

## FUTURE POSITIVE

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In an increasingly interdependent world, no one has a future unless we learn to work together. We are co-creators of the world we live in, and must take responsibility for doing what we can to make it worthy of ourselves and a fitting legacy for generations still to come. At a time when values of cooperation and community seem ever more at risk, *Future Positive* provides a refreshing and optimistic assessment of the prospects for a new international order – a direct counter blast to the doom-mongering views of writers and politicians whose voices dominate the debate. For those in search of politics and economics that are more humane and less destructive, this book will be both an inspiration and an essential, practical resource. Covering an enormous amount of ground in clear, lively and non-technical language, the book explains how the international system operates, the pressures it faces, and the changes it must undergo, and offers concrete new ideas to re-frame international relations, foreign aid, and humanitarian intervention. *Future Positive* tackles the big questions of globalization and the national interest head on, without jargon and with no simplistic judgements. This groundbreaking book is a must-read for anyone concerned with where the world is heading.

1. Prevailing cynicism and disenchantment in the field in stark contrast to the excitement and aspirations of the post WWII period – a widespread feeling that things have gone wrong, and that old answers won't suffice in a new context.
2. But important to remember that everyone needs help at some point in their lives, and no country in history has prospered in isolation from the ideas and resources of others. This is especially true in an increasingly interdependent world, where individual welfare is affected more and more by collective choices about how we deal with collective problems – climate change, international capital movements, refugees etc.
3. So the right response to the failings of the past is not to abandon foreign aid but to reform it, root and branch – we shouldn't underestimate the task in hand.
4. In my research, 4 fundamental reasons why foreign aid so often fails:

- A failure to get to grips with the fundamental challenge of our times: re-shaping the costs and benefits of global capitalism of a global welfare state to care for the casualties of state and market failure.
- A failure to establish the conditions required for co-operation to work: mutual respect in international affairs, and the legitimacy that comes from democratic participation in setting the rules of the game. Intervention of cooperation, but not where intervention was required.
- A failure to engage with the forces that really change things: opening global regimes to the dynamism of business and civil society, and connecting international institutions much more closely to their constituents.
- The need for a greater sense of humility about what is possible through international co-operation, outside intervention, and development aid, balanced by more concerted efforts where we can really make a difference.

5. And three basic principles for reform:

- Consistency - with local realities, even where they demand a departure from Western orthodoxy eg capital controls
- Continuity – a commitment to work together over the long term, de-linked from volatile changes of fashion, ideology and disagreements along the way
- Coherence – a unified framework for decision making on all the things that influence development, from debt relief to diplomacy

6. *In summary:* a move from a system that interferes too much in the detail of other people's lives and not enough when it really matters, to a system that welcomes diversity and encourages ownership, while standing firm against the abuse of fundamental rights and freedoms. *Future Positive shows what that means in practice.*

7. The challenge facing Western governments is to craft an international order that is much more serious about poverty and the abuse of fundamental rights, but much less intrusive in forcing third world countries to adopt particular ways of realizing them in practice. And that requires a new philosophy that balance freedom and autonomy with rules, standards and other boundaries that are negotiated, not imposed.

8. Beyond all the technocratic details about what sort of assistance we provide, how and when, that presents us with two over-arching challenges:

- How to evolve an international system which is genuinely democratic at every level – the only basis for a successful rules-based global order

- How to build public and political constituencies for international co-operation in the USA and EU, since a democratic global order will be one where self-interest has to be modulated by the common good

9. How we respond to these challenges – with the excitement of a common enterprise after WW II or the cynical self-interest of today - will determine whether we share in the successes of developing countries, or inherit their failures.

Michael Edwards is the Director of the Ford Foundation's Governance and Civil Society Unit in New York, having worked in international development for the last twenty years, including periods spent living and travelling in Latin America, Southern Africa and South Asia. After a series of senior management positions with Oxfam and Save the Children, he moved to Washington DC to work as a Senior Civil Society Specialist in the NGO Unit of the World Bank. His writings have helped to shape a more critical appreciation of the global role of civil society, and to break down barriers between researchers and activists across the world. Michael was educated in England at the universities of Oxford and London, and now lives with his wife in the center of Manhattan.

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