

## A Modest Proposal for Long Term National Security

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A number of observers in the US have noted the peculiar characteristic of the American political structure that taxes the best and most proficient citizens to support those unable to contribute their fair share to the overall well-being. The growing recognition that this is unfair and damaging is fueling criticism of Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. In additions, trends in tax and bankruptcy law reflect the awareness that non-contributors put the success of our best citizens, and the nation as a whole, at risk.

This wealth redistribution through social entitlements is a relatively new phenomenon in US history. The steady climb in US global power up through World War I was based on the capability of the most capable Americans to see their power and wealth grow unencumbered by redistribution of assets to those not contributing. Unique circumstances in the second half of the 20th century allowed entitlements to grow without costing the US its super-power status.

The global system of nations can be viewed as ecology in which a Darwinian process of selection and evolution is in continuous operation. US health and security is contingent on our ability to successfully compete in that global system. In turn, the capability to reward the most valuable Americans is essential for national security. These are not system characteristics that the US is free to accept or not accept. They are the inherent dynamics of all living systems. The message is, "Adapt or go extinct."

What's proposed here are structural modifications to the social contract Americans have with their government regarding such features as individual freedom, social responsibility, and entitlement. This proposal steps back to the wisdom of the late 19th and early 20th centuries regarding the Darwinian nature of global economies and nations. In that light, this is a return to the values that made the US a great and powerful nation.

### A Bright Future

Imagine that it is 2020 and the US is secure as the wealthiest nation in the world. Our best and most productive citizens remain the world's wealthiest leaders. Tax burdens are at all time lows. Entitlement drain on the GDP have been essentially eliminated. Illegal immigration is a minor issue. Federal government spending is almost completely focused on defense and homeland security capabilities allowing the US to proactively intersect all threats. The voting public is nearly unanimous in support of the government and its policies. Voters uniformly feel that taxation is reasonable and that policy rewards them for their productivity.

The enabling capabilities and policies that have achieved this secure state of affairs are organized around the most important feature of a Darwinian reality: extinction is a frequent and common event as systems adapt to changing environments. The well intentioned and humanitarian policies of the late 20th century made sense in an idealistic sort of way, but they failed to recognize the larger dynamics in play since the creation of the earth 4.5 billion years ago.

### Role of the Federal Government

The primary responsibilities of the federal government are two-fold:

1. Facilitate and support the rise and growth of potent and effective individuals and businesses. The potency of the US in global survival is contingent on this above all other factors.

2. Assist and facilitate the migration of non-contributing citizens out of the system so that unfair and damaging burdens to the economy (and the nation's security) do not develop.

Efforts by US administrations since 1980 have started the progression on the first responsibility. Tax cuts to the most successful Americans are a move in this direction; so are restrictions on bankruptcy and the elimination of welfare. A dilemma develops with the lack of progress in the second responsibility. Often times the elimination of an entitlement only shifts the burden on the best and most successful parts of the US from one place to another. As an example, a large fraction of those not fully contributing have no health insurance, but they still get medical care through Medicaid and Medicare which end up being paid for by those who are fully contributing.

How to complete the transformation to an agile and successful United States?

### The Proposal

As we have shown, the migration of non-contributing citizens out of the system is critical to US national security. Doing this with integrity, respect, and fairness presents a huge (but essential) challenge. This is especially critical for the US to manage with such a large number of citizens entering the nonproductive, later portion of their lives.

Addressing this issue first requires that all Americans be reviewed to establish each person's value of contribution (VOC). In concept, this is simply asking the question, "Does the person have a positive net worth?" Algorithms will be developed to include all the necessary features to determine if a person is making a positive net contribution or if a person is taking more than they are giving. To assist in creating an adaptive US system, this algorithm will evolve with the needs of the nation for its success. All Americans would be assigned a VOC according to the following:

- Exceptional Contributor (EC): These would be the citizens scoring in the top 10% of the VOC.
- Full Contributor (FC): These are the remaining citizens who score a positive value of net contribution.
- Not Fully Contributing (NF): These citizens score a negative value of net contribution.

Our information technology and computing capability will allow this to be determined to a high degree of accuracy. This will be done by extension of the tax concepts of "dependents" so that children are included in the contribution calculation.

The EC citizens are the most productive and beneficial contributors to the security and well-being of the US. They are taxed at a lower rate than the FC citizens. (Remembering that there are no entitlement programs, and that national defense and homeland security are the largest pieces of the federal budget).

The FC citizens are taxed at a higher rate as motivation to accomplish more and climb into the EC ranks.

The treatment of the NF citizens is the most problematic, yet the most important for the security of the nation. Protecting the rights of these citizens is essential, as is having a clear due-process for handling their status. All NF people will have access of legal counsel and non-delaying appeals. Here are the steps:

1. On appraising a person as performing in the Not Fully Contributing (NF) category, That person is provided one year probation and is required to develop a Plan for Improved Performance (PIP) to show the path back to FC status.
2. If the person is still classified as NF at the end of the year, all of their assets will be liquidated to pay debts and the person (plus dependents) will move to a Transition Community (TC). As a resident of a TC, the person will be prohibited from having or fathering any more children, lose his or her voting privileges, and surrender normal legal rights.
3. Residents of the TCs are available to the wider labor market on an auction basis (buyers of labor bid for services from residents). All income from outside work goes into a TC Operations and Management Fund. Residents can continue to live in a TC as long as their net fiscal contribution to the community is positive. In this limited environment, this net value can be very accurately established. Medical costs are calculated for individuals and carried as liabilities in the contribution equation. The most critical feature of TC operation is that the ECs and FCs of the nation not be burdened with the costs associated with the NFs.
4. When any person becomes a net drain on the TC O&M Fund, they are moved to an Out-Placement Center (OPC). These services are key. The management of OPCs will outsourced to faith-based organizations to help insure that every person feels respected and valued as a person. There must be pleasant and respectful surroundings and a total absence of pain associated with the end. The tragedy of this necessary ultimate outcome for some will always be recognized.

## Conclusion

Many of the global features that facilitated the ascendancy of the US as a power in the second half of the 20th century have changed significantly. The US must co-evolve with that world or collapse. This harsh reality requires that such features as an aging population and rising medical costs not be considered inevitable. This proposal simply lays out the path by which the best and most productive Americans can contribute to future national security and those unable to contribute do not unfairly burden those who are contributing. This proposal makes no moral statement, it simply reflects the Darwinian nature of competing systems in larger ecologies. Those nations that acknowledge this dynamic and behave accordingly will ascend and thrive. Those that do not will become extinct. This is a path to success for the US.

Wendell Jones is working as a spiritual director and friend to men in recovery from drug and alcohol addiction as an avocation while he finishes his working career in one of the national security laboratories of the Department of Energy. His life journey began with worldly success as a scientist, church member (Deacon and Elder), and officer in the US Army. Then, in 1979,

his younger sister tragically committed suicide. Wendell responded as many do: he blamed himself. What followed was a descent into alcoholism, anorexia, and exercise addiction. The unconditional love of God expressed through a few friends and family brought him back to life in 1985. Since then his gratitude at the unwarranted love he received has manifested itself in a second career as a dispute resolver and ombudsman, and credentials in spiritual direction. He is currently working as a consultant in the Department of Energy to assist in the transformation of the current nuclear weapons enterprise to a safer and much smaller enterprise. His primary commitment is to stand with the lesser, the weaker, and the unlovely to show something of the unconditional love expressed by God in Christ.

He writes a blog on spiritual formation at: <http://web.mac.com/wbjones/iWeb/Site/SF/SF.html>.  
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