

THE CONCEPT  
of the  
CENTER FOR WORLD STUDIES, INC.

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THE NEED

Mankind has made great progress in understanding everything except himself, his social institutions, and relationships with his total environment. Our capacity for contriving complexities through piecemeal actions has developed more rapidly than our capabilities for comprehending them—and the gap is widening.

This should not be surprising, for we have directed our energies to the creation of myriad specialisms of one sort or another in the belief that an "invisible hand" would somehow tie them all together. Unfortunately, this logic has prevailed in academia as well as in business and government, with the result that we are now attempting to deal with a tangle of threatening problems through a hodgepodge of expedient studies and programs.

The fundamental question is: Can we continue to deal with problems of integrity of government, population growth, threats to human freedom and justice, economic development, stagflation, and many others, in an *ad hoc* way, as if they were *only* a collection of unrelated problems? The answer is that the course of world history testifies to the failure of piecemeal approaches to integrated problems.

There is an urgent need in every sphere of endeavor to develop and enlarge the habit and capability for thinking in the large, to confront what others have called the world *problematique*. This need may be particularly urgent with respect to the role of the Western democratic values of individuality, variety and political participation; values which either now or in the near future could become expedient or unintended casualties of a continued failure to address problems in a global perspective.

It is a basic characteristic of the Western concept of a democratic society that the people as a whole must shape the actions and moral direction of government. This they cannot do if they are ill-informed. The most dangerous consequence of the currently accepted philosophy of specialism is that it encourages people to abdicate their responsibility to participate as *broadly informed* citizens.

A CENTER FOR WORLD STUDIES

Pervasive tunnel vision, an unanticipated by-product of an "Age of Analysis," threatens the stability, orderly development and, perhaps, survival of human society. It is time for the Age of Analysis to give way to an era in which the actions of individuals and institutions are governed by a broad understanding of the workings of human society and by a sense of responsibility for its future development. To be midwife to such a philosophical transition is the long range purpose of the Center for World Studies (CWS).

A global strategic information system is one of many programs by which CWS proposes to assist this philosophical transition. It is becoming increasingly difficult for planners and managers, even in very large organizations, to be adequately informed about strategically important domestic and global social, political, economic, environmental, and technological developments.

Public and private organizations are making fragmentary attempts to monitor and anticipate these developments, often with costly duplication of effort and an inadequate foundation for analysis and synthesis. One CWS aim is to develop sophisticated strategic information systems to serve the needs of industry, government, and other public and private institutions and thereby to promote decentralized, informed planning and decision making in all sectors and at all levels. The program involves developing a systematic framework for monitoring socioeconomic developments and interpreting their implications for future structural change. It is therefore intimately related with other fundamental studies of the Center. It is concerned, also, with the development of educational programs to encourage and facilitate the widespread use of strategic information systems.

### THE APPROACH: I. CREATIVE THINKING

Given our ignorance of the complexities of human society and of the processes of social change, it would be naive to pursue the above purpose independently of programs of fundamental and applied study. Our emerging global society is an ordered system, a rapidly evolving subsystem of the Earth's biosphere, about which we have little fundamental knowledge and apparently little awareness of the need for such knowledge. We expend a significant and increasing proportion of our financial and intellectual resources in frenzied, ad hoc studies of first one crisis situation and then another, to the neglect of basic and comprehensive research; yet modern history clearly demonstrates that practical human progress has depended on the parallel progress of fundamental, theoretical scientific knowledge. To be sure, society's problems cannot be shelved while we search for a deeper insight, but it should be no less obvious that much greater attention must be given to fundamental scientific studies of human social systems if we are to avoid or deal effectively with future problems.

Such studies, although drawing on ideas from diverse natural, social and humanistic inquiries, will require not simply a "holistic," "interdisciplinary" or "multidisciplinary" approach but a recognition of the unity of physical, biological and social systems in the universe and the search for fundamental laws governing the creation, behavior and interdependent evolution of such systems. The problems call for scientific thinking in the large, for the natural philosopher's perspective, for a heretofore neglected emphasis on the systematic, integrative dimensions and methods of natural inquiry rather than an arbitrary amalgamation of disciplines and specialisms. This constitutes a scientific challenge of a new and higher order.

In keeping with this thinking, CWS studies are concerned either with the structure, behavior and evolution of social systems, as systems, or with those parts of applied social policy problems which can benefit from or contribute to fundamental inquiry. Brief descriptions of a few such studies, proposed or now underway, follow.

Sociometro-dynamics. Collision, motion, force, inertia—all are used to characterize social-political relationships; but they also describe physical relationships. In recent decades various scholars have sought to gain insight into politics by patterning their inquiries after the historic scientific inquiries into corresponding physical relationships. The attempts have been characterized either by failure to apply fully the physical-mathematical structure or by a lack of emphasis on the systemic, structural aspects of politics.

A CWS program is looking more carefully at the mathematics of physics as a means of representing the structure of influence in the world political system. The aim is to anticipate future trends of major power competition, alliances and spheres of influence from knowledge of the past. A mathematical model is now created in which present political preferences between nations is the result of the past history of economic, political and social development within nations. Social analogs to physical force, inertia, space, spacetime, and laws such as conservation of momentum make the connection. Necessary empirical tests are identified. The

work points to more precise understanding of domestic-to-foreign, economic-to-political, and other key connections.

Evolutionary theory. Human societies are systems whose processes of structural change are little understood. The Social Darwinists mistakenly sought to understand human society in terms of analogies with biological organisms and what was then known of the processes of organic evolution. Unfortunately, their aborted efforts led to a deep schism between social and biological sciences which has prevailed until recently.

A CWS program is concerned with developing a general theory to account for the origin and hierarchical evolution of living systems, including the complex social systems of humankind, in terms of fundamental physical laws, particularly an extended formulation of the second law of thermodynamics. The theory derives therefrom a principle of “thermodynamic selection” to account for the evolution of all organized systems, from molecules to the hierarchically structured social systems of humans. Darwin’s principle of natural selection is seen to be a special case of the principle of thermodynamic selection. The theory has implications for biophysics, sociobiology, ethnology, physiological psychology and the systemic understanding of human society and its problems.

Normative science. The trend toward value relativism—the development and acceptance of diverse systems and standards of valuation and ethical and moral behavior by individuals and institutions but not necessarily held by society as a whole—has led to increasing interpersonal tolerance but at the same time to a deterioration of the unity, stability and predictability of human society. The complexity presented by value relativism is of central concern in virtually all areas of social policy relating, for example, to urban and regional development, land use planning, energy needs, governmental regulation, environmental concerns, technology assessment and transfer, human rights, and foreign policy. In a proposed CWS program, diverse value systems will be empirically studied and treated as realistic elements which must be part of any adequate systemic understanding of society’s problems.

Other ongoing or proposed topics include improvements in certain important statistical and econometric techniques, a new approach to understanding military arms races, and the implications of changes in Earth’s climate, for social systems.

Much of social science research has come to be programmed by expediency—by the need for quick solutions to complex problems and the availability of public funds to support such research. However, the historical experience has been that major advances have occurred more often than not by those relatively few creative thinkers whose studies were guided by the search for new fundamental knowledge.

Accordingly, CWS aims to identify and attract creative thinkers and to give them the greatest possible freedom and support to pursue their inquiries as they see fit. In practical terms this means that the emphasis is on obtaining funding to support the thinker and his program rather than on marketing technical expertise.

As the above may suggest, the possible range of individual topics—literally from international relations to molecular biology—is without precedent in any one research group. To reemphasize, the essential mentality which CWS aims to foster is that such studies are of interest to the extent that broad, fundamental understanding of human system and relationships can emerge from them. The overriding consideration is to enlist individual creative pursuits in the purpose.

## THE APPROACH: II. EDUCATION

Our social-political-economic problems are compounded by, if not largely a result of, tunnel vision. We have been schooled to believe that the narrow and expedient self-interests of

individuals and institutions are somehow juggled by an “invisible hand” to the benefit of society as a whole, and we have accepted this idea despite growing evidence to the contrary. The solution to this problem lies not in centralized planning and decision making but in expanding our understanding of the interdependence of human activity so that individuals and institutions can act in a more socially responsible way. Thus, it is essential that the knowledge from research be widely shared.

Moreover, it is not simply that research and education go hand in hand but that the conceptual as well as functional separation of these activities serves frequently to inhibit the advance of knowledge of scholars and laymen alike. This is of special concern in the study of human society where the distinction between teacher and student may at times be particularly unclear.

CWS believes that there is a deep need for scientists, scholars, technical specialists and leaders in public and private organizations, and other concerned individuals to work collectively in resolving our social problems and in developing a more humane and viable social order in the future. These responsibilities cannot be wisely delegated to any elite group. We are, moreover, mindful that research may benefit from as well as contribute to the thinking of individuals in other walks of life. The point of science is to augment, not replace, practical wisdom and respect for human feelings and needs.

CWS educational programs will reflect the ever-central concern with fundamental studies of the structure, behavior and evolution of human society as a systemic whole or with the study of contemporary social problems in the context of such fundamental inquiry. Once again, our concern is to promote a habit of and capability for thinking in the large—for comprehending immediate problems in their larger context—and thereby to encourage a more responsible approach to planning and decision making on the part of leaders in business, government and the public at large.

This objective can be realized through a variety of programs, communications and services which will be made available on a not-for-profit fee basis to individuals and institutions. Such programs will include courses, seminars and colloquiums conducted in Center facilities or at other convenient locations. (While CWS is not a degree-granting institution, such courses will often complement college and university offerings and may be accepted for credit by such institutions.) Other programs, including the above global information service, will make available periodical and other communications and information services to enable public and private institutions, large and small, and citizens groups to become broadly informed about domestic and global developments and their implications for long-range planning and decision making.

But global education for leaders and institutions alone is not enough; the distribution of understanding must be democratized so that common citizens come to understand their connectedness to the total fabric of civilization and, in understanding, find the means to contribute to the informed, decentralized solution of problems of which they are at once part and victim.

This commitment of CWS to help democratize responsibility can be illustrated by a special part of the information system, and by another program, the library of international conflict models.

The extensive resources required to develop and utilize a global strategic information system effectively discriminates against all but the largest organizations; yet, for the reason stated, such resources must be readily accessible to all elements of society. Recent advances in telecommunications, however, make it possible to create a system to give the public low cost access to technical and social information. Consider the number of public issues whose understanding requires knowledge of an arcane sort that is currently restricted to a relatively few specialists. CWS aims to translate information into a form that can be understood by many

laypersons, maintain this data base and make it available to the general public. The system would respond to specific information requests and would protect the anonymity of users. An important side benefit of the system would be its possible use as a source of indicators about public concerns; the frequency of requests would constitute a measure of the perceived importance of certain issues.

We turn, now, to our second example, the library of international conflict models. A need exists to synthesize the variety of conflict models and data bases which have arisen in the past decade. Progress in understanding international conflict has been hindered by the lack of compatibility of concepts, models and data bases created for differing research purposes.

CWS is currently creating a library of simulation software which will integrate these diverse elements in such a way that researchers lacking computer expertise can nevertheless attempt reformulation, extension, synthesis and testing of existing models. This development will encourage a greater community of effort among those who are seeking to understand the sources and possible remedies for international conflict or to broaden the context of understanding.

But we have noticed that the library will also be of use in simulation exercises by which ideas about the causes and consequences of cooperative and conflictful behavior can be taught to members of the general public; hence the program can contribute to the purpose of decentralized political responsibility.

The conflict models library also illustrates the close relationship envisioned between research and public education at CWS.

### THE APPROACH: III. PUBLIC PROBLEMS

The following partial list of problem-oriented studies is of obvious practical interest; but, to emphasize an earlier point, each topic is chosen because it relates to the fundamental, systemic, integrative concern of the Center. Although of diverse subject matter, these particular studies can draw upon the basic studies—normative science, evolutionary theory, and so on. Conversely, these problem studies will stimulate the basic inquiries. Many of the topics focus on the social impact of technological innovations or transfers.

The studies are guided by two further considerations. First, the proliferation of government functions in the United States and elsewhere has been accompanied by a widespread perception of growing intrusiveness of government in the sphere of the individual. In particular, bureaucracies, begun as tools of public and large-scale private purposes, actually fail to relate to individuals in a manner that is rational from either a public or individual point of view. The burden of the tool, thus, is now so great that the boundary between the user and the used is blurred. This complex of issues—of government legitimacy, political alienation, and human freedom—will be taken as a significant issue to be dealt with where applicable in any analysis of government activity.

The second consideration relates to distortion in the process of policy evaluation caused by the acceptance of a monetary basis to utility measurement in cost-benefit analyses. It is well-known that this basis is valid only under the unusual condition that a market economy obtains in the particular domain and that, otherwise, monetary value is an unreliable indicator of utility. A corrective is possible, which CWS will use, in the form of “basic cost-benefit analysis” which uses new methods to better measure utilities of policies.

The above considerations imply a new form of policy analysis which explores the impact of policies on the individuals and groups affected by them in a much more comprehensive way than is now the case. To do so will involve drawing on several already-discussed programs,

particularly normative science. Although more difficult to execute, this new form explores a broader, more significant range of effects.

The examples follow:

“Regulatory systems” includes such matters as criminal justice, nuclear regulation, education, and occupational safety and health. The common element perceived among all of these is that they are among the modalities whereby governments regulate the affairs of private groups and persons. The admonition of sensitivity to the issue of government intrusiveness, above, applies particularly here. CWS would conduct studies on trends over time in regulatory activity and public perception of its legitimacy, on the impact of regulation on democracy and social conflict and, more generally, on the mesh between regulatory incentives and the structures of motivation within individuals. The central concern is the impact of regulation on the quality of civilization.

Introduction of computer and social technologies in the courts. In response to increasing case backlogs, Federal and state court systems have begun to introduce computers and techniques of operations research as aids in record-keeping and scheduling. The techniques appear to effect a closer approach to the ideal of speedy trial. CWS would examine the affect of these and other possible technologies on justice.

Alternative energy technologies would apply basic cost-benefit analysis to compare nuclear, solar and fossil choices, including coal gasification; and energy conservation.

Social impact of bio-technologies. Applications of population genetics to genetic screening and in the insurance industry raise serious ethical, legal and policy issues, for which the basic cost-benefit perspective is relevant.

Comparative foreign policy would examine motivational aspects of individuals, groups and leadership elites using data derived from national media and other sources of information on national culture. Program would address, in a unique way, the question of what are “national interests” and relate this to controversial U. S. policy concerns such as human rights, conventional arms transfers, and nuclear proliferation.

Strategic military balance. CWS has begun work on a quantitative strategic assessment model. It will aid in studying relationships, over the past thirty years, involving U. S. – and Soviet—bloc military capabilities and arms competition, foreign and internal policy behavior, and third-nation behavior.

Transition to resource-conserving economy: workable plans. The many recent world order studies (often sponsored by the Club of Rome) have made valid and insightful accomplishments. But all have partly or wholly neglected certain non-economic factors, including climatic and political change factors, and variables describing changes in social and human decision making and values. Nor have perspectives from research into conflict and other international transactions been properly integrated into the world order studies. In consequence, any transition plans based on such work would be fraught with pitfalls.

CWS will carry out world order and transition studies which place necessary emphasis on these here to for neglected factors. The studies will require a particularly deep reliance on fundamental systemic knowledge of human society; they will be especially dependent on progress in basic inquires such as those previously outlined. For that reason, such inquiries may be stimulated, in turn, by the transition problem.