

# A New Deal for the World

*Lucy Law Webster*

Recommending, as do many others, a “Bretton Woods 2.0 ... [p]rompted by the continuing financial instability”, Harold Meyerson (“Going Global”, *Washington Post*, 18 October 2008) comments: “More fundamentally, though, the authors of the new global compacts must do more than write the rules and establish the transnational institutions to regulate 21st-century finance. They need to put rules and regulators in place to ensure the safety of the products the global economy creates, and the safety and living standards of the workers who produce them. It’s time to globalize the New Deal.”

This is a “How To” article on two themes: how to put an end to war and how to make a New Deal for prosperity and dignity for all worldwide.

War is a human institution; it does not arise inevitably from any natural cause. Although we humans have spent many thousands of years in competitive relationships with frequent violent confrontations, we now know how to distinguish between healthy competition and destructive conflict. And we know how to prevent dysfunctional violence. Furthermore, the “boys will be boys” attitude toward war is one game in animal-spirits mode that has become unacceptably dysfunctional with the development of modern military technology.

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Also, we know how to ensure economic security and social dignity for all. The vast inequalities of the present world system are only one factor contributing to our proclivity to approach our diverse interests in a confrontational way, but reducing these inequalities would reduce mistrust and tension. Here again there is nothing preprogrammed into our genes that makes inequality or injustice inevitable. We are the masters of our fate. Or at least we could be. However, existing economic and social structures and the history of adverse interactions do of course contribute to human insecurity. It should also be noted that there are various kinds of deliberate fraud and extreme selfishness that can undermine the implicit social compact. This is why citizen monitoring and governmental regulation are needed.

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[E]conomists and social scientists give significant attention to the global structures that contribute to human welfare and to warfare, but, in my opinion, we do not give enough attention to process. We must seek cause and effect sequences that engender benign spirals for benign, humane results.

There are tried and true ways to move from where we are to where we want to be. ... [W]hen Jean Monnet and Conrad Adenauer launched the European Coal and Steel Community, they wanted to make efficient use of resources to address a specific economic need, AND they wanted to start a process that would end the history of French and German wars and might also lead to a United States of Europe. The two goals were sought with equal ardor. The EU, which emerged from this beginning, has since made a major contribution to peace in Europe and to global prosperity. Its history has led a drive for regional and sub-regional cooperation and some voluntary integration in many parts of the world.

Thus, one very important how-to principle for both peace and prosperity would be to seek structures that make cooperative interaction easy and successful and give dignity to all participants. Learning by doing is the greatest multiplier; it amplifies, broadcasts, and teaches for an emerging, adaptive interactive global system.

Another principle is to look ahead, and widely. It is not enough to work for short-term compartmentalized goals. A global image of peace and prosperity for all should be held firmly in mind so that every step taken contributes in an optimum way to the global vision, giving the maximum importance possible to the needs of each nation and each segment of each society. This vision should be worldwide and multi-generational. The United Nations is an effective forum for harmonizing goals and visions because it encourages participatory global governance. It should not matter where one is born or what passport one holds if there is a common image of a worldwide global nation with congruent values and respect for all.

I would not wish to imply that these and similar principles can create a world of peace and plenty in a single step. The primary objective is to create a path, which can become both a means for getting to a New Deal and the end. Building an integrated peaceful world community is a process more than it is a goal. We should recognize that a participatory process is itself a result. It is a very powerful strategy whereby people worldwide can learn and demonstrate what can be done to build power and wealth from the base upward. This empowerment IS the proposed New Deal and its transforming effect on people is the result that will bring adequate prosperity to millions. Before colonialism, this perspective was common in many parts of the world, and it provides an understanding of process that has never been lost.

A related point, which is more economic, is to note that recent thinking in development economics gives renewed importance to the need to improve agricultural production in less developed economies in order to produce real surpluses in the real economy. Such value is an important basis for growth and for wellbeing even when it is small. In similar vein, I know a small business owner in upstate New York who has been approached by his local bank manager to ask if he wanted to borrow money to invest in a way that was being considered in order to increase equity. It is good to know that added value in the real economy is appreciated — especially in an era of predatory management of over-leveraged loans in the paper economy. Thus building additional value that serves people is an important principle for the proposed New Deal.

The first principle, which should be first of all, relates to every ambition and especially to peace and non-violence: is to do no harm. It is important to not be diverted from a humane, participatory path by impatience. Each part of the future global community must be allowed to be built at its own pace. To do no harm is to honor the vision of others and to support the self-empowerment of each person and each nation while at the same time teaching and demonstrating respect for the essential principles of universal human rights.

A New Deal for all can be negotiated very quietly. People and nations will see what is needed for their economy and their environment, which is the common economy and common environment that everybody owns. The UN and the whole world community have many explicit vision and mission statements. What needs to be added is that everyone should play his or her role in a way that does not trample on the humane, pro-people, pro-planet vision of others. All the great world religions teach love and mutual respect, which is also the finding that emerges from the world of science, which shows that what works best is what serves the common human interest.

In the 21st century it is no longer acceptable to exploit nature in a way that does not show a decent respect for future generations. With careful husbandry, the value of renewable resources can be expanded and shared using human creativity and sustainable means of production.

Everyone has power in proportion to the respect that he or she enjoys and anyone can use that power for creative or for destructive action. Terrorists and community leaders both have power. If there is no honor or fear accorded to terrorist acts there will be very few. Communications technologies mean that everyone can know what others do and everyone can quietly show support for or rejection of the policies and actions of nation states and non-state actors. Many civil society leaders are the non-state actors who are building the global-nation vision. They can have major influence on the shape and the tone of the global New Deal by demonstrating the policies and the action projects that contribute most to peace and wellbeing.

In the 21st century everyone can be held accountable for his or her acts and thus it is no longer possible for the strong to override the interests of the weak. War crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide can be punished by the international law of the International Criminal Court. Everyone can be protected by the quiet vigilance of all. And as long as there are no alarmist responses that give power and dignity to criminal actions, it will be

possible to minimize the importance of such acts and to apprehend the perpetrators. We are all demonstrators and monitors of human rights norms and law. The technology of modern weapons and the power of rapid communications mean that on the one hand it is not very difficult to generate fear and hyper-reactions to acts of terrorism, while on the other hand there are new capacities to stop anyone who would trample on the lives and peace of people worldwide. The new communications systems offer powerful tools to build solidarity and to prevent over-reaction to terrorism. It is in the hands of all citizens of all nations to determine how the growing power to communicate worldwide will be used.

The proposed New Deal will be the deal the world community negotiates with itself to share a vision of a global nation living in peace, sustainable adequacy, and mutual respect to encourage one another and to protect a mutually supportive vision. The United Nations, which is developing new flexible competencies, can help greatly to create and guide this sort of complex adaptive system. At the same time the concept can to some extent be self-managed; the process of creating the New Deal depends on self-management by individuals, civil society groups and states, and that will also need to be central for implementation, which must be a constant process.