in US\$; so oil traders across the world had to buy & hold US dollars to be able do oil deals. But last year China became the world’s largest oil importer<sup>10</sup> & this move will give it more influence over the pricing of all crude oil in Asia. And already on its very first day Unipecc, the trading arm of Asia’s largest-, & Beijing-controlled-, oil refiner Sinopec<sup>11</sup> inked a deal with a Western oil major to buy Middle East crude from it under a Shanghai crude futures contract.

*In the short-to-medium term this is a relatively minor step forward in China’s long-term ‘death by a thousand cuts’ policy vis a vis the US. But the question remains whether the Xi -, & subsequent-, Chinese regimes may have the staying power to see it through to its logical conclusion - I for one doubt it & look upon China’s rush to global prominence as a potential 2.0 reincarnation of the 1970’s Breshnev Doctrine that sank the Soviet Union..*

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### **IS IT POLICY, OR JUST A REALITY TV SHOW? (NYT, Paul Krugman)**

- The other day the Trump administration announced a new trade deal with South Korea as well as the nomination of 50 year-old Rear Admiral (*lower half*) Ronny L. Jackson<sup>12</sup> to head the *problem-, & occasionally scandal-, ridden* Department of Veterans’ Affairs<sup>13</sup>. Both events have one thing in common; they are indicative of how Trump views his job, not as an exercise in policy-making, but as one of Reality TV. Thus, while Jackson looks great on TV & gave Trump an ‘excellent’ bill of health (while conceding that he is overweight to the point of being obese), he appears to have none of the management skills & experience to get such an administrative behemoth operating with a modicum of efficiency. And as to the South Korean trade deal that’s being hyped as a major victory, it doesn’t amount to much, all it will do is to increase some Kprean import quotas that aren’t fully used & direct a few percentage points of their steel exports to other destinations.

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<sup>10</sup> Although it with one-fifth of the world’s population it accounts for less than one-tenth of global oil consumption, and in absolute terms its oil consumption is 30% less than the EU’s, despite the fact that it has a population that is nearly 3x that of the EU.

<sup>11</sup> A Chinese government-controlled, but Hongkong-, Shanghai-, New York-, & London-listed, integrated oil company active all over Africa, with interests and in Canada (it owns 9% of Syncrude), the North Sea & Brazil.

<sup>12</sup> And believe it or not, the starting monthly pay for a Rear Admiral (lower half) is just US\$8,438!

<sup>13</sup> Which has a budget nearly half that of the Department of Defense, close to one employee for nearly every four members of the US Armed Forces on active service, & one in five if reservists are included, and accounts for US\$2.5TR of the US government’s long-term deferred liabilities

*While everybody keeps referring to Jackson as an “Obama appointee”, this is only partly true; for while Obama did name him ‘Physician to the President’ in 2013, it was Bush 43 who put him on the White House payroll in 2006 as the ‘White House physician’. And while under normal circumstances, someone with only 22 years of service making ‘flag rank’ would have been someone **really** on the ‘fast train’, his achieving this feat likely was more a function of **where** he was serving than of how **well** he had done so. The only saving grace of him becoming Secretary of Veterans’ Affairs, & one that. Given Trump’s modus operandi, would have to be a diehard optimist to expect, is that he may be able to convince the President to not totally ‘blowtorch’ the Departmental budget - while I typically don’t have much use for much whatever Krugman says or does, or has said or done, and attribute his getting the 2008 Economics Nobel Prize, like Obama’s Nobel Peace Prize one year later, to temporary insanity of the Prize Committees responsible for their selection, in this case he may well be onto something.*

### **ELLEN JOHNSON SIRLEAF WINS 2017 IBRAHIM PRIZE FOR ACHIEVEMENT IN AFRICAN LEADERSHIP (Ibrahim Foundation News)**

- Following a meeting of its independent Prize Committee the Mo Ibrahim Foundation announced on February 12<sup>th</sup> that the 2017 Ibrahim Prize for Achievement in African Leadership had been awarded to Sirleaf, who served two terms, from 2006-2017, as President of Liberia. In announcing this decision, Dr. Salim Ahmed Salim<sup>14</sup>, Chair of the Prize Committee, said that she “took the helm of Liberia when it was completely destroyed by civil war and led it to a process of reconciliation that focussed on building a nation and its democratic institutions. Throughout her two terms in office<sup>15</sup>, she worked tirelessly on behalf of the people of Liberia ... *and while* today, Liberia continues to face many challenges ... during her twelve years in office ... *she* laid the foundations on which Liberia can now build.”

*This is interesting factoid that reinforces the idea that a welcome wind of fundamental change may be starting to waft blow through sub-Sahara Africa (as did the recent presidential change in South Africa); for this may well be the first time ever that a ‘self-made’ African has deployed some of his new wealth in a foundation seeking to promote the common good. If so, Western leaders such as Trump are, & before him Canada’s Stephen Harper were, too clueless in foreign affairs to pick up on this, & other countries will ignore it at their own peril (China certainly isn’t). For it is a store house of mineral wealth & a part of the world in which in the next three decades half the world’s population growth is expected to occur - The Ibrahim Prize was created in 2007 by the London-based Ibrahim Foundation<sup>16</sup>. It is a US\$5MM award paid out over ten years, & at a US\$200,000 annual rate for life thereafter to retired Presidents who had been “democratically elected & vacated their office at the end of their constitutionally mandated*

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<sup>14</sup> A Tanzanian politician & diplomat, he served, among others, as Prime Minister of Tanzania, Secretary-General of the OAU (Organization of African Unity), and President of both the UN Security Council & General Assembly, & has no less than six Honorary Doctorates from universities in Africa, Asia & Italy.

<sup>15</sup> That in 2014 included the disastrous Ebola outbreak.

<sup>16</sup> Based in London, & founded in 2006 to promote the quality of governance in Africa by Sudanese businessman Mo Ibrahim, who ‘made his bones financially’ by founding, in 1998, the Centel International telecom firm & became a billionaire in 2005 when he sold it for US\$3.4BN to Kuwait-based MTC (a firm that in 2007 was renamed Zain & that had, as of last September, 45.3MM customers in Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, South Africa, Sudan & South Sudan).



terms". It has so far been awarded to Nelson Mandela & to the former Presidents of Mozambique, Botswana, Cabo Verde & Namibia, and now Liberia<sup>17</sup>.

### **POLICE BREAK UP CYBERCRIME GANG AFTER \$1.24 BN SPREE (AP)**

- According to the Spanish police & the EU law enforcement agency Europol on March 26th, its alleged mastermind, a Ukrainian only identified as "Denis K." & three of his Russian/Ukrainian suspected accomplices, were arrested in the coastal city of Alicante (*on the Spanish East Coast, South of Valencia & 340kms Southeast of Madrid*). The hackers had, over a period of five years used malware to steal US\$1.24BN from over 100 financial institutions & their activities had long been tracked by security researchers.

*The fact that these 100+ banks let these people get away with US\$1.2BN over five years employing such dead simple methodology suggests that they were highly incompetent in running their business.*

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Liberia is all but unique among Sub-Saharan countries in that it has less potential for deep-seated tribal warfare since it was founded in the mid-1800s by black US citizens & ex-Caribbean slaves (something not entirely dissimilar is true for Sierra Leone, except that there the outside force originated in Great Britain).