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Analyzing “social integration” is the process of examining the patterns of human relations and values that bind people together in time and place, and that define their life opportunities. Patterns of social integration are shaped by trends in politics, economics, culture, and technology. The recent wave of globalization has radically changed the context of social integration across the globe. After discussing the overarching bases of social integration, this chapter examines how the process of globalization is altering existing values and behavior, institutions and governance, and relations among ethnic groups around the world.

Setting the Stage for Social Integration

A number of aspects of globalization are shaping the patterns of social integration. With the collapse of the Soviet Union there has been a great upswing in the degree of democracy and individual freedom across the globe. This has opened up new possibilities for participation and has created a new, wide ranging set of voluntary associations and interests groups. While such organizations can widen and deepen the bonds of citizenship on one hand, they can also create new divisions or accentuate long standing rivalries.

Coupled with the turn toward liberal democracy and the search for individual freedom has been the endorsement of market forces as the principal means to manage economic systems. This shift is manifest in changes such as the retreat of the state from intervening in economies, the deregulation and privatization of many industries, and perhaps most importantly, the integration of different economies through the liberalization of trade and investment in goods and services.

This reliance on the market has markedly altered the economic and political context for social integration by changing the power relations among different social groups and countries. For example, it is clear that the power of organized labor has weakened, while transnational corporations, the owners of capital and other groups have been strengthened. Changes in production systems and labor markets have also altered patterns of social integration around the world. Longer term trends that give nations with highly trained personnel a comparative advantage over the unskilled will present difficulties for many of the developing economies.

These economic trends, paired with rapid technological change (especially in electronics, communications, etc) are transforming the nature of work relations and job creation, altering

patterns of leisure and consumption activity, and encouraging the creation of a global culture. The revolution in mass communications, while having the potential for promoting understanding and solidarity and enhancing knowledge throughout the world, also has the capacity to exalt consumerism.

Exclusion and Inclusion

The characteristics of globalization outlined above give the people of the world a contradictory picture of inclusion and exclusion. At the same time that images of wealth and leisure are widely disseminated by global media, the life chances of many are becoming more and more restricted and marginalized. Income and wealth are becoming more polarized and the ability of governments to provide social services is decreasing.

One of the most obvious responses by those threatened with exclusion or marginalization is to migrate, whether within countries or abroad. Migration can be a process both of integration and of division. For the affluent and educated migrants, life chances are often improved. Larger-scale migration by poor people, in contrast, can sometimes mean greater impoverishment and a disruption of existing forms of social organization in both sending and receiving regions.

Changing Values, Behavior, and Institutions

Globalization is creating profound changes in basic social institutions, modifying existing bonds and patterns of behavior, and creating new forms of interaction and integration between the household and the larger society.

While households around the world vary considerably, self-contained, two parent families are no longer the norm either in developed or developing nations. Single parent households, most often headed by women, tend to be the poorest in industrialized countries. This is true also in some areas of the developing world, but in others extended families provide support for female headed households.

Globalization is also weakening communities and neighborhoods. The computerization of the workplace, the declining legitimacy of altruism, the necessity to accommodate refugees and migrants, in addition to exposure to the global economy, all stress core social norms and relationships.

One of the most positive changes has been the opening of civil society, but this must be looked at with caution. The strengthening of civil society should be based not only on citizen's initiatives and nongovernmental organizations, but on the breadth and scope of a kind of "civic culture" which presupposes a basic adherence to an agreed upon set of universal values and an acceptance of workable rules for the adjudication of interests and the protection of minority voices.

Governance and Social Integration

Developments in the global economy and society are posing increasingly complex problems for political and administrative institutions at both the local and national level. The basis of good

governance is a package of institutions, laws, procedures, and norms which allow people to express their concerns within a predictable and equitable context. Structural and ethical changes are jeopardizing such contexts.

In the developed and developing world alike, ideological and economic forces are sponsoring a deep reduction in public expenditure on social services. Business, labor, and political alliances are also increasingly confronting the threat of fragmentation, instability, and ineffectiveness. This reinforces public perceptions of ineffectiveness on the part of the state. These trends manifest in the growing numbers of those in the informal sectors of the world economy. Growing numbers of people provide for themselves without contributing through taxes for public purpose. Some of these informal groups are criminal organizations, which have gained significant power in countries such as Colombia and Russia.

Social Integration and Multiethnic Societies

Many of the problems discussed here are exacerbated within the context of multiethnic societies. Of course most countries in the world are multiethnic, but some have been more successful than others in attempting to forge tolerant and just societies. Drawing from the experiences of diverse countries such as Belgium, India, Lebanon, Malaysia, Nigeria, and Switzerland, it is possible to identify institutions and policies that can be effective in easing ethnic tensions during the integration process:

- systems of governments with power sharing arrangements between the center and the regions, as well as among various ethnic groups;
- electoral systems that are tailored to the specific ethnic structures and problems of individual countries so that they guarantee a place for minority ethnic groups;
- the fostering of a network of advocacy groups concerned with humanitarian questions and human right;
- strong educational systems that promote understanding and tolerance in multicultural societies;
- the enforcement of tough policies directed against those who stir ethnic hatred and violence.

Conclusion

“There is at present a striking incongruence between patterns of social integration, that bind people around the world more closely than ever before, on the one hand, and the frailty of existing mechanisms for subjecting global processes to regulation and channeling them toward human welfare on the other.” (318) This gives rise to a number of challenges that will require institutional reform at many levels of society. These issues include:

- How can the international community control the polarizing effects of the liberalization of trade and investment?
- How can new bases of solidarity be created during a period when capital and labor are much more mobile than ever before?

- How can new forms of personal worth and livelihood be created in the context of the secular decline of the need for human labor?
- How can we deal with the unprecedented degree of environmental degradation associated with new patterns of resource use?

“The international context assumes greater importance in this endeavor than ever before -not because it is possible to design universal solutions, uniformly applied around the world, but because global forces have created inescapable common problems of worldwide scope. The concept of an “international community” is no longer a simple ideal. It is a fact of life.” (318)