GLOBAL CHALLENGES AND GLOBAL RESPONSES

The world of the 21st century faces four great challenges, the answers to which will determine the future of mankind. They concern demography, economy, ecology and security. Finding adequate responses to them demands international co-operation which cannot be achieved without a fundamental reorientation of the ways in which they are perceived both by political leaders and by the general public.

Demographic challenge results from the rapid growth of world population and from the highly unequal rate in which population grows in the main regions of the world. In 2019 the world is populated by 7.6 billion people. It means that the world population has increased 760 percent in two centuries (from approximately one billion in 1820) and 350 percent in the last eighty years (from approximately two billion in 1930). Moreover, the rate of growth is highly differentiated regionally with the fastest growth in two poorer regions: Asia and Africa. In 2015, the regional distribution of population was as follows: Asia 4.31 billion, Africa 1.15 billion, America 973 million, Europe 745 million and Oceania 37 million. The demographic trends are also regionally differentiated. Very fast population growth in Asia and Africa is accompanied with the demographic stagnation and of the aging of population in Europe. Consequently, there is a very strong migration pressure from the poorer regions of Asia, Africa and Southern America to the affluent North: to Europe and North America. Policies aimed at preventing such migration cannot be fully effective, both because of the determination of migrants and because of the growing opposition to drastic measures in the democratic states of "global North".

Economic challenge results from the growth of inequalities, both within and between countries. The GNP per capita is the highest (over 50 thousand US dollars) in three West European countries (Luxemburg 65 602, Norway 59 768 and Switzerland 54 925) and the lowest (less than 200 dollars) in six African countries (Burundi 96, Congo 120, Liberia 135, Somalia 136, Malawi 161, Guinea-Bissau 177,

Eritrea 193). In the world of today 2.5 billion people lives for less than two dollars a day, while the richest 8 persons own the same part of world resources as the 3.6 billion poorest people. While in the last decades the absolute level of poverty decreased, the distances between the rich and the poor sectors of the population increased rapidly. The highest income inequalities exist mostly in the poorest countries of Central America (Haiti – Gini index 60.8) and Africa (Botwana – 60.5, Namibia – 59.7, Zambia – 57.5). It should be noted that the lowest income inequalities can now be found in the Central European post-socialist states: Slovakia, Slovenia and the Czech Republic, where the GNP per capita is below 30. There is also a tendency of reducing within country income inequalities in the moderately affluent European countries, while such inequalities tend to be high and growing in the fast developing countries of Asia (particularly in China). The growth of economic inequalities leads to radicalization of social conflicts and to political destabilization, particularly – but not exclusively - in the poorer regions of the world. There is a growing awareness of the necessity to revise the dogmas of neo-liberal economic thinking. Polish economists Kołodko and Koźmiński call such new approach "a new pragmatism" (Kołodko & Koźminski 2017).

Ecology constitutes the third major challenge, particularly because of the warming of climate, the substantial part of which results from human activities. Climate warming leads to devastating consequences in several regions of the world and – if nothing is done to slow down this process – will contribute to the stronger migration processes, particularly from Africa to Europe. The very nature of climate warming requires coordinated action of the majority of state to slow down this process. It is a very complex issue as the radical reduction of human-caused climate warming would be quite costly. Governments are therefore trapped between the requirements of long term ecological strategy and the short term political cost of such strategy. The Kyoto Protocol of 1997 constitutes the most ambitious attempt to build international cooperation in the efforts to reduce climate change. Unfortunately, it has

not been signed by several great powers, including the United States, China and India. The ratification of the Kyoto Protocol by the Russian Federation constitutes the major step in the right direction. A continuous effort to make the Kyoto Protocol binding for all states is of a major importance.

Security challenge has two main aspects: wars and terrorism. During the "cold war" the rivalry between two superpowers armed in the weapons of mass destruction resulted in the military stalemate in which global war became impossible (Aron 1962). Local wars, sometimes even with the participation of one of the superpowers (Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan), were frequent but because of the fear of total war between superpowers they were kept within certain limits. The end of the cold war was due to the reorientation of Soviet foreign policy in late 1980s, during the short tenure of M.S. Gorbachev. It was then believed that with the end of the US-Soviet conflict the world entered an era of lasting peace. The reality has been by far more complicated. While the balance of nuclear powers makes the global war impossible, lasting peace has not materialized. There are three main reasons for this: failure of the American world hegemony (particularly after and because of the military intervention in Iraq in 2003), the rivalry between regional powers attempting to expand their respective spheres of interest, and ethnic and/or religious conflicts in several parts of the world. The reemergence of the arms race, particularly after the decision of the USA to withdraw from the INF treaty, makes the security challenge even more serious than a few years before. Mutual suspicion creates the international atmosphere in many ways resembling the one which prevailed during the cold war. Lasting peace requires a long and difficult process of trust building. "In practice - write the British political scientists Keating and Wheeler – the problem facing states is how to create a successful security regime and transform it into a security community. We argue that this necessitates overcoming fear and suspicion by developing new practices of trust building" (Keating & Wheeler 2017:73). In a recently published study of relations of Russia with the world, Russian scholars argue

for restoring cooperative relations between Russia and the Western powers in spite of conflicts of interests between the Russian federation and the United States (Tsvetkova 2017). I strongly believe that improvement of these relations is crucial for world peace and for solving international problems in the spirit of peace and international cooperation.

In addition to conflicts between and within states, international terrorism continues to be a very serious danger to world security. It has roots in ethnic and religious conflicts (particularly the burning Israeli-Palestinian one), in frustration resulting for poverty and discrimination, and in religious and/or ideological fanaticism. In the present century, terrorism became a truly international phenomenon which calls for coordinated efforts of the states affected by it. Terrorism cannot be eliminated by security measures alone. Do be truly effective, such measures must be based on cooperation between states. However, even the best security measures will not eliminate the danger of terrorism. Long term strategy must include education of citizens in the spirit of respect for values of non-violence. Building and promoting value systems conducive to peaceful resolution of conflicts and respect for human rights is essential for creating social and psychological conditions necessary for reducing the danger of terrorism. Therefore, the realistic answer to the security challenge cannot be reduced to military and/or police measurers. It calls for a new way of viewing the world, something that I have discussed as "the culture of peace" (Wiatr 2017:296-221).

The combination of these four challenges means that the responses to them cannot be found in the measures undertaken by separate states. They call for truly global responses. With the absence of a world government such responses can be found only in the collaboration of national governments.

Such collaboration is difficult because in many instances it demands subordinating short-term national interests to global interests. Decisions of such kind

are in the hands of political leaders. Are they aware of the seriousness of the global challenges? Can they be made more sensitive to such problems? Will they be able to abandon national egoism in favor of mutual cooperation and promotion of common good, even at the expense of short term national interests?

The answers to these questions must reach beyond political leadership. Leaders – both democratic and authoritarian – do not operate in a political vacuum. They have to take into consideration the state of mind of their citizens – even when democratic mechanisms of elections are absent or limited. Therefore, the key to political solution of global problems lies in the state of mind of the citizens. What is critically needed, is so-called "global education" directed at the remaking the way people perceive the global issues. The Polish sociologist Katarzyna Jasikowska in a recent book discusses the perspectives of global education as "indispensable element attempts to find solution to the burning contemporary problems" (Jasikowska 2018: 10). She considers such education as an attempt to overcome limitations of the neoliberal economic thinking and of the conservative acceptance of the status quo. Such radical global education may be a kind of an utopia, but its lasting value consists of making people aware that there can be an alternative to the ways in which global problems are treated both by the politicians and by the general public. In this, global dialogue between people from different cultures has a very great importance.

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