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The journal is devoted to the promotion of policies and services for the survival, protection, care and development of all children. Its concern is with the whole spectrum of the child's development and the supportive facilities needed in the structure of the family, the community and society. While principally concerned with issues in the developing world, particularly in Afghanistan, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Mongolia, Nepal and Sri Lanka, *FUTURE* will also have an interest in other countries.

*FUTURE* aims to extend knowledge about the conditions of children and the means to improve them. It advocates that the first priority in national planning should be children. It presents examples to show that resources intelligently applied on convergent services for children are the wisest investment for the future.

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Printed and published on behalf of the UNICEF Regional Office for South Central Asia by Suat Cobanoglu. Printed in India at Rekha Printers Private Limited, New Delhi - 110020.

RN 39286/81 (India)

UNICEF House, 73 Lodi Estate, New Delhi 110003, India

ISSN 0252-1873

# future

1984 summer-autumn 11-12

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Rs. 30 in India  
Airmail \$ 9 Asia, Africa  
\$ 11 Europe; \$ 13 America  
Single copy: \$ 1.50; Rs. 8 in India

### Subscriptions/Advertisements

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# ***social sciences: tools of transformation***

SOEDJATMOKO

**We are in a situation today of drift, danger and social and political fragmentation at national and international levels. Yet, concurrently, we are experiencing the counter-pull of increasing interdependence. All societies, strong and weak, are exposed to many forces and processes beyond their control. We have lost control of the arms race. The international economic system is in crisis, and the current signs of partial economic recovery cannot hide continuing systemic disorder.**

## **international disorder**

A number of forces are at work internationally in the process of global transformation. Major shifts are occurring in the configurations of political and economic power.

Our inability to deal with poverty and inequity has led to the migration of millions of people into already overcrowded cities and across national and continental boundaries in search of jobs and security. In addition, there are more than 16 million refugees adrift around the globe.

These demographic changes have led to massive cultural and ethnic interpenetration, severely taxing social adjustment mechanisms: these have raised political, economic and cultural tensions leading to conflicts that erupt not only along class lines, but also along the fault lines of race, ethnicity and religion.

We are prisoners of our fears, increasingly trying to find security in the threat or use of violence at a time when no country, however strong, can define and ensure its security unilaterally.

A labour force of more than one hundred million people is now paid directly or indirectly by defence ministries. Governments everywhere keep buying ever more sophisticated arms as security, only to increase the world's—and their own—vulnerability. In short, humankind has allowed science and technology to serve its fears rather than its cooperative impulses. Indeed, the whole international system itself is in a state of crisis.

## **domestic change**

Domestically, the process of global change manifests itself in many ways. There is demographic change: the greying of society, urbanization and the diminishing productive cohort in the population.

There is the impact of technology on employment—robotization and automation are leaving growing numbers of what might be called the “structurally unemployed”.

Value changes of many sorts, about work, life-styles, the role of the spiritual and other non-material aspects of daily human life, are affecting human and social behaviour.

There are also the newly assertive voices of the little people on the march, clamouring for attention worldwide: the women's

movement, the peace movement, the environmental movement, and the evolving workers' and peasants' associations in both rich and poor nations. They are becoming a major force for structural transformation and value change.

In addition to international and domestic change, events at the subnational level in a distant country may well affect societies everywhere in the world.

## **institutional failure**

All of these forces for change, in one way or another, disturb the prevailing equilibrium and we see our institutions, at both national and sub-national level, incapable of dealing with the cumulative impact of these changes.

To recap, what this brief overview of the state of global transformation seems to point up most clearly is a world in which all countries and the international system are confronted simultaneously with the centripetal demands of growing interdependence and centrifugal, increasing diversity and fragmentation.

Clearly, paramount is the survival of humankind. It is increasingly apparent, for example, that for all the nuclear stockpiling, the ability of the superpowers to influence the processes of global transformation is decreasing.

*So, what human action is called for in this turbulent situation in which humanity finds itself? What are the responsibilities of the social sciences?*

*How can we learn to control the arms race and manage the international system in a peaceful nonviolent manner when no one is in control?*

*Further, how can we control science and technology, without destroying the creative drive, so that they can work to benefit humanity, not terrorize it?*

*How can we tame a runaway international economic situation where the rapidity of financial information flows and international movements of money has almost completely escaped any sort of reasonable control by even the most powerful governments?*

*How can we preserve the ecological carrying capacity of a globe that in the 21st century must support some 8 to 10 billion people?*

*How can we prepare planners and decision-makers for the management of complex interactive systems where problems cannot be taken up singly but must be dealt with together at many different levels simultaneously?*

*How is the world going to cope with the political and cultural tensions engendered by unprecedented migration flows, and how can we enhance the social adjustment capacities of societies?*

*And, finally, how should social scientists make their contribution to such tough and often politically sensitive problems?*

### **crisis of the welfare state**

No society is immune to the effects of the global forces of change. In the industrialized parts of the world, a number of these forces have come together in what might be called the crisis of the welfare state.

Confronted with this crisis, the only response so far seems to have been to dismantle the welfare state, thereby reducing the burden of the social services and social security in proportion to the production capacity of the nation—at the expense of the poor and the aged.

I suggest that the time has come to begin thinking beyond the welfare state towards new ways in which we could organize ourselves and our societies to meet our needs for a more viable society.

### **new horizons**

Low rates of economic growth could be seen as an opportunity to explore different kinds of societal growth and evolution.

Changing attitudes towards work, longer leisure time, increasing automation, and the potential of the new communications technologies may be made to come together to provide new opportunities to organize and manage our social services and social security systems differently, more in line with the changing needs of the different phases in a longer life cycle.

With the earlier maturation of the young, we might also consider new sorts of interweavings of the learning and work cycles.

Another major challenge in the industrialized countries is the need to retrain labour forces for new industries and new ways of organizing production. Both industry and labour must find ways to overcome the rigidities that have developed in their structures, in order to respond more effectively and efficiently to the technological revolution.

In many areas, there is a need for decentralized, self-managed systems that are less dependent on large bureaucracies. This, however, also requires the articulation of different concepts of efficiency and productivity. We will have to develop new concepts and indicators of social and cultural productivity that may have no direct impact on rates of economic growth.

We also need to think about a restructuring of industrial societies where growth is not fueled by the arms industry—which at the moment is the only growth industry—but is led by other more benign and socially beneficial industries.

The complexities of our modern world are such that no single cultural vision will be adequate in trying to come to terms with them. Each perspective—North or South, East or West—will have something to contribute.

### **towards a plural society**

Therefore, pluralism in the international social sciences community becomes essential, and communication among the various ideologies and schools of thought within this community absolutely necessary to an understanding of international processes and the manner in which our individual societies are affected by global conditions.

Social scientists need to overcome the inclination to concentrate solely on problems in their own countries and on their own methodologies. Rather they must enhance their capacity to understand the values and perspectives of colleagues from other cultures, and look at the broad canvas of human affairs and problems, especially the moral concerns central to our times. Problems of their nations and the manner in which they both arise from and add to the global problematique should be more systematically identified.

North American social sciences, for example, have been preoccupied with stable systems and in particular with organizations. This, I think, accounts in part for their inability to grasp phenomena that take place outside established structures like the military, bureaucracies, and the ruling party. This has imposed serious limits on the ability of social scientists to anticipate events — they have been looking in the wrong places for significant historical actors to emerge.

### **rediscovering the world**

Another need of social science in the North is a greater recognition of the importance not of exporting models but discovering what the rest of the world has to offer by way of a model, that is, to accept the validity of reciprocity.

The social science perspective should include both inward and outward orientations. Macro-social analysis should take account of both the processes of change in a region and their global significance, as well as the internal changes affecting whole societies. More attention, therefore, needs to be given to overcoming the fragmentation and lack of communication among and within the disciplines.

Out of this could come an improved understanding of the process of global transformation and the management of an increasingly interdependent world — an understanding of the dynamics of interdependence and ways to cope with them without resort to war. A study of this must start from an assumption and acceptance of human solidarity beyond national interests.

North American social science, in particular, has generally shied away from normative considerations.

Nevertheless, it is obvious that the identification of the problems in the global transformation process must be a normative endeavour.

One wonders how North American social science could hope to identify correctly the priority problems in the global problematique without being guided by a general concern for values like freedom, civility, justice and equity.

In general however, I think it is safe to say that the overriding considerations and values which should govern the identification of topics is the question of human survival and especially human survival at the lowest possible level of violence and the highest level of freedom, civility and justice.

The global problematique also poses new challenges to the policy sciences. The management of global problems will require concerted international actions, and while the effectiveness of the policy sciences normally depends on the stability of power relations within which the technocratic institutions are capable of making policy decisions with a high probability of implementation, that stability of power relations does not exist in the international setting.

Thus, one of the challenges to the policy sciences is to create

the power conditions necessary for policy implementation on a global or local scale.

### **interdisciplinary interventions**

This cannot be done in the normal historical context, but will entail grasping the structural dimensions of the totality of a world in transformation, and will call for an interdisciplinary intervention—involving not only political decision-makers, technocrats and planners, but various groups and social forces.

Thus, the pluralistic evolution of the social sciences in various societies will require an interdisciplinary approach, with a continuing dialogue between the different perspectives on the structural dimensions of global realities, taking account of newly emerging social theories.

As a corollary to this, social scientists could make an important contribution in studying the management of complexity and the problems this entails, since managing global issues will require efficient concerted international action.

### **non-bureaucratic organization**

The need here is for a continuing monitoring capacity of the process of global transformation as well as an enquiry into the possibility of less bureaucracy-intensive modes of organization. It would be a sad prospect indeed if the capacity for concerted international action were proportionate only to the size of an international bureaucracy.

Finally, we are confronted with the crucial question of how the social scientific understanding of the problems and the factors for their solutions could be communicated to users and decision-makers and assimilated into public understanding and awareness.

The fundamental and rapid current and future social change is such that our societies will have to prepare themselves for a radically different future, which will require a much improved capacity to anticipate and to adjust.

### **towards a different future**

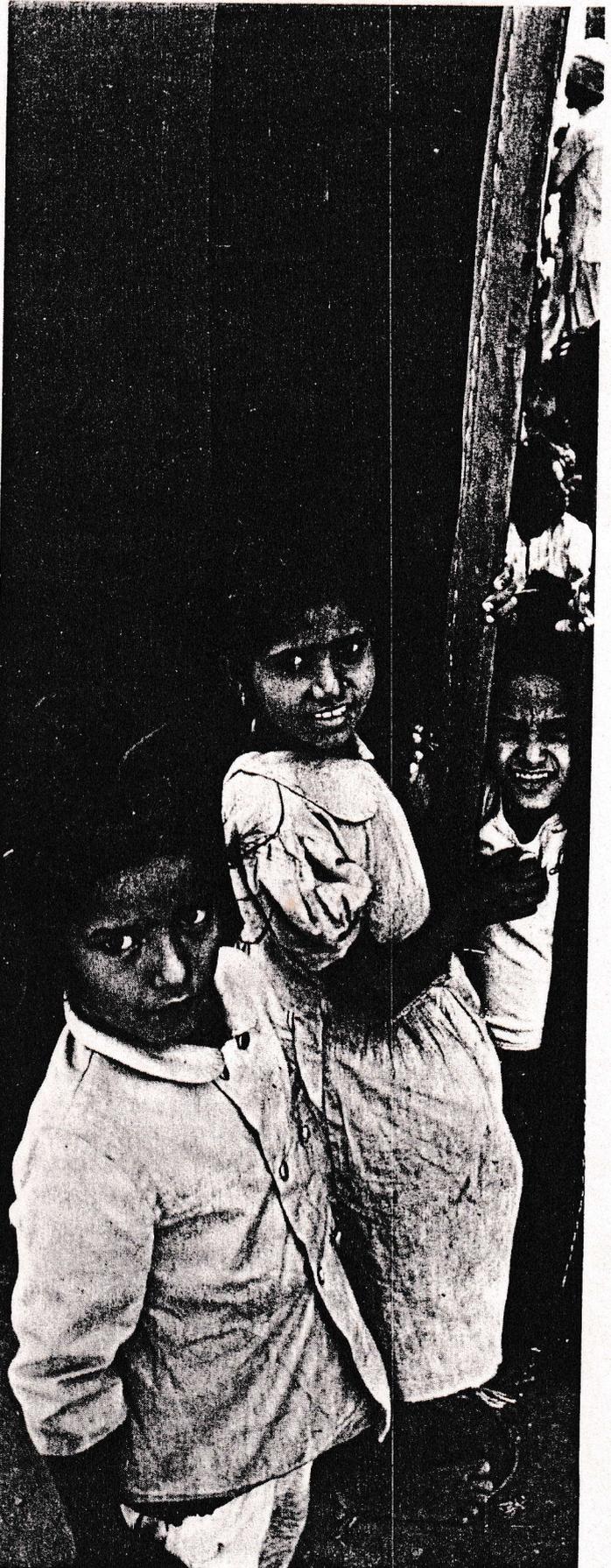
For this reason, I believe the social sciences should become more concerned with the "learning capacity" of nations. Each society will have to learn to live with the emerging future through a learning process that will not only involve the formal education system but especially the informal ones.

It is only by accepting the need for continuous learning and adjustment on the part of our political, educational and social institutions, and by the public at large, that a society can prepare itself for the future. A study to achieve better understanding of the learning processes of whole societies might be an important focus for at least a segment of the social sciences.

For this is the only way to overcome the social and institutional rigidities that have crept into our institutions and our processes which now limit our collective capacity to adjust. And on our ability to adjust, in peaceful and humane fashion, hangs the survival of humankind.

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**The article is based on an address on the subject of "the social sciences and global transformation" at an international symposium organized by the Canadian Commission for UNESCO.**



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