

The Management of Interdependence*

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The Making of the New International Order: A Prospective
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I would like to share with you some of the reflections that have occurred to me as I have tried to keep us with the Socio-cultural Development Alternatives in a Changing World (SCA) project. My great regret has been that I have not been able to participate actively in your deliberations and therefore had to sustain much of my interest in a second hand manner by reading the materials and by listening to reports of the discussions. But before sharing with you some of these reflections of mine I would first like to welcome you on behalf of the United Nations University. I also would like to thank Governor Nagasu for his hospitality and for providing us this very beautiful room for our conference. We are looking forward to continued collaboration with the Kanagawa prefecture and with the Governor. We expect to have a number of our activities in this part of Japan as a means to further our own objectives of course, but also as a means to involve a wider section of the Japanese scientific and intellectual community in the work of the UNU.

The problem that we will be dealing with in the course of

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the next few days is a problem that forces us to stretch our minds and that pushes us really towards the frontiers of our knowledge and understanding about societies, about civilizations and about change, as well as about the fragility of the coherence of the international systems within which these societal changes are taking place - that have kept us going so far. We are here at the cutting edge of the present state of knowledge and understanding of these problem areas. Whether we will be able to add to the understanding of the problems that are inherent in this situation we will have to see. I certainly hope that this series of meetings and this SCA project generally will show to have added to our common understanding.

The topic of our discussions this time puts us in the middle of the present global crisis. It has been, in fact, this awareness that undergirds this project. But if anything, the present state of the international crisis in itself constitutes significant justification for holding this meeting. It is very obvious now that the breakdown of the international order that emerged after World War II has continued. The capacity of the superpowers to maintain a semblance of structure and order has very obviously eroded to the point where one might say that the intervention of the superpowers, in many ways, adds to the destabilization rather than to the stabilization of the world system in its present state. We are also witnessing the future fragmentation of political structures, a process which was in

a sense delayed as a result of the cold war but which became possible as internal pressures were reduced in the wake of detente. That fragmentation has led to a number of new opportunities for social, political and economic change, but it has also led to a fragmentation of the very fragile political systems in the Third World which emerged from the struggle for liberation and independence. As a result of this fragmentation we are now in a situation in which the continuing breakdown of the international order of post World War II does not present us with any clear alternatives.

I think it has now become so much more clearer than when we started ten years ago, as an outgrowth of the Bandung Conference and the successive Non-Aligned Conferences to speak about the New International Economic Order (NIEO), that the NIEO will not come about as the result of an orderly process of negotiated change. On the contrary we are now finding ourselves in a situation in which the international system within which we had assumed the negotiations could have taken place, itself is in crisis. In fact, the Secretary-General of the United Nations recently in his annual report, warned against the threat of a new international anarchy.

In the economic field, of course, the state of international economic disorder has been obvious for some time. We are really faced not only with an incapacity to overcome the disorder after the collapse of the Bretton Woods Agreements. We are also faced with our incapacity to explain, satisfactorily, the

reasons for the disorder. The crisis that we face in the economic field, therefore, is not only one concerning international economic and financial institutions and arrangements. They also concern the state of our knowledge and our understanding of the changes that have affected the workings of the international system. One phenomenon that we will have to deal with and that we so far have been incapable of dealing with, either organizationally, politically, or in terms of our understanding and of theory, is the separation that has taken place between the workings of the financial system and that of the international economic system.

The new international anarchy, of course, shows itself in the many forms of fragmentation that we have seen; but beyond this it also shows in our incapacity to bring the arms race under control. Nuclear weapons development as well as the trade in arms has now effectively escaped political control. We are all at a loss as to how to contain these processes. It is in a very ironic sense a manifestation of the power of science and technology, as well as of the deeper underlying problem, i.e., of the degree to which we have lost control over the processes of scientific advance and technological innovation. It has reached the point where developments in science and technology seem to serve our fears rather than our creative human capacities. We are in a situation in which the utter folly of the priorities that we have set for ourselves has become obvious. While science and technology have in principle the

capacity to resolve the problem of hunger and malnutrition, hunger and poverty persist. We, in the South, are carrying a crushing debt burden at a time when the North has high unemployment and a great deal of idle productive capacity. We seem to be engaged now not in efforts to overcome the economic recession, but in increasing protectionism which reduces the effectiveness of the larger units of economic co-operation that have emerged after the second World War. We have reached the point where trade wars are no longer a looming threat, but seem to be around the corner. All this happens in a world that has become interdependent to an unprecedented degree. The fact that this interdependence is asymmetrical and unjust, does not deny its reality. One might reverse the statement and say that the non-viability of the international order is due to the asymmetrical character of the structures of interdependence. But in the process we -- that is all nations -- have become more vulnerable; our borders have become permeable to decisions taken outside one's national borders. All this is taking place in a situation in which rapid social changes are taking place at all levels of society -- at the sub-national, national, as well as the international levels. We are really in a state of global transformation in which many of the processes and events seem to escape the capacity of governments and of nation-states to deal with them effectively.

The other characteristic is the interlinkages. The changes at the sub-national level are linked with those at the national

as well as at the international level and vice versa. At the same time very profound value changes are going on in our societies and our earlier meetings have dealt with them. The value changes have had to do with the higher degrees of political consciousness especially among people who have traditionally been marginalized and who have been so far outside of the political mainstream in their countries. The value changes also affect the levels of cultural and religious awareness. And one might even speak about the breaking through, once again, of a new awareness of the transcendental meaning of human life in a number of our cultures. But the value changes also express themselves spatially, that is people have started to move. People are on the move not only politically -- they are also on the move physically. And the major movements of people, from rural areas to cities -- urbanization -- as well as across national boundaries and even across continental divides, constitute an element in the international dimension of global transformation that, I believe, has not been sufficiently taken into account, either in regard to its dynamics, nor in regard to its longer term political, social, and cultural consequences. The movement of the little people upwards through the developmental process, but also as a result of the absence of development in many cases, have already begun to upset conventional, traditional, social and political and cultural equilibria, leading to a great deal of violence not only within our own societies, but also internationally, as these problems

spill over onto the international scene.

At the national level, these processes have led to the erosion of the capacity of our political systems to deal effectively and in a manner that is at least perceived to be legitimate with the changes that are occurring. These profound value changes have led to shifts and divisions within the electorate and which has in many cases made it impossible for effective governments to emerge. We see now in many places of the world weak governments emerging even though power may be concentrated within those governments. Often the degree of concentration of power is simply a measure of its fragility within the society.

We are witnessing now as a result of the very powerful shifts in cultural and value orientations the emergence of single issue politics in many countries -- a reduction and concentration of the political interest in specific issues without regard to the complex interlinkages of such issues with broader national or international problems.. We are witnessing also the development of underground economies that escape the regulatory power of the national bureaucracies. This is happening in the North, in the South, in the East, as well as in the West. Everywhere we are witnessing the changes that reflect the growing incapacity of the political systems to deal with the changes that are occurring within the society.

One of the additional changes that we will have to take into account, whether we live in the industrial North, or in

the pre-industrial South, is the aging of our populations. These are bound to have an impact not only on our family systems, especially in the South where the family system is a very essential primary social unit. But they also raise very important policy questions as to how to deal with the specific problems that result from the greying or aging of our populations. This will raise questions with regard to the use of leisure time as well, not only with regard to the family and sustainability of the family, but the longer life span that one may expect -- there is a life expectancy of close to 80 years by the year 2000. It raises very profound questions about how the human being should spend the 250,000 hours that will be available to him over and above the time that he has to spend maintaining his life and working and learning.

Already now we are having to face the crisis of the welfare state -- the capacity of the welfare state to support a growing cohort of old people through a decreasing cohort of young people resulting from the decline in the birth rate after the baby boom in post World War II. In the South, of course, the problem is different because, while aging is taking place, the median age of the population continues to decline; the youth cohort therefore is larger. We will be faced with an entirely different complex of problems arising from the pressure of larger numbers on a rather rigid labour market. This is bound to lead to tremendous tensions on the political system, whatever its ideological orientation. There are profound questions of

this kind that will shape the nature of the civilizations that may emerge, if they emerge at all, from this very dangerous period of transition. And it will force men to face, in a number of different ways, the question of the ultimate meaning of human existence.

At the global level, these problems have added to the fragmentation and drift in international relations -- the uncertainty and unpredictability of political behaviour of individual countries as well as of alliances. It is quite certain, it seems to me, that in the next 20 years we will see not only continuing fragmentation, but also very important shifts in the distribution and configuration of power across the globe. Innovations and weapons technology combined with major shifts in political orientation may well lead, 20 years hence, to entirely different configurations in the systems of political and military alliances that we now know.

This then brings us to what I perceive to be the heart of the problem that gives the present process of global transformation its uniqueness. The rapidity of social change now outstrips the capacity of our institutions and our political systems, be they national, or international, to deal with and to absorb those changes in an orderly fashion. The rapid rate of change is determined by the rate of scientific and technological innovation, by changes in military technology, but also by changes in communications, its technology, and its cultural impact. All this makes the whole process of global transformation an extremely

untidy one. History is always, of course messy. If there is one lesson that we can learn from the study of history it is that it refuses to conform to the categories of the mind. But the uniqueness of the present process of global transformation, I believe, lies in the degree of unpredictability and the degree of messiness or lack of fit with the present categories of the mind with which we tend to look and try to understand the nature and dynamics of the process.

This is happening at a time when the management of certain specific global issues becomes more essential than ever if humankind is to survive. The juxtaposition of the increasing disorderliness of the processes of global transformation on the one hand, and the clear need for a greater management capacity to ensure, at least the survival of humankind, gives this period of global transformation its uniqueness and its urgency. What are some of these problems that require more effective global management? They are, of course, in the first place, the problems of arms control at the nuclear level and at the conventional level. They are problems that have become routinized, ritualized, and as a result, deprived of meaning. But urgency to develop greater political pressure to get these negotiations off dead-centre has become very obvious. We see now new waves of political consciousness and political movements arising in a number of countries. But popular movements in themselves may not be enough to change the dynamics of arms control. These movements will have to develop higher levels of political,

technical sophistication in the arms technology and dynamics of arms control, if we want to stop the drift there and the danger of the development of new chemical warfare weapons and weapons that will lead to a competition for the control of space.

The fragility of the economic system is another dimension of the global problems that will require more effective management. We will have to go beyond the present recession and protectionism. Even if we can stem that particular problem, it is very likely that we will have to adjust to a long period of slow economic growth at high levels of unemployment that will affect the OECD countries. Neither they, nor the South, nor the East, nor the West are prepared for the consequences of such a scenario.

I have already made a few points about the problem of migration. That, too, I think, will increase as the structural inequalities on a global scale persist. And we may have to begin to think in new ways about the magnitude of the process of migration as it is likely to manifest itself by the year 2000. The movement of people to rich areas and to empty spaces is very likely to assume proportions that will force us to think about the manner in which humankind has organized itself in systems of nation-states. There are, of course, the obvious problems of the global environment, the global commons, the management of the shared resources of rivers, the seas, space, communications, of which the most urgent one may well be that of forestry.

If the international order is breaking up, if no alternative is visible as yet, if at the same time there is this minimum

degree of international management that is essential to prevent the ultimate catastrophe facing humankind, then what is the central problem that we should address at this particular meeting? I believe it has to do with the management of interdependence in a global system that is itself in transformation. The central problem there, it seems to me, is the governance of the transition; or if one may want to put it in a more negative sense, the avoidance of the ultimate catastrophe. Of course, we all agree that any viable new international order should be characterized by a much lower level of violence, much greater disinclination to resort to it, and greater equitability in a multipolar political setting. This will require more democratization and greater capability of overcoming the structural dualism and inequity in the international system. It will also require, more than ever, cultural pluralism. The pervasive power of history, the persistence of traditional cultural attitudes that pervade and change even so-called modern institutions that we have put in place after independence, show that we cannot think of our future without having a very profound awareness of the past, as well as of the variety of different ways of being, individually as well as collectively. All this is to take place in a situation of rapid interlocking change at all levels of societies and across the whole range of human activity. One thing however has also become clear, and that is the inadequacy of our present state of knowledge and understanding

of these problems. Certainly we are going through a knowledge explosion, but much of the kind of knowledge that is needed to help us understand our problems better and to bring us closer to a solution is not forthcoming, because of the disassociatedness of the particular pursuit of scientific knowledge, of the manner in which it is now organized, from the new type of knowledge needs that will have to be met, if we want to be able to address more effectively the problems that we face.

I do not have to dwell here on the inadequacies of political and economic science as well as of the discipline of international relations in this regard. Neither do I have to speak about the inadequacies of the global models. But I think we should also realize the limitations of conflict theory for understanding or managing the problems of our present time, especially because of the tremendous capacity for destruction and violence that is now available to humankind. It is no longer enough to stop where conflict theory ends. In fact that is the place where we will have to begin to ask the difficult questions of how to live with conflict at this very high level of destructive potential. We do not have the socio-cultural models that could help in explaining the dynamics of the inter-locking processes of change through which our various civilizations are going. Neither do we have an adequate theoretical framework capable of linking up the differences in tempo and rate of these historical changes in various places on the globe that has added to the complexity of our situation, and to the difficulties in our understanding

the dynamics of the present international order.

One is tempted to think of one of the possibly most attractive models -- a model which may be capable of reflecting the tremendous complexity of our situation. That model is provided by the meteorological world map. It is that map that shows how small disturbances in one place may lead to large swirls in the international system. It is capable of showing how great disturbances ebb away after their force has been spent. It is, if one is in a philosophical mood, a very satisfactory way of looking globally at the historical process. That meteorological map makes us realize how much of the traditional thinking about philosophy of history has been parochial in character so far, and how very much in need we are of a more satisfactory set of global philosophies of history, and I am speaking advisedly in the plural rather than in the singular. What is amazing about this meteorological map also is the degree of homeostasis it shows. The self-regulatory capacity of the system as a whole in containing the differences within the very narrow limits of temperature change that are essential for the maintenance of life on this earth. It is therefore very seductive to look at our problematique with this picture in mind, and I myself have for a long time entertained and consoled myself by looking at the world situation in that fashion.

The problem with this picture, however, is that it has no operational significance, certainly not in terms of the life span of each of us. Therefore, in a way despite its intellectual

attractiveness, it deprives us of our ultimate personal responsibility for the changes that are now taking place in the world. Neither does this picture add to our capacity to manage the complexity of the various changes that are taking place. Nor does it take into account the unprecedented concentration of destructive power that is now at the disposal of humankind. The rapidity of scientific advances and technological innovation may be another factor that outstrips the self-regulatory capacity that both the global ecological system and the international system seem to have had. We are therefore faced with a new situation that constitutes a definite mutation in the human condition. The ultimate meaning of the theories that may emerge from the conferences in the SCA project lies, I think, in what they can contribute to our understanding of those mutations and to our capacity to handle them. We should, and I hope you will, in the next few days, deal in this context with the centrality of the problem of power. I think that it is important to realize the degree to which the various forms of power have shown their limitations in dealing with the kinds of changes that have taken place in the world; some of these limitations have become quite obvious. The limitations of using nuclear power as an instrument of policy have become clear to many of us. In the same way, the limitations of conventional arms, even at these higher levels of destructiveness, have become clear, in light of their economic and political costs but also of their destructiveness to the sense of moral purpose underlying the cohesion of a society in

making unjustifiable use of such destructive capacity.

We have seen the political limits to economic power. Japan is beginning to face that problem now. It is very curious that so few people have given serious thought to the problem of how to turn economic power into political power. Insight into this question would have been of tremendous significance for the development of less violent and unpredictable alternative international systems.

We are also witnessing new limitations to political power as a result of higher levels of political consciousness. Where political and social institutions begin to fail to adjust to changing political values, perceptions and goals, a very real dichotomy develops between the formal political processes and the manner in which the real concerns of people express themselves politically. When the exercise of political power ceases to be relevant to the real concerns of the people that political power loses its legitimacy. Whatever the degree of concentration of state power with its monopoly of the means of violence, there are now visible limits to the application of such political power -- even though one might also say that the human costs of such exercise within those limits have often been very high.

Therefore the question that we face really is: how can we make an international system work that is democratic, in which no single country, or group of countries, is in control and that is, at the same time, capable of making the changes needed to overcome the structural inequity of the world system? What kind

of power, what mix of different kinds of powers is needed to bring about such changes? It is a problem that is unprecedented. Mankind never has had to face this kind of problem before. We will have to learn to do so in the absence of any supreme law or any supreme power. The obvious danger in such a situation is the veto of the weak, the veto of the irresponsible, the veto of the extremists, the likelihood of the tail wagging the dog, and of the collective human capacity being reduced to its lowest point by the irresponsibility or narrowness of the few. If we can't make such an international system work then we will have lost the supreme challenge of our time.

Of course there are many partial things that can be done and should be done. These include developing more effective conflict resolution mechanisms, more regional and sub-regional arrangements for security and economic co-operation, more effective mediating mechanisms, enhanced capacity to prevent conflicts by a greater capacity of anticipating conflicts and triggering mediating actions. This requires greater information flows, more communications, not only greater exchange of hard data but especially of perceptions -- perceptions of national interests and potential threats. This is an area in which political science has remained very primitive and deficient.

Fear may well be the most important factor that we will have to take into account. How do we learn to manage our fears? It is an essential precondition for the management of an international system in which no single country is in control.

And how do we increase our cultural understanding at the deepest existential level? All this leads us to the central question: how can we learn to exercise voluntary self-restraint in the exercise of power for the sake of human solidarity? This means another quantum jump in attitudes and values. This will however be essential for the emergence of different -- of alternative civilizational answers to the questions of common survival.

The technology for this is available. Our capacity to use the technology however is not there. Our capacity to use science differently is not there. Primarily I believe this is because we have not thought of relating science and the dynamics of its advance and innovation to the manner in which we have organized ourselves. If we are to survive we may well have to think differently about profit as the paramount organizing principle of our societies. But how to do this without falling into the trap of rigid bureaucratization? How to think differently about productivity and efficiency so that these concepts are no longer related in such a narrow fashion to economic growth, but to different kinds of societal growth. These are the kinds of problems that we will have to face. We should realize that the great ideas that have shaped and given direction to the political processes in the early part of the 20th century have now exhausted themselves. And we have nothing to replace them. But maybe it is just as well -- maybe it is not grand ideas that we require. Maybe in this unprecedented situation human beings will require different ways of relating to each other and of aggregating their individual interests in new ways that are now

becoming possible through various applications of the new communications technology.

We will have therefore to make a number of choices, new and different choice about societal organization and social purpose at the sub-national, national, as well as the international level. But in this entire search for new answers we will have to make one ultimate choice, and that is the choice whether we are choosing a scenario for freedom or not. This question arises within our societies, they arise within the international context in the management, the governance of transition in this process of global transformation. At the heart of the problematique these questions pose is the place of freedom. Is there a scenario for freedom or not? These are some of the concerns I hope you will address in this conference. They seem to me inherent in the nature of the problematique that has evolved in your successive discussions over the past years. I am sure elements of these have already emerged but our problem is how to integrate them into the concrete problems and dimensions of the governance of the great transition. In the end, I am sure, it will become very clear that we will have no recipes to offer, no ready-made answers or scenarios or plans of action. I believe that it would be intellectually dishonest to try to do so, and it would not do justice to the complexity of the problem. And if there is one thing we will have to learn it is how to manage complexity more honestly and at a level at which that complexity should be treated. So even if we can only advance a little bit our

knowledge and our understanding of this central problem, at this stage of the game, we will have made major progress, and it is in that spirit that I would now like to conclude this very long -- much too long -- exposition of some of the reflections that have accompanied your work as I have watched it evolve. Thank you very much.

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