

The Global Economy, the Simultaneous Policy and Satyagraha

If asked to reduce to one word what is the core of our world economic, environmental and social problems, in my opinion that word would be COMPETITION.

The reason world problems only seem to worsen is not because we lack the resources, knowledge or will. It is because competition induces fear. Governments fear implementing any policy that might incur the displeasure of internationally mobile capital for fear of devaluation, inflation or capital flight. They also fear imposing tighter controls on industry for fear of capital and jobs moving to other competing countries. Businesses fear the implementation of environmentally responsible technology because it will increase costs and reduce competitiveness resulting in lower profits and job losses. Mergers and acquisitions and their attendant job losses occur less out of greed, but more out of fear for the company to retain competitive advantage and relative safety from itself becoming a takeover target. Third World countries too must compete with one another to attract investment from foreign multi-nationals by submitting to 'structural adjustment' and allowing their raw materials to be plundered and their indigenous peoples displaced. Today, therefore, the main barrier to solving world problems is competition. Competition is, however, neither national nor industry-specific. In the age of globalisation, it's a truly global problem. And global problems require global – and simultaneous – solutions.

In a globally competitive context, we need to ask: How can we get from international competition to global co-operation? How do we build a genuine and co-operative community of nation states capable both of bringing competition back under control and of implementing measures to narrow the gap between rich and poor and to save the global environment? Or in Gandhian terms, how do we achieve the "uplift of the last" of the poorest nations (*antyyodaya*) whilst at the same time building a community of nation states in which "the good of the individual [nation] is contained in the good of all" (*sarvodaya*)?

The Simultaneous Policy is a direct answer to those questions. In a globalised world, the only appropriate basis for co-operation which avoids the risk of capital flight and job losses is for a range of measures to be implemented by *all (or virtually all) countries simultaneously*. That is what I have called the Simultaneous Policy: SP.

The measures of SP would, amongst other things, tax all major corporations and global currency speculation, cancel Third World debt and abolish weapons of mass destruction. The re-regulation of financial markets and corporations would restore genuine democracy to nation states and the proceeds of the taxation would fund development of the poorest countries on a debt-free basis. Environmental and labour protection measures would also be built-in in an equitable manner.

Remember that these measures would be implemented by *all countries simultaneously*. SP therefore represents a low-risk way forward because it removes the key fear of business, governments and people alike: the possibility that *some* major corporations or *some* countries could gain unfair competitive advantage by escaping implementation thus causing a loss of competitiveness, profitability, jobs and votes for all others. In short, by eliminating competition at this level, we also eliminate its adverse consequences.

"But," you might say, "how can we possibly succeed in getting SP adopted by all nations of the world?". The answer is that SP has some rather interesting advantages on its side:

Firstly, since *implementation* is to be simultaneous amongst all nations, it can only occur once *adoption* by all nations has been achieved. It is therefore clear that a gradual process of adoption or 'adoption campaign' must take place first: person by person, party by party and nation by nation. Any individual, any business, any NGO, any political party or any government can adopt SP provided it is adopted in full. Who ever adopts SP risks little or nothing because implementation can only occur when *all* nations do likewise. ***SP is low-risk or no-risk; it eliminates fear and distrust. It is universally inclusive, practical and political, and anyone can adopt it.***

Secondly, since global simultaneous implementation refers to a point in time in the future at which all nations implement the same measures, this creates what could be described as a 'future context' of *co-operation* amongst nations. This 'future context' is clearly entirely different to the 'current context', as we have it today, which is one of *competition* amongst nations. Arising from this, policies that are unworkable and consequently undesirable in the current competitive context can, in a future context in which all cooperate, become entirely workable and desirable. ***SP transforms sterile into fertile; it provides the cooperative basis that allows necessary policies to be adopted.***

Thirdly, whatever the current politics of a person, organisation or political party, if they consider the measures of SP as desirable in a future context in which all cooperate, that is sufficient for their adoption. Because it relates only to the future context of cooperation, SP becomes a non-party political issue in the current context of competition. This allows adoption by any person, organisation or party of any political leaning. Instead of dividing people along party-political or other lines, SP therefore unites them behind a policy for which there is already widespread support. ***SP is not right or left but a policy for the whole world. SP unites us instead of dividing us and challenges everyone to adopt it. Anyone not adopting can have no good reason for refusing.***

All these are good reasons why SP will succeed. But perhaps the most compelling reason is what I call "pseudo-democracy". Today, all political parties once in power, have no choice but to pursue only those policies that will not displease world markets. So whichever party we elect, the policies delivered inevitably substantially conform to those demands thus supplanting democracy with pseudo-democracy: an illusion of democracy in which it no longer really matters for which party we vote. As more and more people realise their votes can make little or no difference, they will increasingly be prepared to vote for ANY party that adopts SP seeing it as the only way to restore genuine democracy, economic and environmental security and peace around the world.

In accepting continued suffering through competition, the adoption process, as it progresses, could be described as a kind of '*satyagraha*'. As each person, organisation or political party adopts SP, they recognise the futility and damage done by continued unfettered competition; they recognise the flaws of our capitalist system and are prepared to be seen to both admit them and stand ready to address them. In adopting SP, they openly demonstrate their non-violent resistance to the current world economic order; a resistance which, as numbers grow, will become a very real and potent "truth force".

Remembering that in most countries it takes only a relatively small number of people to influence the 'swing' or 'floating vote', the target is to get that 'critical mass' of people in each country to adopt SP. For if enough of us do, politicians will be powerless to ignore our "truth force". Indeed, when political parties realise that a critical proportion of the electorate is prepared to vote for *any* party that adopts SP, they are going to find adoption rather difficult to resist. They, too, will have no option but to succumb to the 'truth force' by adopting SP.

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