



# PERSPECTIVES

by Rinaldo S. Brutoco



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## No Wasted Crises

You've heard the old saying "Never let a good crisis go to waste." No question, we are ensnared in a crisis, within a crisis, within a crisis. We have the crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic with 180,000 dead as you read this. We have an economic crisis (another 1.1M filed for unemployment just this past week) perhaps larger than the Great Depression. And, as over 350 wildfires ravage California, it is clear that the climate change crisis is here and accelerating!

No other industrialized democracy has faced anything like the incompetent mismanagement this country has witnessed at the national level. We still don't have national testing standards, a national procurement of testing materials, national testing protocols, or a "program" for getting the virus under control. We know what to do if we just COPY what all the other successful countries in Europe, Asia, and the South Pacific (e.g. New Zealand) have done. Or better yet, copy New York, which under Governor Cuomo's incredible leadership not only reversed its role as the leading epicenter in the world, but also developed the protocols to keep the virus contained to this day.

Yes, we do know what to do: wear face masks, observe social distancing, maintain good personal hygiene, keep schools closed until the virus is under control, and most importantly: no boisterous crowds! Then background "social spread" will slow down enough to permit effective contact tracing and isolation as required. Until we do, this will remain a crisis.

Similarly, the pandemic-triggered economic crisis also doesn't need to persist. While the Republican Senate blocks aid to the unemployed for yet another week, those who were living paycheck to paycheck are beginning to be evicted by the millions, and landlords, unsupported by reliable rental income, are falling behind on their mortgages. Families are spending untold hours in lines at food banks. Millions are having serious problems feeding their families. YES, this is a crisis!

What to do? Remember, we don't want any crisis to go to waste. What can we do to transform these? With such a massive set of interlocking crises it would seem that the "benefit" we could obtain should be equal to the challenge of the crises themselves. So, what is the solution?

Let's assume that the election goes the right way and we're provided with a different Administration and a different Senate.

Well, within one week we would trigger the national procurement act to make the personal protection gear we need to protect all of our healthcare workers, so we'll never again be dependent on other countries for it and we will retain those jobs in the US.

By February 1st we could have a new stimulus bill that would put food back on the table for the working poor who are currently unemployed.

Within 30 days we could restore the Environmental Protection Agency's rules created in the Nixon-Carter-Bush-Clinton-Bush II-Obama era protecting for our air, water, and land.

Also, within 30 days we'd restore the Post Office to its old reliable standards, and within 180 days a complete reformation of the Post Office to permit it to stop carrying mail on Saturdays (except Priority mail) thereby saving enormous amounts of money, and an expansion of postal authority to permit it to offer bank accounts as Japan has successfully done since WWII. We'd eliminate the unfair rules passed to give an advantage to competitors like UPS and FedEx. And, we could obtain a declaration that the Post Office is a vital service that is not supposed to make a profit—it's supposed to be a public service for our society like every other major branch of government.

By the end of February, we'd introduce legislation to prohibit any future President to politicize the Justice Department with another William Barr.

By the end of March, we could enjoy a rapid expansion of Obamacare so that an additional 20 million people will be covered together with a "Medicare for all" type public option.

Best of all, by April we could at last get the coronavirus under control when the new Administration develops a National Plan that is so sorely lacking now.

By May we could have passed the first of several infrastructure bills allocating one trillion dollars to spend on bridges, roads, highways, renewable energy construction, modern high-speed rail, and the creation of millions of great middle-class jobs just like FDR did in the Great Depression.

At the same time, we could see the dramatic reduction or total elimination of student debt. We could also ban the possession of assault rifles and other battlefield weapons, while launching national background checks/a registry to properly regulate the sale of all firearms.

By June we could see the passage of the "Green New Deal" to launch our country into the forefront of renewable technology industries as the newest American R&D profit generator creating millions of permanent jobs.

By July we could receive back a report from a Blue Ribbon Presidential Panel with a blueprint for how to intelligently reform policing to reduce structural racism, provide public protection, and develop other departments at the City, County, and State levels to take over some of the traditional roles police have handled when those roles don't require a "man with a gun," like enforcing traffic, providing social services to deal with repetitive domestic abuse cases, and other non-lethal citizen encounters.

Somewhere in that same time frame we would see the permanent protection of all DACA kids, and within the first year we would finally see comprehensive immigration reform including some program for guest workers who would find it easy to come to the US for three to nine months at a time to pick crops and other essential work we require as our populations ages, with no hassle crossing the border, and a guarantee of fair wages so they can live with dignity back in their countries of origin.

Finally, we would see the beginning of the restoration of American influence on the international stage leading to peaceful resolutions for the Middle East, a re-engagement with the World Bank, a re-affirmation of our commitment to the World Health Organization and the International Monetary Fund, a re-positioning of America's influence within the United Nations, and so much more to restore Pax Americana that is so badly missed.

Well that is a whole lot of really “good stuff” that could get done really quickly with a progressive Administration backed up by a “can do” Senate and a vigorously charged House. With a team like that these crises will have given us the opportunity to totally re-launch the “American Experiment” into its next chapter as we strive for yet “a more perfect Union.” Best of all, every single thing I've listed is supported by at least 65 percent of the American public. Most of it is supported by 75 percent or more. So, in a democracy, why can't “we the people” create the country we want to live in, and that we'd feel good, oh so good, passing along to our children?

That would be a triple threat “crisis” we didn't waste, and worth what we've been forced to pay to get through it!

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