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## UNITAR SPEAKS

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# 'How we'll regionalize the world'

*The following are excerpts from a paper and presentation entitled "Regionalism: The Problem of Public Support" by Thomas E. Jones, a consultant for UNITAR and the Hudson Institute and a self-described futurist. Jones has authored a book Options for the Future, to be published by Praeger next month. Do not let his terminology disorient you. He means "brainwashing."*

The effective mobilization of public support must constitute a crucial ingredient in recipes for implementing and maintaining increased regional cooperation and integration oriented toward the evolution of the New International Economic Order...

At the core of public opposition to economic regionalism lies the fear that it runs counter to national and personal self-interest. Even when bound by a loose economic cooperation agreement, a nation may be called upon to act in a way that infringes upon its perceived national self-interest...

An attempt by a national government to force its citizens to participate in economic regionalism would not only abrogate freedom; it could easily provoke opposition. Even if political coercion would suppress widespread dissent, it would not evoke the kind of popular support needed to make economic regionalism a thriving enterprise.

Nevertheless, recognized societal incentives and disincentives play crucial roles in sustaining habits and promoting the adoption of new ones.

Despite the importance of such sanctions in buttressing voluntary support, they cannot effectively replace it. The mobilization of public support for the regional strategy depends on the use of informed persuasion to motivate voluntary changes in attitudes. Such persuasion is based on careful analysis and appeals to enlightened self-interest.

The specific procedures for appropriately modifying the societal information flow vary from society to society. Yet emphasis falls on dissemination of relevant information via the educational system and communications media, supplemented by group discussions...

The success or failure of informed persuasion is integrally related to the quality of leadership. Politicians need to enlist the assistance of other societal leaders to devise and implement an appropriate program of informed persuasion...

By relinquishing certain short-term goals, such as increased consumption in order to release funds for capital investment, a nation can procure long-term benefits, such as increased economic development...

Regional cooperation and integration can also produce situations in which each participant gains more than it loses. Hence the transfer of partial sovereignty to a regional organization could be treated as a loan of sovereignty in exchange for increased benefits...

To transform this apathy and opposition into support, developing nations would need to supply persuasive evidence that the developed nations—as well as the world as a whole and future generations—are likely to benefit from the recommended restructuring of the international economic system. The perceived tone of the demand for the NIEO would have to change from rhetorical confrontation toward synergistic cooperation...

This sudden shift in perception and motivation frequently springs from the occurrence of a threatening crisis and the graphic, believable depiction of two contrasting types of possible future:

- likely collective disaster (or continuation of existing disaster) if current patterns of divisive behavior persist.
- deliverance from disaster and to a desirable future, but only if the participants in the situation cooperate to make an appropriate response to the crisis.

History and the social sciences testify to the effectiveness of presenting images of conditional deliverance, as well as to the failure of such "repent-or-perish" warnings when they go unheeded or are unrealistic...

The most effective motivation appears to be mediated by images of disaster and deliverance operating in tandem, with emphasis placed on the latter. Crisis and the danger of disaster can arouse success-oriented people to act constructively... Yet images of catastrophe, intended to become self-negating, can become self-fulfilling when unaccompanied by an image of an attainable attractive future. Conversely, positive expectations induce constructive, reward-oriented "achievement motivation", which is more likely to lead people to attain their goals than is "fear-of-failure" motivation. To stress the importance of presenting a desirable alternative future, the term "conditional deliverance" is here used instead of the more negative "provisional catastrophism"...

Hence credible forecasts of conditional deliverance can be used to promote changes in perception, motivation, and action that are conducive to the mobilization of popular support for the regional strategy.