

"Beyond Alliances and Nuke Treaties: A New Idea in Foreign Policy"

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Debate over the future of US foreign policy tends to break down along standard lines: the merits of alliances, use of force, and the proper means to respond to nuclear proliferation. But lost among these arguments — and how to apply them in places like North Korea and Iran — is the need for new approaches that could reshuffle the world deck. The country urgently needs ideas that can lead to real change in conditions.

After WWII the Marshall Plan achieved real results and strengthened our position for the Cold War. Now there needs to be a new competition of ideas. We'd suggest radically expanding one policy we know well that germinated six years ago, but has not been fully exploited.

We left the Clinton White House six years ago proud of the work we did encouraging the distribution of food to needy people. Every Administration is able to help millions of poor and hungry people - but everyone also knows the real limits of direct aid. It may not encourage local economic development, and in some cases can stifle it. One program we worked on was different.

The Global Food for Education Initiative (GFEI) offered food to poor children in developing countries who otherwise would have little or nothing to eat. And it encouraged parents to send their children - mostly girls — to school, with powerful results.

This is the right time to make an imaginative and dramatic commitment - every child in the world should have enough to eat and get an education. It's a commitment the United States could lead and support, just as it did the Marshall plan. If we were to lead a new, ambitious effort to enable every child have at least one meal a day it would not only remind the world of America's commitment to the well-being of others, it could change the future and politics of the developing world.

The scope of the problem is huge. Today an estimated 300 million children in developing nations are chronically hungry. More than one-third of these children, approximately 120 million, do not attend school. Most of them, sixty percent, are young girls. In too many countries fathers see no reason to send their daughters to school. The problems of young, uneducated women, some of whom marry as early as age 11, are sadly predictable. A terrible cycle of poor health, powerlessness, and poverty too often affect generation after generation.

A better education is crucial. Girls who go to school marry later and have fewer children. Better educated and mature mothers are better equipped to care for their

children, have higher incomes and raise healthier families. The link between education and economic success is clear. In countries with an adult literacy rate of about 40 percent, GNP per capita averaged \$210; in those countries with at least 80 percent literacy rates, GNP per capita is \$1,000 and above.

Investments in education, especially for young women, lead not to just to higher incomes and healthier families but lower birth rates and delayed child bearing — all of which contribute to economic growth and stability. When people have hope that their lives, and the lives of their children will improve, then they have a larger stake in political and economic stability.

The global school lunch program already has bi-partisan backing - originated by President Clinton and supported by Senators Robert Dole and George McGovern. The GFEI program is unique in that students and families must actively participate in educational advancement in order for the child to receive food benefits. In addition, the nations in which the school-feeding program operates must commit to universal education: both boys and girls must be able to attend school. The recipient country must commit to educational goals and agree to take over the US funded school-feeding program after a few years and thus assure the benefits will continue into the future.

The cost of a global commitment is reasonable given its potential for good. In the first year we worked on the program, for \$300 million a GFEI pilot program provided nine million children in the developing world the assurance of at least one meal a day in a school setting. Expanding the program adds up to real money, but a potential real bargain. For less than \$4 billion we could likely feed every child and get them into school.

Fifty years, facing the threat of Soviet expansion and a few years removed from the blood shed of WWII, Harry Truman pushed through a remarkable idea that sparked a European resurgence. The Marshall Plan. Let's hope a presidential candidate this election cycle will go look for some beyond traditional ideas of foreign policy options and offer a new approach for how America can once again promote growth, stability, and change the world for the better.

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