

WHAT'S NEXT?

For at least a decade, progressive thinking has been imprisoned. The fighting faith of the twentieth century has been paralyzed by the need to protect its past achievements and by a divided political landscape that has left it capable of winning only bare majorities, curbing any initiatives for reform.

2008 marks the chance to begin anew. It's our opportunity to present a new vision of ambition and scope to the nation that addresses the great challenges of our times, from the threats of Islamist terror and global warming to the transformations of the global economy and the aging Baby Boom. In January of next year, the United States has the chance not only to inaugurate a new president, but also a new progressivism.

This campaign season has shown an American public energized and engaged by the political process in ways not seen in a generation and more open to progressive arguments than in many years. However, for all this sense of possibility, we have seen a lack of imagination about what progressives can truly accomplish in America and the world. The media works 24 hours a day, but focuses

on perceived candidate slights and stylistic differences. And despite the large number of presidential debates, they have revolved around the candidates' pasts or minuscule policy differences. No one is asking—or answering—that simple, but vital question: what's next?

That's why we are dedicating a large part of this issue to putting forward a new progressive agenda. *Democracy* always has seen its role as revitalizing and renewing progressive thinking for a new century. Usually, we focus on ideas instead of policies—on overarching approaches rather than the specific proposals which follow from them. But, at this moment, we believe that it is critical to do something slightly different and present 20 specific policies that can point the way toward the next progressivism.

To arrive at this list, we contacted more than 600 policymakers, academics, thinkers, writers, and activists and asked them for their one big idea. We weren't interested in policy tinkers nor the important, but common, policy prescriptions often bandied about. Instead, we looked for big—even radical—ideas that creatively addressed one of the major problems we face, and could conceivably be implemented someday soon. The responses cover the gamut: from the water crisis in the West to the prospects of peace in the Middle East, from middle-class schools to long-term care, and from ending foreign aid as we know it to curbing climate change. We hope these essays provoke a debate over these next nine months until the next president is sworn in, and start to shape the next progressive agenda.

End Foreign Aid As We Know It

Larry Diamond

After more than four decades and \$500 billion in international aid, much of Africa remains as poor, if not worse off, than it was at independence. The same is true around the world: Aid flows profusely to governments with little or no inclination to control corruption and reduce poverty. Despite tough talk about “good governance,” it is still largely business as usual: predatory governments pretend to be promoting development, and the donors profess to be aiding it. The losers are the people of these so-called “developing countries,” who lack the schools, clinics, medicines, roads, housing, irrigation, sanitation, drinking water, credit, and justice that they need to be productive—or even survive.

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