

TIKKUN/NSP'S GLOBAL MARSHALL PLAN

posted by [rabbi michael lerner](#) (wednesday, february 28 2007 @ 10:54 am pst)

America needs a strategy of generosity, not domination, in its foreign policy. Tikkun/NSP presents the Global Marshall Plan.

An Introduction to the Network of Spiritual Progressives' version of
The Global Marshall Plan

After a century of wars and violence, and five thousand years of societies that thought it was "common sense" to believe that the only way to achieve personal and societal safety was through domination of others, culminating in the world wars of the 20th century, the Vietnam war, and most recently in the Iraq war, we at the Network of Spiritual Progressives are calling for a fundamentally new approach which emphasizes that generosity and genuine caring for others can be a much more effective and morally coherent approach to human security, peace and development.

We know that when people feel that they can't trust others, and that everyone is just out for themselves, they are drawn to paranoid pseudo-communities that are sometimes offered to them through extremes of nationalism or through right-wing religious communities. When people can no longer believe in the shared humanity and decency of others, they develop a vulnerability to the fundamentalist reactionaries and their campaign to instill "Fear of The Other."

But it's not just reactionaries who use that approach—it is embedded in the fundamental thinking of both the Democratic and Republican political parties. The language of "negotiation" and "sanctions" as used in contemporary politics during both Democratic and Republican administrations are code-words for less extreme forms of using our power to push for our way. Likewise, "sovereign defense" and "national security" are linguistic devices invoked by both parties for diverting resources away from social spending and toward the military budget for the purpose, again, of getting our way both at home and abroad. And "our way" usually ends up being shaped by a commitment to protect the economic and political interests of the most powerful corporations and their allies in government, economic institutions, the media, and the universities. So the NSP call for a new paradigm, a new way of doing foreign policy, is not only concerned with the full-scale psychopathology manifested in wars and mass killings, but also with the "softer" versions of pushing the world around to achieve our own ends without regard to the well-being of others. So even the most courageous liberal elected officials often defend their policies by justifying them as less violent ways to achieve "our" goal of getting the world to do what the most powerful forces in the U.S. wish them to do.

The key to our alternative, what we call the Strategy of Generosity, is our commitment to reestablish trust and hope among the peoples of the world so that we might begin to reflect and act coherently on ending world poverty in our lifetimes and saving the global environment from the almost certain destruction it faces unless we reverse our policies and give highest priority to protecting the earth. Instead of asking "what serves the interests of American economic and political geo-power best?" we want a foreign policy that asks "What best serves all the people on this planet and best serves the survival of the planet itself?"

That is a question that very few people in politics today are willing to raise in that form, fearing that they will not be elected or re-elected because they are charged with not being patriotic enough (even though it is obvious to almost anyone who understands the interconnectedness of all people on the planet that the best interests of America and the best interests of our children and grandchildren is best served by worrying about the best interests of everyone else, and the best interests of the planet rather than to frame things in terms that reinforce the nationalist fervors of the past and lead us toward selfishness and inability to think globally). A world divided by nationalist struggles and vain fantasies of dominating the resources of the earth on behalf of one or a few of the more powerful nations must be recognized as increasingly insane and self-destructive for the human race. Yet very many decent and moral people, having been talked into accepting the current construction of politics as "the given" within which one must work, end up participating in this insanity and calling it "realistic." It is an urgent necessity to break through that set of assumptions about what is and what is not realistic--so that people can look at the Strategy of Generosity not through the frame of existing inside-the-beltway assumptions or the "common sense" thrown at us daily by a corporate-dominated media, but rather through the frame of what the human race and the planet earth urgently need in order to stop the insane people who have power at the moment from continuing their disastrous path.

It is a huge delusion to imagine that the insanity of framing our foreign policy only in terms of narrowly conceived American interests is somehow confined to one political party or one set of candidates for office—it is a shared insanity that must be challenged in every part of our political thinking, and it is just as likely to be articulated by people with whom we agree on many other issues as by people who are overtly reactionary or overtly ultra-nationalistic. So the task of challenging these assumptions is huge, and the Strategy of Generosity and the Global Marshall Plan give us a useful vehicle for opening this conversation.

Building that Strategy of Generosity requires that we reconnect with the human capacity to recognize the other as an embodiment of the sacred, or, in secular language, as fundamentally valuable for who they are and not as only instrumentally valuable for what they can do for us. This pre-reflective, pre-nationalist connection between people must become the center of our campaign for peace and environmental sanity. The bonds of caring among human beings can and must be fostered by our policies.

So although we can emphasize that it is in our own interests as humans to recognize that our individual and societal well-being depends on the well-being of everyone else on the planet, and sometimes will frame part of the argument for the Global Marshall Plan in those terms, we have to emphasize as well that our commitment to the Global Marshall Plan is not only because it could save the planet from nuclear and conventional wars and jump-start the process of global environmental planning, but also because it reflects our deepest truth: the Unity of All Being and our commitment to care for each other as momentary embodiments of the God energy (or in secular terms, the goodness and love and generosity) of the Universe at its current stage of evolutionary development. We wish to foster an ethos of caring and love for others because it is ethically and spiritually right to do so, not only because it is instrumentally the only sane policy for saving the planet and saving the lives of our children and grandchildren.

Ironically, what turns out to be the most ethical path is also the most practical and self-interested from the standpoint of saving the human race and protecting the planet that sustains our lives. We reject any approach to the Global Marshall Plan which attempts to take it outside of the ethical and spiritual framework we articulate here. It can't work unless it is perceived by others as being more than a new, clever attempt to dominate the world through "aid" or some new way to open up the gates of their society for further penetration by Western corporate interests. It can only be perceived as a genuine attempt to change the terms of global interaction if the support for the Global Marshall Plan is transparently built around our ethical vision of world in which generosity and caring for others is valued because it is right, not only because it is smart and a savvy way to protect the United States.

To our friends in Congress and in the various political parties, to those who wish to work with us on this project, and to the media we offer the following caution: Do not take these ideas and try to "win" with them by abandoning the core vision and only achieving support for some of the details. Global issues must be discussed and supported in an interdependent fashion, reflecting our human and spiritual interdependence. So this is a plan that will only work if it is supported for the right reasons, with the global common good as the primary goal. In that sense, the Strategy of Generosity is really the core, and the Global Marshall Plan is only a particular way to actualize that new approach to human relations (which is actually the approach that our religious and spiritual and secular ethical traditions have been teaching for many millennia).

=====

What is The Global Marshall Plan?

=====

After the second World War, General George Marshall suggested that the U.S. interests would be best served by a massive project to provide aid to Western European countries including Germany which had been our antagonist in the war. His proposals for relief and reconstruction were backed in the U.S. in part by the desire to make Western Europe economically more successful than Eastern Europe dominated by the Soviet Union, so that West Europeans would not democratically elect a communist government. The idea of a similar massive relief effort for developing nations gradually emerged and there are now various conceptions of a Global Marshall Plan to provide aid to impoverished areas.. These plans vary widely in focus and scope. We are joining the Centre for Global Negotiations in calling for a series of international meetings to help shape the details of such a plan. But in the meantime, we are interested in further developing our own plan. And we are inviting members of the Network of Spiritual Progressives to engage in their own brainstorming to help refine our ideas. Nevertheless, ***they are developed enough right now to make them useful as a solid and compelling plank for American politics in.*** A full book worth of detailed plans will need to be prepared before the plan is actually implemented, but for the moment it is enough to try to convince the American public of the need for this kind of approach very quickly. ***If in the next few years we can get the idea of the Generosity Strategy and the Global Marshall Plan into the mainstream dialogue in the U.S. we will have accomplished a lot. We are not in danger of it being passed by Congress and the President immediately and then being caught without enough details. So, the NSP will continue to work with others to develop these ideas, and will give priority in the next few years to building coalitions with other groups that can endorse our version of the Global Marshall Plan.***

Here are the essentials of the plan developed so far by the Network of Spiritual Progressives:

- Providing enough funding to once-and-for-all eliminate global poverty, homelessness, hunger, inadequate education and inadequate health care, plus restore the global environment (healing it from 150 years of irresponsible forms of industrialization in both capitalist and self-described socialist countries). The most modest estimates for this would be to dedicate 1-2% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the world's developed nations toward funding this goal each year for the next twenty years. We do not want to wait until all of the G-8 nations or the world's 29 OECD nations are involved in this project—we believe that the U.S. must lead by example, dedicating at least 1% of its GDP toward this goal starting as soon as we can get the Congress to vote for and fund it.
- Creating an international, unbiased, nongovernmental mechanism for receiving the funds (including both foreign aid and alternative sources of financing) and distributing them in a way that is environmentally sensitive, respectful of native cultures, safeguarded against corruption, protected from manipulation to serve corporate profit motives or the interests of elites, and empowering of the people in each region. This agency or mechanism should be governed by a board of ethicists, religious leaders, poets, writers, social theorists, philosophers, economists, scientists, and social change activists all of whom have demonstrated that they give higher priority to the well-being of others than to the well-being of corporations or wealthy elites. They will carefully scrutinize, supervise, and if necessary, override the decisions of a staff who are committed to the goals of this project, want it to succeed, and have no ideological commitments

committed to the goals of this project, want it to succeed, and have no ideological commitments or conflicts of interest that run counter the creation of a successful international agency for the elimination of global poverty.

- Changing all global and regional trade agreements in which the U.S. are currently involved so that they no longer privilege the most powerful and economically successful Western countries and the elites of other countries at the expense of the poor of the world. Global trade must be both multilateral and equitable. New agreements must provide support and encouragement for working people organizing, being paid a living wage, and providing adequate safety and health conditions and environmental safeguards so that economic growth is encouraged in ways that respect the rights of working people, promotes their well-being, and ensures their dignity and human rights. Trade agreements must also protect farmers, both at home and abroad, encouraging food prices that make it possible for farmers to make a living and poorer people to buy adequate food.

- Ensuring hands-on involvement from peoples of the Western world, starting with the United States. We wish to create a greatly expanded Peace and Justice Corps of the United States (PJCUS) which would provide ways for people with useful skills to volunteer two years of their life (at any age of their life) in donating their talents toward the goals of the Global Marshall Plan. To make this viable for professionals and others who have gained valuable skills and who fear losing their jobs, we envision a guaranteed job for anyone volunteering two years in the Peace and Justice Corps at the level of income at which they were working before they entered the program. While participating in the Peace and Justice Corps, people would receive the average salary that they were receiving in the five years before volunteering so that they could continue to help their families (though they would be encouraged to bring with them and spend in the countries in which they were working the same salaries that the people in those countries receive for doing comparable work). For high school graduates, three years of volunteer service in the Global Marshall Plan would be rewarded with a fully paid college or professional school tuition plus student housing and food for four years as long as they were making satisfactory progress in an accredited college or graduate or professional school.

- Using the PJCUS program not only to build the capacities of people around the world to ensure their own future economic well-being, but also to deliver certain necessities including emergency food supplies, the building of environmentally-sound housing not only for the millions who are currently homeless but for the hundreds of millions of people soon to be born into poverty before the program can fully succeed, the rebuilding of crumbling city infrastructure, the building and/or rebuilding of dams, levees, roads, bridges, ports, railroads in environmentally sound ways, and the training of hundreds of millions of people with the skills necessary to do well in the economic marketplace and to survive those aspects of environmental collapse that at this point may be impossible to avoid.

- Retraining of the armies of nations around the world to become experts in ecologically sensitive construction of those aspects of their own societies that need relief and reconstruction, including agriculture, health care, housing, infrastructure, education and computers, and other appropriate technology.

- Training for everyone on the planet in techniques of nonviolent communication, respect for ethnic and religious diversity and differences, family and parental support, stress reduction, child and elderly care, emergency health techniques, diet and exercise, and caring for others who are in need of help.

- Training for everyone on the planet in the essentials of living in accord with the survival and sustainability needs of the planet.

We estimate that this program, if fully implemented, could cost as much as 3-5% of the GDP of the world. Our commitment is to start with the 1% of US GDP and move from there.

We offer this plan with a commitment to humility and a conviction that it cannot work unless it is understood as deriving from our own commitment to the well-being of everyone on the planet and not primarily as a self-interested plan to advance American power or influence. One of the values of having an international agency to administer the plan is that from the start it will be clear that this plan is not simply another puppet for U.S. power.

We must also insist that the plan be implemented with a clear message that although the West has superior technology and material success, we do not equate that with superior moral or cultural wisdom. On the contrary, our approach must reflect a deep humility and a spirit of repentance for the ways in which Western dominance of the planet has been accompanied by wars, environmental degradation, and a growing materialism and selfishness reflected in a Western-dominated global culture.

Given these distortions, it is central to our mission to convey in the Global Marshall Plan a recognition that we have much to learn from the peoples of the world, their cultures, their spiritual and intellectual heritage, their ways of dealing with human relationships. So part of the program must also include cultural exchanges in which we invite into the cultural and educational systems of Western countries some of the teachers, musicians, artists, religious leaders, authors, poets, and philosophers of the non-Western world. We view this not as a sop thrown to ameliorate possible hurt egos, but as a genuine attempt to recognize that our superior technology and material success has not brought with it a superior ethical or spiritual wisdom, and that there is much to learn from societies that from a material standpoint are "under-developed" but from a spiritual standpoint may have within them teachers and cultures that are far more humanly sensitive than our own.

To build support for the Strategy of Generosity and the Global Marshall Plan, the NSP is asking

To gain support for the Strategy of Generosity and the Global Marshall Plan, we need to ask people to take the following steps:

1. We have created Generosity Sunday, April 15, 2007. We are using the traditional U.S. Tax Day to create local demonstrations, teach-ins in churches, synagogues, mosques, ashrams, unions, civic associations, college and universities which would focus on the Strategy of Generosity, the Global Marshall Plan, and the strategies of the U.N. Millennium Goals and the One campaign, and any other projects that similarly are founded on the Strategy of Generosity. We will be asking people to write to their elected officials to communicate that the taxes we are paying should be used to support this approach to building peace. In Canada, England, and other countries where the NSP has supporters, we are urging them to do the same activity on their own Tax Day (the day that taxes are due).
2. From: Local groups should seek to have their own city councils and state legislatures endorse the Strategy of Generosity and the Global Marshall Plan. Where that does not happen and there is a referendum or citizen-initiative procedure in place, local groups should seek to use those to put an endorsement of the Strategy to Generosity and the Global Marshall Plan on the ballot.
3. Run for elected office on the platform of the Strategy of Generosity and the Global Marshall Plan (or, for a fuller platform, use the entire Spiritual Covenant with America, which you'll find downloadable at www.spiritualprogressives.org). Using this idea, you will find many people who support your candidacy even if you have zero financial support. It is an important way to force this issue into public debate. If you don't want to run for an elected office, you could run as a member of the slate of your favorite candidate for President—and get yourself elected to go to the national convention of your political party, whatever it is. And if that is not possible, then follow candidates around during the primaries and elections and continually ask them to endorse the Global Marshall Plan and push the ideas at their public meetings. We will be happy to send you a candidate's questionnaire for them to fill in—and we could then post it on our website.
4. If you have detailed knowledge of a particular country facing poverty (including the US) or some other technical knowledge and wish to contribute your expertise to developing further details of the program within the framework that we've outlined here, please let us know.
5. We are seeking funding for an ad that we want to put into mainstream media to introduce the idea of the Generosity Strategy—please sign and donate to the ad at www.tikkun.org/iraqpeace

For assistance in these projects, or for more information, please contact Nichola@tikkun.org or Jonathan@spiritualprogressives.org.

To read more about the philosophy behind the Generosity Strategy and how it could be "realistic" in American politics at this historical moment, please read Rabbi Michael Lerner's book *The Left Hand of God* (Harper San Francisco, 2006). For more info on James Quilligan's history and explanation of the Global Marshall Plan, click [here](#).