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VIEWPOINT

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REKINDLING THE HUMAN SPIRIT IN BUSINESS

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Editor' note: Academy Fellow Hazel Henderson notes that in the response to terrorism “change the game” strategies should be heeded and implemented that do not further inflict violence and terror on more innocent civilians. “Outside the box of conventional economics lies a wealth of creative strategies based on barter, reciprocity, mutual aid, sharing and cooperation.” She notes that these strategies work better than competition (win-lose) in a closed system such as today’s interdependent global economy. “In our globalized, interdependent world, justice, equity and cooperation have become pragmatic.”

Preventing War and Global Recession: Change Globalization to a Win-Win Game

By Hazel Henderson

Scenarios of global economic recession were on the horizon before the awful attacks of September 11 on the symbols of finance, world trade and US military power. Economic globalization took down the firewalls between national economies, producing today’s roller coaster of synchronized economic downturns. Financial markets electronically linked worldwide spread “contagion” and currency turbulence.

These markets, whose movements are amplified instantly by global mass media, have now become transmission belts of every shock as we saw in the world’s falling stock markets in the aftermath of September 11th. For the second time in history, economic globalization may end in depression and another lengthy war as in the 1930s.

Yet terrorism must be faced and checked, and such crimes against humanity must be brought to justice. How can all this be achieved without inflicting further violence and terror on more innocent civilians?

Such questions are no longer posed only by pacifists but by increasing millions of “global citizens” who have faced the realities of interdependence created by economic and technological globalization: we live in one world where borders are vanishing. These globally-aware 21st century humans with their candlelight vigils and peaceful marches in New York City, London and other cities around the world oppose US military retaliation.

They offer new analyses, actions and strategies--many similar to those of ignored security strategists in the Pentagon, the CIA and policy think tanks who warned that terrorism required a top-to-bottom rethink of US military force structure and priorities.

These “change the game” strategies should be heeded and implemented before knee-jerk military strikes kill more poverty stricken innocents, whether in Afghanistan or in the wider conflict, and trigger more terrorist attacks. Eye-for-an-eye dogmas belong to history, not the 21st century

There is still time to avoid the looming global economic deflation and depression - caused by laid off employees and panicked investors and consumers - with the result of sliding stocks and prices and rising inventories increasing a worldwide glut.

Instead of the US leading a coalition of bombing raids, countries with large inventories and backlogs of unsold food, clothing and other consumer goods could start airlifting those surplus goods and parachuting them all over Afghanistan. Starving Afghans, whose UN and other food and humanitarian aid have been cut off as a result of the US threats can fill their stomachs and find new strength to resist their Taliban oppressors.

As unsold commodities, consumer goods, radios and magazines float down from the skies, the Taliban will become further discredited for their economic failures. As unsold inventories are reduced in stagnating economies in Europe, Asia, North and South America, production can be revived and people re-employed. These economies and companies will rediscover the power of bartering -- their surplus goods for peace -- at a fraction of the cost of weapons and military strikes.

Such outside-the-box strategies are common to game theorists. Today, they are advocated by strategic policy analysts in university think tanks. They derive from architect and engineering genius Buckminster Fuller, after whom the carbon-based "buckyballs" are named. Fuller, the most practical futurist of the 20th century, called for human design revolutions so that our evolving technological societies could provide for 100% of humanity -- within the tolerances of planetary ecosystems.

Many thousands of Bucky Fuller's former students teach in universities, invent green technologies and, like myself, promote win-win approaches to today's malfunctioning globalization and money systems. Today's global casino is largely unregulated, providing conduits for money laundering and transferring funds by terrorists, drug lords and Mafia groups. In April 2000, the G-7 and the OECD, with full support of then-US Treasury Secretary Lawrence Summers, launched an effective blacklist of all financial havens harboring such illicit financial transactions. The incoming Bush Administration then withdrew US support. Mr. Bush reversed this policy on September 24th -- in recognition that regulating global financial flows is key to stemming terrorists as well as other criminals.

But money-based systems, policies and national accounts, such as GNP are only half the story - and limit our thinking and strategies. Money does not equate with wealth, a broader term, which includes human creativity, intellectual and social capital and ecological assets. Outside the box of conventional economics lie a wealth of creative strategies based on barter, reciprocity, mutual aid, sharing and cooperation. This hidden parallel economy is estimated at \$16 trillion annually, but money-free and therefore invisible to economists. These strategies used by the other half of humanity, the poor and those bypassed by globalization, are all considered irrational and primitive by market economics with its competitive strategies of maximization of self interest and profitability.

Those who advocate airlifting surplus supplies, food and unsellable consumer goods to Afghans follow the logic of game theory, not economics. The world's growing glut of unsold inventories is causing layoffs, deflation and recession in today's tightly-linked economies. Clearing the backlogged shelves in exchange for Afghans' goodwill in deposing the Taliban and bringing Al-Qaeda's network to justice makes more sense than a 20th-century style war. Wars have always been one way of getting out of economic depressions; World War II production ended the Great Depression.

Today, we know a better way. Reciprocity, barter, cooperation and mutual aid (win-win) work better than competition (win-lose) in a closed system like today's interdependent global economy. They are also superior national security strategies. Many within the Pentagon have tried to promote more diplomacy and better prevention of terrorism, cyber-warfare and the new Information Age threats of the 21st century.

Such game theorists as Robert Steele, founder of the think tank OSS, Inc., William Perk, former board member of the Buckminster Fuller Institute, Jan Lee Martin of Australia's Futures Foundation, and many others understand the wealth of win-win strategies available beyond conventional economic and military thinking. An example was Mikhail Gorbachev's challenging the US to cooperate with him in reducing nuclear weapons. Baffled Pentagon hardliners finally understood his use of "tit for tat" game theory and began to cooperate, allowing Reagan and Gorbachev to find common ground. In the 1950s, Cold War sociologist David Reisman in his famous essay, "The Nylon War" proposed a classic win-win game to discredit Soviet leaders in the eyes of ordinary Russians by parachuting consumer goods into the USSR. Military brass could not think of such surprise tactics.

Competitive strategies remain important for national security and economics. But as the very new challenges of the 21st century and globalization unfold before us, expanding our policy approaches to embrace game theory, including win-win cooperation, and initiating, as Gorbachev did, virtuous cycles of behavior, such as the boom in socially responsible investing, can serve the world well. Even economists are getting these

concepts and seeing that in an interdependent global economy, business-as-usual competition can turn into a lose-lose game for all countries.

Win-win globalization will focus far beyond humanitarian assistance and food aid to reduce surpluses. The adoption of strategies already agreed to in UN summits in the 1990s on food, children, health, human rights, shelter and poverty eradication would make the world a safer place. The reduction of weapons budgets worldwide, as security is redefined in human terms, need not cause massive unemployment and depression. There will be enough work for everyone in redesigning sustainable societies based on renewable energy and resource use that can provide for 100% of the human family. In our globalized, interdependent world, justice, equity and cooperation have become pragmatic.

www.hazelhenderson.com

Copyright © 2001 World Business Academy, 428 Bryant Circle, Suite 109, Ojai, CA 93023
Academy Phone 805 640-3713 Fax 805 640-9914 Website www.worldbusiness.org
Editor, Joe Simonetta jrsimonetta@home.com Phone 941 378-8407 Fax 941 378-9348