

## **2009 Peace Proposal (Summary)**

# **Toward Humanitarian Competition: A New Current in History**

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The impact of the financial crisis that started with defaults in the subprime mortgage market in the United States, leading to the bankruptcy of the U.S. investment bank Lehman Brothers, has now spread to encompass the whole world.

The present crisis inevitably provokes associations with the nightmare of the 1930s, when a severe economic depression created the conditions for the global conflagration of World War II. The situation remains fluid and unpredictable, and there are growing signs that the financial crisis is undermining the real economy, bringing about a global recession and driving up unemployment.

The main cause of the crisis can be traced to the rampant dominance of speculative financial assets, whose scale is said to be four times the cumulative value of actual goods and services. The origin of the crisis is found in the fact that the financial markets, whose true function should be to support and lubricate other economic activities, have thrust themselves to center stage, with market players becoming the “stars” single-mindedly pursuing earnings and profit, often with no thought for the impact on others.

As I have pointed out in these proposals on a number of occasions, the deepest underlying root of the crisis is the love of money itself, of currency, the global Mammonism that constitutes an essential pathology of our contemporary civilization. The currency that controls and dominates market economies has, of course, virtually no use value, it has only exchange value. And exchange value stands only on the foundation of understanding and agreement between people; in its essence it is both abstract and anonymous. It is not directed at such concrete (and therefore finite)

objects as real goods and services; thus, as the object of human desire, it has no real or inherent limits.

Soon after the end of World War II, the French existentialist philosopher Gabriel Marcel offered a penetrating perspective, examining the “spirit of abstraction” as a key causal factor in war. While the ability to develop and manipulate abstract concepts is indispensable to human intellectual activity, to Marcel the spirit of abstraction is destructive, a process in which abstractions are alienated from concrete realities, taking on a life of their own.

For example, it is only possible to participate in war if we first deny the individual character and humanity of the opponent—reducing him or her to an abstract concept such as fascist, communist, Zionist, Islamic fundamentalist, etc. Without this kind of reductionism, it would be impossible to justify or find meaning in one’s participation in war.

When looking at the present financial crisis, we have to ask if we as a society have not been caught up in this spirit of abstraction. Have we not fallen prey to the Medusa-like spell of the abstract and anonymous world of currency, losing our essential human capacity to see through to the underlying fact that—however necessary it may be to the functioning of human society—currency is nothing other than an agreement, a kind of virtual reality?

If, for example, a company loses sight of its public aspect of contributing to the larger society, and serves only the private interests of its stockholders—their insistence on short-term profit—it will relegate to secondary or even tertiary importance its concrete connections with the real world of real people—whether these be management, employees, customers or consumers.

We must find ways of applying the brakes to the runaway aspects of financial capital. We also need to take swift and bold measures, such as fiscal and financial support and strengthening social safety nets, in order to respond to the dramatic slump in corporate performance and the accompanying rise in unemployment.

In this sense, it is especially vital that we keep in mind the global dimensions of the issue of poverty, which threatens the opportunity for meaningful work that is a core human activity, and on which hinges the sense of purpose and hope that are vital to human dignity and the survival of society. We must put all our energies into engaging with this critical issue.

At this crucial juncture, it is especially essential that political leaders exercise their talents for the greater good and from a broad and impartial view, as the state and the political system have a large role to play in taming the runaway stallions of capitalism. At the same time, we must absolutely heed the lesson of the 1930s, in which an excess of state control was intertwined with the rise of fascism.

The time has now come for a new way of thinking, for a paradigm shift that will reach to the very foundation of human civilization. During the Great Depression 80 years ago, socialism offered an alternative paradigm to capitalism, something that is lacking today. While socialism, and in particular Soviet-style communism, cannot today be considered a viable antithesis to capitalism, if we accept the premise that we are facing a crisis of modernity itself—modernity as a system which has capitalism and democracy at its heart—then the imperative to discover a new perspective and principles becomes all the more pressing.

While immediate measures must of course be taken to help avert a further deepening of the financial and economic crisis, we cannot settle for merely remedial measures. We must also work to find a principled worldview that can function as a “lever” to change the direction of history itself. For better or for worse, the processes of globalization have reached the point where this kind of fundamental response is required.

In this connection, I would like to explore certain ideas set out by the founding president of the Soka Gakkai, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, in his 1903 work *The Geography of Human Life*, which I feel can serve as a fresh paradigm to guide us out of the present deadlocked position. Specifically, I would like to explore the possibilities to be found in his idea of “humanitarian competition.”

In this work, Makiguchi surveys the grand flow of human history and identifies the forms of competition that have prevailed in different periods: military, political and economic. He concludes with a call for us to set our sights on the goal of establishing “humanitarian competition” as the prevailing ethos of the era—competition to contribute the most to society. While his vision was not immediately realized, I would like to express my strong conviction that the time has now arrived, 100 years after it was originally proposed, for us to turn our attention to humanitarian competition as a paradigm for the new era.

This is because the values encapsulated within socialism in order to remove the ills of capitalism—justice and equality, for example—whether applied in the domestic or international arena, are indeed rooted in an underlying humanism. These ideals cannot be allowed to perish along with the systemic failure of communism.

The question remains then as to why, if socialism is informed with correct principles, it has generally failed as a system. It is valuable to reference Makiguchi’s insight: “Whether in natural or human affairs, when free competition is hampered, this results in stagnation, stasis and regression.” The failure of socialism can be attributed to the failure to take the value of competition as a source of energy and vitality in human society adequately into account.

Herein lies the value of humanitarian competition. As a concept, it allows us first to directly confront the reality of competition while ensuring that it is conducted firmly on the basis of humane values, thus bringing forth a synergistic reaction between the values of humanitarian concerns and competitive energies. It is this that qualifies it to be a key paradigm for the twenty-first century.

In our quest for new paradigms, it is crucial that we heed Gabriel Marcel’s warning always to keep concrete realities firmly in view. The impatience and arrogance of people who think they know all the answers and are ready to offer a grand design toward which human history should advance, demonstrates that they have fallen victim to the negative aspects of the spirit of abstraction.

In past proposals over the decades I have urged that our approach to universal

perspectives and principles cannot be external and transcendent, but must be immanent and internalized. Here also, Makiguchi's superlative farsightedness in *The Geography of Human Life* merits our careful attention: "The actualities of vast stretches of the earth are generally observable in a tiny patch of land. In that sense, the outlines of the vast and complex phenomena seen in the geography of the entire world can be explained using the examples of a single town or village in an isolated region." When Makiguchi speaks of "the geography of human life," this is obviously not limited to geography in the narrow sense, but includes the concrete aspects of the full scope of human activities, including politics, economics, society, religion, etc.

In other words, rather than making the great leap to the "vast and complex phenomena" of life, we should start from the concrete realities of the "tiny patch of land" where we are now. It is only by paying close and continuous attention to those realities that we can gain a meaningful appreciation of larger phenomena. For someone with this kind of imaginative power directed toward the reality of daily life, not only intimate friends but even the inhabitants of distant lands can be experienced as "neighbors."

This is our most certain guarantee against the kinds of inversion in which ends are sacrificed to means, the tangible present to a utopian future, human beings to ideology. I am confident that there we will see the realization of a society which is focused on the realities of life and humanity, and not the anonymous abstractions of currency.

### **Sharing the future**

I would now like to offer some creative ideas for a better future for all as a means of stimulating and contributing to the development of "humanitarian competition."

In addition to spreading financial instability, the world is now facing the intertwined crises of climate change, environmental degradation, energy and food shortages and poverty issues. In that sense, what we need is a bold vision and the courage to take on new challenges.

The newly inaugurated U.S. President Barack Obama made "change" the central

theme of his presidential campaign. He stated in his inaugural speech, "... the world has changed, and we must change with it. ... What is required of us now is a new era of responsibility." The challenge to bring about change confronts not only the United States, but the entire global community.

Here I would like to suggest three pillars to serve as the mainstays for transforming the current global crisis into a catalyst for opening a new future for humanity through stimulating the kind of humanitarian competition that will create a global community of peace and coexistence.

The first of these pillars is the sharing of action through tackling environmental problems. The second is the sharing of responsibility through international cooperation on global public goods. The third is the sharing of efforts for peace toward the abolition of nuclear arms.

### **Shared action on environmental problems**

I would like to discuss the first of these pillars with specific reference to climate change. Global warming is having immense effects on ecosystems everywhere, can cause meteorological disasters and armed conflicts, and aggravates the problems of poverty and hunger. It epitomizes the twenty-first-century crisis of human civilization, threatening to saddle future generations with immense and dire burdens.

Regrettably, there was no conspicuous progress in negotiations on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions last year. It is hoped that constructive discussions will take place this year. In addition to renewed efforts by the developed countries, it is vital that developing countries are also committed participants in any new framework.

The official signing of the statutes of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) sets in motion an international effort to mitigate global warming that embraces industrialized, developing and emerging countries alike. Seven years ago, in my 2002 peace proposal, I called for a convention for the promotion of renewable energy sources, and therefore welcome the establishment of this new international agency.

There has also been a new initiative in the area of energy efficiency, another key to the achievement of a transition from dependence on fossil fuels to a low-carbon, no-waste society. In December 2008, energy ministers from 15 countries including the G8, China and India issued a joint statement calling for an International Partnership for Energy Efficiency Cooperation (IPEEC) to be established during 2009, with its secretariat located within the International Energy Agency (IEA).

These new initiatives need to be functional by the end of 2012, when the first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol ends. Going forward, they can serve as a focus for building international cooperation and play key roles in the implementation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

In addition to these measures, I would further propose that an International Sustainable Energy Agency be created in the future under the aegis of the UN to support and promote the work of these two organizations in order for international cooperation on energy policy to firmly take root throughout the global community.

At the same time, it is important for individuals to actively engage in education and awareness-raising activities in pursuit of a sustainable global community in line with the goals and spirit of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, which reaches its midpoint this year.

### **Shared responsibility through international cooperation**

The second pillar I would like to propose is to promote a sharing of responsibility through international cooperation on global public goods, a key element of which would be the creation of a World Food Bank.

Starting in the fall of 2006, a sharp rise in grain prices led to simultaneous food crises in numerous countries around the world, forcing an additional 40 million people to live in a state of hunger. It is estimated that 963 million people now suffer from malnutrition worldwide.

The tragedy is that this was not a natural but a human disaster resulting from market speculation and increased biofuel production.

To prevent future repetition of this crisis, we need to design a mechanism to keep a certain amount of grain in reserve at all times as global public goods so it can be distributed as emergency relief during a food crisis or supplied to the market to stabilize prices. This is an idea I first raised 35 years ago.

The food crisis was one of the focal points discussed at the G8 Hokkaido Toyako Summit held in July 2008, which led to the G8 Leaders Statement on Global Food Security. This is an issue demanding urgent attention, as food security is the vital basis for sustaining human life and human dignity.

I would also like to propose the introduction of innovative financing mechanisms such as international solidarity levies for the purpose of achieving the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Among existing mechanisms of this kind are the International Finance Facility for Immunization (IFFIm) to support immunization programs that save millions of lives and the Air Ticket Levy to help provide treatment for such infectious diseases as HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis.

Possibilities for other mechanisms such as a currency transaction tax and a carbon tax are currently being explored. This is an undertaking worthy of the description humanitarian competition, where various states constructively compete with one another in the sphere of soft power by developing better ideas and initiatives.

There is an urgent need to energize discussions toward the Fourth UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries scheduled for 2011 to build momentum toward the fulfillment of the MDGs. And we must construct tightly knit safety net systems throughout global society to safeguard the weak and most disadvantaged beyond 2015, the target date for achievement of the MDGs.

“The bottom billion”—the poorest of the poor in 58 countries, who have long been



left behind by global economic growth—became one of the focal issues at the UN last year. The stark disparity in the value of human life and dignity, virtually predetermined by where one is born, is a pathological distortion that must absolutely be eradicated.

It is my earnest hope that Japan will demonstrate active leadership in the effort to establish, as a global common good, the right for all people to live with true human dignity and in peace. In doing so, Japan can draw from its own experience of postwar recovery that was termed “miraculous.”

### **Shared efforts for peace toward nuclear abolition**

The third pillar I would like to propose is to build an international framework for reducing and banning nuclear weapons. This falls under the heading of the sharing of efforts for peace toward nuclear abolition.

In any discussion of nuclear weapons, we must bear in mind the fact that the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) does not give the five recognized nuclear-weapon-states the right to retain their “special” status indefinitely.

For two consecutive years, former secretary of state Henry Kissinger and other prominent U.S. political figures have issued a proposal for a nuclear-free world. This has sparked increasingly active discussion of nuclear disarmament issues including in the nuclear-weapon-states themselves.

To ensure this opportunity is not lost, I call for the prompt holding of a U.S.-Russia summit, where a basic agreement for bold nuclear arms reduction plans could be reached. This would clearly demonstrate to the world the two nations’ commitment to disarmament ahead of the 2010 NPT Review Conference.

I would urge that, building on such a U.S.-Russia consensus, a five-state summit for nuclear disarmament, including the other nuclear-weapon-states and the UN Secretary-General, be convened regularly and start drawing up a roadmap of truly effective measures to fulfill their disarmament obligation stipulated in Article VI of

the NPT.

The conclusion of a Nuclear Weapons Convention (NWC), which would comprehensively prohibit the use, manufacture, possession, deployment and transfer of nuclear weapons, is another challenge that should be pursued.

A Model Nuclear Weapons Convention was drafted under the initiative of NGOs and submitted to the UN by Costa Rica in 1997, and a revised version has already been circulated as a UN document. Last year, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon urged countries to consider negotiating a NWC.

The policy of deterrence, to which the nuclear-weapons-states continue to cling, has served as a justification for other states to seek nuclear weapons capability; it is vital to establish international norms that comprehensively prohibit nuclear arms with no exception for any state.

The second president of the Soka Gakkai, Josei Toda, condemned anyone who would use nuclear weapons, irrespective of nationality, in his declaration calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons issued in September 1957, the year before his passing. He saw that the national egotism that underlies the urge to possess nuclear weapons presented a dire threat to the future of humankind.

To realize an NWC, it is vital that people of the world raise their voices and strengthen solidarity in the manner seen in the campaigns for the Mine Ban Treaty and the Convention on Cluster Munitions, but on an even greater scale.

Global Zero, a campaign launched in December 2008 aiming to eliminate nuclear weapons and build broad-based public support for this cause, is planning to convene a World Summit in January 2010. I have long called for such a summit, and welcome this initiative. I would urge that negotiations for an NWC be commenced, using discussions at the Global Zero World Summit and the NPT Review Conference as a springboard.

Nuclear weapons embody an absolute evil that threatens humankind's right to live;

they are incompatible not only with the interests of national security but with human security. This understanding must form the foundation for a Nuclear Weapons Convention.

With Josei Toda's declaration as our guiding principle, members of the SGI will continue to encourage people to see the nuclear problem as their own. To this end, we will promote initiatives such as the exhibition "From a Culture of Violence toward a Culture of Peace: Transforming the Human Spirit" and a documentary of testimonies from atomic bomb survivors. These are concrete actions taken as part of the People's Decade for Nuclear Abolition.

The SGI is determined to foster stronger international public opinion with particular emphasis on activities initiated by women and young people, working closely with other NGOs such as International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW), who launched the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN).

Lastly, I would like to make proposals for the strengthening of the UN, which must serve as the hub of humanity's shared struggle to address global problems.

When we consider the future of the UN in the twenty-first century, what we need to do above all is to build a robust partnership with civil society which would be a sustained source of support and energy for the UN for generations to come.

As a step toward building that foundation, I would like to call for the creation of a post of under-secretary-general for civil society relations within the UN. A similar proposal was made in the report issued in 2004 by the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations chaired by the former Brazilian president Fernando Henrique Cardoso.

This under-secretary-general should be a permanent post specifically dedicated to the advancement of NGOs and could, for example, participate in the deliberations of the four Executive Committees on Peace and Security, Economic and Social Affairs, Humanitarian Affairs and Development Operations to ensure that the opinions of civil

society are represented. It would be desirable to make this reform the starting point for building momentum toward giving the UN a human face, providing real meaning to the opening words of the UN Charter, “We, the peoples....”

Another proposal I wish to make is for the creation of an office of global visioning within the UN Secretariat in order to enable the international body to develop a vision for the future and focus its energies toward this. Former UN Under-Secretary-General Anwarul K. Chowdhury, with whom I am currently engaged in a dialogue serialized in a Japanese monthly magazine, has expressed his concern about the lack of such an organization within the UN. He notes that there are offices performing routine duties and functions to coordinate and administer various activities, but no department dedicated to anticipating the challenges that will confront humankind in the future and formulating responses.

I fully share his concern. It is essential for the UN of the twenty-first century to be equipped with an organization with think-tank functions capable of offering future-oriented vision and action strategies based on what the world will look like 50 or 100 years from now. Here, also, ample attention should be paid to reflecting women’s perspectives and the voices of young people who will shape the world of the next generation, and discussions should always take into consideration the empowerment of youth and children.

The Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research, which I founded, will continue to offer strong support to the UN in the area of formulating future visions for humanity, an activity that relates to the very *raison d’être* of the international body.

The Boston Research Center for the 21st Century and the Institute of Oriental Philosophy will also continue their efforts to bring together the wisdom of humanity through the promotion of dialogue among religions and civilizations in support of the UN’s efforts to tackle global problems.

This year is the International Year of Reconciliation, and 2010 has been designated the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures. This attests to the fact that the UN places emphasis on tolerance and dialogue as indispensable means to

achieving the goals of realizing truth and justice.

Armed conflicts and civil wars continue around the world, as evidenced by the recent bloodshed in Gaza and other complex conflicts such as those in Sudan and the DRC. The only means to put an end to these conflicts is to build international popular consensus demanding dialogue and diplomatic efforts for their resolution. UN leadership, along with cooperation and tenacious diplomatic efforts among states, is indispensable in tackling these seemingly intractable problems.

Believing in the power of dialogue, in 1974-75 when Cold War hostilities were intensifying, I made repeated trips to China, the Soviet Union and the United States, meeting with top-level leaders in an effort to bring about a reduction in tension in my capacity as a private citizen. Since that time, I have devoted my efforts to building bridges of friendship and understanding globally.

I have actively engaged in efforts to create bridges of friendship between different cultures while engaging in dialogue with numerous leaders and thinkers in various fields. The results have been crystallized in the publication of more than 50 volumes of dialogues.

The Soka Gakkai was born in 1930, in the midst of a global crisis. The SGI was launched in 1975, also a time of crisis. Undeterred by adverse circumstances, we have spread currents of humanism and a culture of peace to 192 countries and territories around the world through the grassroots efforts of ordinary people.

Embracing this pride and sense of mission, the members of the SGI are determined to pave the way for a society brimming with peace and coexistence, steadily expanding the global solidarity of people through the power of dialogue toward 2010, the year that will mark the 80th anniversary of the Soka Gakkai and the 35th anniversary of the SGI.