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Toward Cooperative Global Politics

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A NEW FRAME OF REFERENCE

As the millennium approaches, it is not clear whether the world is coming together—or falling apart. Our morning newspaper may trumpet the worldwide triumph of consumption-based capitalism or the emergence of western-style democracy in unexpected places. But when we turn on the evening news, it looks like religious or ethnic fanaticism, rampant nationalism—or the raw ambition of some regional dictator—is creating chaos rather than anything remotely like 'order' of any kind. Which is it: chaos or a new world order?

World chaos, in an increasingly interdependent and crowded world, is an invitation to disaster, with the great accumulation of nuclear, chemical and biological arms in many nations (with more in the U.S. and in Russia), creeping famines and pestilence in the world, and adventurist political and military leaders.

Yet, the existing world order is to the detriment of the great majority of the poor and the weak. The existing system -- the present distribution of power is really "disorder," it favors the rich who are getting richer, and the powerful who are getting more powerful.

It might be helpful if we acknowledged that the collapse of Soviet-style socialism lifts the 'semantic fog' of ideology, which obscured many of the real forces, which have been busy reshaping the international scene for some time. Among these forces is 'nationalism.' At the beginning of this century, the world was basically organized into European-style empires or spheres of influence, which ignored underlying ethnic aspirations for self-expression.

The Soviet Empire turns out to have been the last gasp of a dying worldview,

rather than the beginning of a new one. The demise of the Soviet Empire in 1989 is the end of a long process that witnessed the passing of similar hegemonies whose metropolitan centers at one time included England, France, Belgium, Holland, Spain, Portugal, Germany, Austro-Hungary, Turkey, Japan, and, with respect to the Philippines, Cuba, Panama and Puerto Rico, the United States.

These empires, for the most part, have devolved into constituent parts, sometimes founded on common ethnicity or religion, sometimes not. The number of independent 'nation-states' more than tripled during the post-war period, becoming, in the process, the 'norm' of the global system. The dominant ethical value in international discourse was sovereignty, the violation of this norm, aggression. The Soviets, of course, defined aggression differently than the Americans. Where the old imperial lines drawn on the maps coincided with 'natural' ethnic communities, the de-colonization process served stability and order; where it didn't, it caused wars.

As the ideological fog of the Cold War lifts, the enduring organizing power of ethnicity and religious belief as the central reservoir of meaning for human communities is thrown into the bold relief it has long deserved. In the context of the continuing legacy of artificial boundaries drawn by European explorers, these are more often perceived as forces for division or civil war, than for unification--as in the case of the former Soviet Union, Ethiopia, and former Yugoslavia. An important point to stress is that the motivating force behind what is generally termed 'factional' or 'sectarian' violence is no different, in principle, than that which motivates the aspirations for self-governance within nations whose existence is sanctioned by diplomatic recognition. The status quo's 'tribalism' is the revolutionary's 'nationalism.' The motive behind terrorism in Ulster or in Sri Lanka is, for those who carry it out, no different than the 'patriotic' drive for independence, which forged modern Italy and Germany out of constituent entities who shared an ethnic heritage only a century ago. This same impulse allowed Brazil, Algeria--and the United States--to throw off a hated imperial yoke.

Despite the emergence of so many new nations, it is important to note that the relative status of nations and regions has been relatively stable. At the beginning of this century the list of major powers included the United States, Great Britain, France, Germany, Austro-Hungary, Italy, Russia, and Japan. China and Brazil were accepted as future major powers. As the end of the century approaches, if we substitute the EEC for the European powers--acknowledging that relative rankings have altered somewhat--the names on this list have changed not at all. China and Brazil are still future major powers.

If we step back 1,000 years, Europe, the Islamic Crescent, and China's sphere of influence already dominated human history. If we grant that Japan and the emerging Pacific Basin still acknowledge China as their cultural home, only the Middle East, as a region, has experienced a fundamental decline in its global influence--a decline that understandably motivates present resentment in the form of Islamic fundamentalism.

The emerging 'new world order' is as much a redefinition of what is important, as it is the discovery of new forces at work. While most experts on international relations will readily acknowledge the continuing power of national and ethnic identity as a major shaping force within the global system, many will argue that there are some fundamentally new forces at work. But this is as much a matter of perception, as it is descriptive of the underlying reality. Take, for example, the rise of the ecological ethic and green politics. The negative ecological consequences of industrialization are not new. They go back to the earliest phases of the industrial revolution in the 18th century. And criticism of the rape of the environment goes back almost as far. America's fine system of national parks is the result of green politics at work in the late 19th and early 20th century.

What is new is the growing organizational and political power of the critics. More of us accept the tenets of the Gaia hypothesis than in the past. What is beginning to shift are our values--and our knowledge of just how damaging our behavior has been all along. As a species, we've actually traveled this road before. Some 10,000 years ago, when agriculture was invented--probably in what is now western Turkey--Neolithic 'farmers,' at first, planted nothing. The first 300 years or so of the agricultural revolution consisted of a break-through in the systematic gathering of the natural produce of the earth. This innovation resulted in the world's first true villages, and a sudden, rapid rise in population. But systematic exploitation, without returning seed to the land, led to mass starvation. The survivors learned that we must return to the earth what we take from it.

The modern industrial revolution started about 300 years ago. Again, we are systematically reaping what we have not sowed. Once again, our numbers have exploded. And, once again, we face mass starvation. The present famine in the Global South and in parts of industrial societies is also the byproduct of economic and political structures and belief systems grounded in uncontrolled materialism. The ecological ethic is not new; nor is it's necessarily a modern discovery. The question is, will we come to our senses in time? Or take the case of technology itself--often portrayed as a 'new' independent force for change. Has the relative speed and scale of technological change really become more salient? Of course. Is it really 'new?' Of course not. Roman engineering reshaped the world order of the ancient world and tens of thousands of Romans died of poisoning caused by drinking water flowing through the 'high-technology' of copper pipes.

What is changing is not so much the basic forces shaping events; they have been here all along; what has changed is how we feel about them and the relative weight we assign to them. More of us do not accept that thirteen to eighteen million human beings, most of them children, die each year as a result of hunger, while our planet has enough resources and know-how to provide enough for every person on earth. This has an important consequence. The new framework reference of world problems is an artifact of the minds and hearts of people. It is not something that is happening to us, or that we are discovering through observation. We are creating it.

THE FIRST GLOBAL CIVILIZATION

The postwar world political order is dissolving faster than visions of a new order to replace it are being developed. For all its unpleasantness, the bipolar Cold War at least offered predictability and stability for half a century. The current fluid situation offers both the potential for evolution into a stable, peaceful relationship at a much lower level of tension and armaments, and the risk of devolution into instability like that of pre-1914 Europe. The end of the Cold War may usher another specter of Balkanization among nations, competing and fearing each other. The new concentration of power on the world level-globalization and privatization may leave us in an even more desperate situation.

The likelihood that the outcome will be good will is greater if nations are guided by a vision of a more stable, peaceful political order. But it is not enough for each nation to have its own vision of a better future. Unless the vision is shared by nations whose independent actions must be coordinated to bring it into being, their actions in pursuit of their own visions are not likely to produce a result that is desired by any of them. Today, such a vision does not seem to exist.

We are not going to get a viable global order by bringing the poor of the world up to the industrial ever-ascending material standard of living. Even if this were a feasible goal, the planet wouldn't stand that. And the crisis we face will probably not be resolved by the industrial societies descending to the Global South's poor standard of living. We certainly are not in a stable situation so long as these disparities remain between those who are living quite well, and those that are barely living.

We have moved from a humanity which lived its collective life as fragments of the whole into a new context of humanity as a whole. We are living in the first global political community. As we stated earlier, the first global industries are emerging. And, along with them, the foundations for a global economic system. We have entered the first truly global civilization since the days of the Roman Empire.

World politics is shifting from a horizontal axis of Right vs. Left or West vs. East to a vertical axis of economic materialist values vs. ecological, feminist, and spiritual values. These issues for the near future focus on who controls the system of technology and who controls the system of beliefs. At present the material beliefs underlying the world economy prevail. On the surface, policy seems to be the critical issue. That is an illusion.

The belief system is the issue. Likewise, on the surface, equity seems to be the issue. The real issue is the belief system. We are driven to contribute to the starvation of the Global South because of unconscious belief systems.

In the presently dominant world economy, we have some assumptions that are being challenged by a majority of people of the globe. The first is that it is perfectly appropriate that the rich should use whatever they want if they can pay for it. Second, there is an assumption that it is appropriate to resolve social issue,

issues that may affect other peoples around the globe and/or future generations, by economic rationality. In other words, it is ultimately economic reasoning that guides our development policy. There is an assumption, the consumption ethic—that somehow we are better off if we consume more and more. All the economic indicators we use are essentially indicators of resource consumption. They go under different names, and they may look a little different. But when we come right down to it and see the correlation between resource consumption and indicators such as GNP, we have built a premise that increased consumption is increased economic growth, and is the desired positive direction of development.

The culture of the industrialized nations dominates the globe with that type of thinking. Implicit to a great extent is the assumption that all of the world's religiously based cultures are predicated on illusion because they cannot be supported by materialistic science, which is the best knowledge the world can have. All of the cultures of the world are overrun by this ideal. They all have to become materialistically, and economically westernized if they want to play the game. In development, human needs, human rights, and the quality of human interactions are all sacrificed in pursuit of the elusive goal of economic development. The development policies in industrialized countries are based on these premises too.

There is an increasingly disquieting situation facing the Global South. It was not very long ago that we spoke confidently of the Global South moving through a process of development, very analogous to that through which the West had moved. It was widely accepted that the Global South was experiencing a take-off, like an airplane moving down a runway and gradually gathering speed, and eventually reaching a self-sustaining situation, where, under its own power, it is able to make its own way. It was just taking a little longer for the assistance, the foreign aid and the investments and that sort of thing from the West.

We are facing a situation where there is no realistic prospect that a large number of countries of what we call the Global South are in fact going to approach anything like sustainable development or modernization in the western sense. There are a variety of reasons for this. Population pressures on the land, people having to leave rural areas as a consequence of that, growing urban agglomeration, massive unemployment, urban unrest—these are only a few of the reasons. The result is political instability—governments and populations under siege. Additionally, increasing energy costs have hit the Global South very hard. The cost, the annual energy bill now facing the Global South, is considerably larger than the entire aggregate flow of assistance to the Global South. Finally, the kind of environmental limits that we've now begun to recognize as part of the physical make up of the planet simply will not permit a replication of Western patterns of development.

COOPERATIVE POLITICS

The illusion of independence has been replaced by the paradox of interdependence. While interdependence provides increased points of leverage for the rich and powerful, it also raises the costs of exercising that influence and

reduces the freedom of action of the privileged. There is a particular irony here for the industrialized countries in that interdependence implies global issues necessitating a global response, but interdependence also circumscribes the exercise of global power. The uninformed or careless use of power -- particularly military power -- in such circumstances can easily be self-defeating.

All of this suggests the utility of a non-traditional approach to national security -- an approach that is beginning to receive attention. This strategy calls for a state to strengthen mutual dependencies and cooperative linkages between it and other states, i.e. exploit existing tendencies toward interdependence. Security from this perspective is achieved less by placing a potential adversary state at a power disadvantage than by circumscribing its freedom and incentive for hostile actions. But, as previously noted, such ties constrain the actions of all states involved. Consequently, adoption of an interdependence strategy carries with it an implied willingness to downgrade sovereign freedom of action as a defining characteristic of national security. On the other hand, a fully developed interdependent system carries the promise of security that is durable --not the elusive quality with which we have been familiar. This is true because from an interdependence perspective, world politics assumes non-zero-sum characteristics.

Enhanced security for one state requires improved security for all. Hence the concept of common security which postulates the existence of common interests that, if served, result in increased security for all states. The maintenance of the system as a whole thus becomes a priority goal of national policy. A handful of states can no longer control what goes on in the world. Hegemony has become a historical curiosity. The superpowers have been disposed, the victims of their own technological breakthroughs. The only workable instrument for the ratification of interstate decisions in the emerging world order will be a broad consensus of peoples and governments.

Consensus -- the distinctive political tool in relations among equals -- has already gone far to replace armed force as the preferred instrument of national policy. "Realists" may object to the naiveté, the instability, or the shortsightedness of some manifestations of the consensus, but it would be sheer folly to challenge either its existence or its power. The process of consensus is so new a method of reaching binding international decisions that mistakes and contradictions in its application are inevitable. But we have little choice: the emerging global order will either learn to live with mass opinion or it will not survive. Trial and error -- seasoned by patience -- will teach the elements of an operational code to govern the new process, and consensus will become a more efficient and predictable instrument.

Consensus does not demand a radical transformation of the global system. Most of the old ways of thinking and acting in world politics will be useful in the future. Negotiation, persuasion, accommodation, and even certain forms of coercion will remain as standard features of interstate life. The loss of the ability to force a verdict by war will do little more than impose one more limitation on the practice of statecraft -- a more fundamental inhibition than any the system

has accepted up to this point. It is true, but nevertheless one that will leave room for vigor, imagination, and skill in framing and executing national policy. The process of consensus, however, underscores the obsolescence of the competitive model of world politics, which has long served as the basis of international economic and political structures. It is a model predicated upon the assumption that competition among nations, all pursuing their own self-interest, will, through Adam Smith's "invisible hand," miraculously lead to the increasing betterment of everyone. Consensus introduces a cooperative model of World Politics, which focuses on the benefits of international stability in the global system. No one country can achieve it by itself. In fact, everyone has to make sacrifices. The cooperative model departs from the zero-sum competitive power-politics model where one-nation gains and the other lose toward common action resulting in mutual benefits.

In economics, the competitive model has functioned well to explain the provision and distribution of private goods. It served the very important function of guiding the stimulation of economic expansion and development. The problem is that the model simply failed to explain voluntary cooperation to provide public goods, as opposed to private goods. Public goods are those that are shared and enjoyed by a large number of people. Two key characteristics distinguish public goods from private goods. The first characteristic is that, in general, they cannot be provided by any single individual, or small group of individuals. It requires a major, concerted effort by a large number of people. The second key characteristic of public goods is what is referred to as nonexcludability, that is, each person can benefit from the public good even if that person does not contribute to the provision of the good (as with public television programming).

In other words, there is a self-interested temptation for each person to take a free ride on the efforts of others: to simply sit back, let other people provide the public good, and enjoy it without having contributed to it. Of course, if everybody always did that, we would not have any public goods. The important point to note here is that, because of these two key characteristics of public goods, the unrestrained pursuit of individual (or corporate or national) self-interest cannot in general provide public goods.

Public goods cover a wide set of activities. Some obvious ones are an ecologically sound environment, international management of food and energy resources, national defense and the avoidance of Armageddon, and morality. Public goods require the correction of the aggregate negative side effects of the unrestrained pursuit of self-interest. In other words, the avoidance of what we might call "public bads" is a public good. This is a key area in which international cooperation is going to be necessary. Carbon dioxide pollution that contributes to global ("greenhouse") warming, mass hunger, energy shortages, arms transfers, and ocean pollution are problems, which no single country can solve. Each country is tempted to say, "Well, my contribution to this problem is minimal, so I'll go ahead and do my polluting activity and let other people work to clean up the environment." Of course, we are aware that major polluters are not limited to nations. Each person, each arms merchant country, can always say,

"Well, I might as well go ahead and sell those weapons to such and such a country, because if we don't sell them, another nation will."

Morality (ethical rules to guide our conduct) is something that everyone benefits from and that no individual can provide alone. It requires continued cooperation by everyone holding that ethical system in order to maintain it. Yet, in general, everyone has a temptation to let everyone else behave ethically and to exploit that behavior by taking advantage of the other people.

So, the class of public goods clearly covers a wide range of important examples. Voluntary cooperation to provide public goods, it seems, cannot be explained by simple self-interested behavior. It requires some minimal ethical assumption. Ethics can be seen as motivated not by pure altruism, but by a more enlightened self-interest, based upon a more inclusive conception of the self (or of the community), in an increasingly interdependent and interconnected world. An ethical assumption to begin with is the existence of a norm of fairness, a norm that requires an individual to bear a share of the cost that is borne by those who are also cooperating in an action, rather than simply taking a free ride, as self-interest would dictate.

What are some of the characteristics of cooperation based on fairness that would be relevant to global cooperative politics? In the first place, to have cooperation of that sort requires the identification and acceptance of shared objectives that can only be reached through cooperative efforts. Second, each of the potential cooperators has to have an expectation of personal benefit from this cooperative effort. They are not obligated by fairness to contribute to an enterprise from which they expect to get nothing back. A third important aspect of voluntary cooperation based on fairness is that there must be a fair distribution of the benefits and costs of cooperation. Questions of international social justice cannot be avoided.

We simply cannot expect a person or a group, a minority group, for example, or a nation that feels it is being exploited, to be willing to make any significant sacrifice of their own self-interest to benefit their perceived exploiter.

Let us emphasize that fairness is an ethical norm, and does at times require that we set aside simple self-interest in order to adhere to the norm. However, the norm of fairness does not require unilateral self-sacrifice. It is not a norm of pure altruism. Fair individuals are obligated to contribute to a cooperative effort only if they can expect to receive benefits from the like contributions of others. This is a key characteristic of the underlying concept of reciprocity, the obligation to return the favor, or, in other words, the obligation not to take advantage of someone who has done you a favor. For example, fairness would not require unilateral disarmament, although it would obligate one not to take advantage of disarmament by another nation. Similarly, fairness does not require contribution to a futile enterprise. We really have to have an expectation of receiving benefits from the cooperation of others.

Because of the mutual expectation of benefits, cooperation based on fairness

requires mutual trust. Since no one party can force any of the others to cooperate, and since each one has a selfish temptation not to cooperate, each must trust the others not to take advantage of both the opportunity and the temptation to cheat. Cooperation requires, then, mutual expectation of a willingness to sacrifice short-term self-interests for the common good.

Cooperation based on fairness involves some risk, because there is a need to rely on mutual trust. The more confidence one has in the trustworthiness of the other cooperators, the less this risk will be. The role of fairness in the game is to obligate cooperators not to take advantage of each other in a risky situation. It is sometimes necessary to build a basis for trust by starting with relatively low-loss, low-risk cooperative ventures, and working up to bigger, higher-payoff, but higher-risk enterprises.

A related problem is the double standard of morality often used. People often have one standard of ethics with regard to their in-group, however that is defined, and a different standard of ethics with regard to their perceived out-group. This may be one of the greatest challenges in building international cooperation, because of the fact that people tend to draw their in-group lines, at the farthest extent, at their own national borders.

While having shared objectives that benefits everyone is a necessary precondition for cooperation, it is not sufficient. There is a crucial role for leadership in converting shared objectives and a shared norm of fairness into effective cooperation. Leadership is needed to establish the mechanisms for cooperation and to ensure that efforts will be coordinated and that they will succeed. Leadership also has an important part in the formulation of common objectives in the first place. Mechanisms for cooperation must be established that determine the fair allocation of benefits and burdens, and that identify the roles and responsibilities of the various actors in the cooperative enterprise. Another role of leadership is to promote the development of solidarity. Solidarity is necessary for the underlying norm of fair reciprocity to be effective. Leadership has the role of setting an example of sacrifice of immediate self-interest, in furtherance of common goals.

PREMISES FOR A NEW WORLD ORDER

World events and trends will continue to underline the precariousness of a national security strategy based on separateness in an increasingly interconnected and interdependent world. Moving beyond such strategies will require basic reformulations of our dominant world-view. To make the world safe for humanity, we must accord to each other and to the earth the exulted placed previously reserved in our thinking for such things as states, ideologies, and economic growth.

The emerging view expands the dominant Western perspective to incorporate traditional cultures. This means freeing people from the dominance of economic logic over their lives, and in freeing cultures from being driven off the globe from economically based institutions. There is a great deal more emphasis on humane

values. They are assumed to have some sort of reality, and economic values are assumed to be subservient to others less fundamental in that they are, after all only models or constructs whose primary usefulness is that extent to which they accurately express and aggregate the human values. Economic institutions, technology and analyses then are viewed as a means to an end, not as ends in themselves. Technology and economic growth are not the end goals in this view. Rather, the goals of a society must relate to the culturally-based goals of its people.

The materialist world view implicit in the institutions of modern industrial nations is not a promising base on which to construct a viable new world order. A suitable new world order should enhance the four pillars of our existence: the natural environment in which we live, our planet; the human environment, that is, us; the political environment, that is our institutions, the way we organize ourselves, and finally, the cultural environment, the way we live our lives.

Our natural environment is the basis of our existence and the key value is ecological balance. If we lose our ecological balance we lose everything. Our human environment is the source of human life. It includes our basic needs including survival and material wellbeing, identity, something that gives meaning to life, and freedom. The key value in the human environment is human dignity. Our political environment refers to our belief systems and institutions. The key value in the political environment is coexistence. A viable political environment is one that is able to sustain pluralism, a thousand and one beliefs and institutions. It is where capitalism, socialism, tribalism and communalism can supplement one another. Finally our cultural environment refers to our life-styles and the way we deal with ourselves. The key value in the cultural environment is diversity. Tolerance becomes the governing principle of human cultural expressions. Culture becomes a resource because culture provides for deep-rooted human needs.

The four key values of a new world order require systems change through development of more effective laws, and through restructuring or establishing responsive governmental and non-governmental organizations. Different actors and different power configurations are needed or plausible alternatives to the present system. We need also a consciousness of transition processes. Change occurs more effectively through evolving consensus.

A new world order represents a shift in our perspective and world view, from the nationstate to one-world; from balance of power to justice; from national interest to human interest; from the rights of states to human rights; and, from independence/sovereignty of states to interdependence; from economic growth as a central value to transformation; from materialism to human progress through spiritual evolution; from an environment to be exploited to an environment that has rights of its own; and from coercion and war to collaboration and non-violence.

Such a vision of a new world order requires a new system of diplomacy. We need to change the diplomatic method, and quite consciously so. The new

diplomacy has a more hopeful view of what can be done than the traditional one. It is more concerned with social change than with merely preserving the international order as it exists, and protecting national interests. The practitioners of the new diplomacy should be more problem-solvers than philosophers, and must possess some inherent distrust of overall theories and plans. But they must also possess a surer sense of values than there is of a game plan.

The new diplomacy must operate on another world-vision than the old diplomacy. The old diplomacy saw world politics as a struggle of nation-states for survival and to protect their national interests. The best that the old diplomacy hopes for is to oil the inevitable changes that occur, thus avoiding the destruction of (western) civilization. The new diplomacy sees world politics as a struggle for world peace in the broadest sense that peace is more than the absence of war, but also is the presence of justice, and freedom for all.

Peace is not seen as an abstract goal to be pursued; peace is a dynamic process of doing and being. Peace is a process. Peace includes both the absence of direct physical violence and war as well as the elimination of structural violence. The latter refers to the consequences of social, political, cultural, economic and civil structure, institutions and processes that lower the material and spiritual quality of human life and the natural environment. Success in this struggle for world peace is dependent upon transcending in the critical areas the provincialism of the nation-states and making more real a world community.

The new diplomacy assumes that all peoples desire and are capable of self-government, that all peoples will find their own form of protecting their own dignity and freedom if they are allowed to do so, and that only in a world of freedom and social justice is the freedom and social justice of all really secure. To deny others and ourselves the legitimacy of caring for other people is to deny part of our own humanity. Likewise, to deny governments as agencies of society the legitimacy to promote humanist goals is to subject our corporate life to the ethic of the jungle, without a struggle.

The prizes to be won under the new diplomacy are novel and unprecedented, but they are worth all the same. Success in the new diplomacy will go as it did in the old - to those who best learn and apply the rules. The penalty for failure may be a disaster; the reward for success may be a better life on this planet for everyone. We are the heirs of an old order of violence. Our legacy would be much greater if we become the architects of a new world order founded upon human solidarity and the wholeness of planetary life.