

GLOBAL SOLIDARITY AS A WAY TO OVERCOME

CURRENT WORLD PROBLEMS

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Introduction

The end of the Cold War, often symbolized by the fall of the Berlin Wall, is one of the most significant events in recent world history. It has led to the institution of democracy in several countries, the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the birth of new states, the reunification of Germany, the enlargement of NATO and the expansion of the EU. It has resulted in dramatic political, economic, and cultural changes that followed all over the world.

This sudden world transformation took many scholars of international politics by complete surprise. In the aftermath, different interpretations of what happened were made, the most common being that communism could not compete economically with democracy, and as a result between 1989 and 1991 most of the former communist countries abandoned that system.^[1] But, as today's examples of North Korea or Cuba can

show, economics by itself could not crush such a powerful ideology as communism, which has a high degree of persistence and can adapt itself to the changing international environment. As I have shown elsewhere, the turning point of history was the series of events that took place nine years earlier, in August 1980, when Solidarity (in Polish, *Solidarnosc*), an independent trade union, but at the same time a powerful civic movement, was born at the Gdansk Shipyard.^[2] Without the birth of Solidarity, there would have been no fall of the Berlin Wall. The Gdansk Shipyard, in which massive strikes and other forms of peaceful resistance were initiated, became the place that inspired the rest of Poland with freedom, and Poland soon began to have a similar effect on other countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

Solidarity and the Question of Globalization

In the grim picture of politics in the twentieth century there are not many moments of light. Solidarity is one of them, not only because it stood for such fundamental human values as freedom and justice, and was victorious, but also because it earned its victory in a non-violent way. It initiated a profound world transformation. Today we live in a world that is fundamentally different from that before 1989. We are no longer divided by a global ideological struggle between communism and liberal democracy. The key issue today is not a bipolar division, but globalization. The world has become almost like one single market that has been penetrated by transnational corporations. In addition, an expanding global system of communication, especially the Internet, has helped to develop a global consciousness and to make most of human beings into members of a single global society.^[3] At the same time, the world today is affected

by serious problems. There are tensions and violent conflicts in many parts of the world, and we are haunted by the danger of terrorism and war. There is a grave poverty problem all around the globe. There is massive cross-border crime. Finally, there are environmental challenges, such as pollution and shortage of water and global warming.

Globalization, poverty, crime, terrorism, scarcity of resources, environmental pollution, global warming: these are the issues that in one-way or another affect human beings today. They influence human life in a powerful, often destructive way. They necessitate a new positive world transformation and a new solidarity that can undertake it. Is such a transformation possible? What can the new Global Solidarity learn from Poland's Solidarity?

From Poland's Solidarity to Global Solidarity

There were four factors connected with the birth of Solidarity.^[4] First, economic demands were transformed into social and political issues. The striking workers demanded not only better salaries, but also freedom for political prisoners and respect for human rights. Second, there was institutionalization of the struggle. The earlier protests that took place in Poland in 1956 and 1970, although they led to some political changes, including changes of government, could not have a long-term influence on political life because there was no institution which would defend the gains of the protests. It was finally in August 1980 that there arose a popular recognition that to protect these gains, an institution was needed, namely, 'Solidarity'. Third, in August 1980, Polish society was for the first time truly united. Solidarity had over ten million members. Its program of economic, social, and political reforms united the majority of society, representing

different social groups. Finally, there was the lack of ideology. The intellectual disputes about the movement began after it was born. Solidarity arose rather as a result of popular recognition of certain basic needs, such as food, as well as freedom and justice that are essential to human life.

Then, if we could apply these factors to the idea of Global Solidarity, it would have to be a global civic movement, based not on any ideology, but rather on the recognition of some fundamental human needs, having the ability to unite around its program a large portion of global society, and capable of becoming an efficient institution. Like Poland's Solidarity movement it would uphold the needs of all, notwithstanding human differences. Moreover, it would be guided by the idea of non-violence in obtaining social and political goals. It would exert pressure on governments to implement reforms that would facilitate a world transformation. Whether such a Global Solidarity could be established on the basis of some existing NGOs that share a similar program and can become something like an umbrella organization for them or would be a new establishment is a technical question that is not going to be discussed here. The World Civil Forum, which took place in Seoul, 5-8 May 2009, and brought representatives of many civic organizations from all over the world, could, in fact, be the first step in establishing Global Solidarity and promoting a world transformation. Is such a transformation possible?

World Transformation and Conflict

The world has escaped a global confrontation between communism and liberal democracy, and a possible nuclear annihilation, but it continues to be divided - not only

by economic and political differences, but also by differences in religion and culture. It is still largely pervaded by conflict. Social Darwinists and some political realists, most notably Hans Morgenthau, have perceived conflict as a phenomenon that is essential to politics and even life itself.^[5] However, while conflict is certainly a part of the reality of life, it cannot be regarded as its essence. If life was only conflict, then a world transformation would be impossible, there would be no social progress, and nothing would ever grow. This is contradicted by what we can directly observe ourselves. Growth, and not conflict, is the essence of life. The ancient thinkers, particularly by Aristotle, who described this unceasing process of life by the word *phusis*, already noticed this.

Modernity has replaced the ancient organic picture of the world by a mechanistic view of the universe based on physical movement. Consequently, modern ideologies have tried to hamper the process of growth and arrest time, by claiming that their concepts, such as communist society in Marxism or liberal democracy in liberalism, represent the end toward which the history moves.^[6] However, time has always been able to free itself and life will always finally prevail. Communism has collapsed, and with the emergence of new postmodern social movements such as feminism and environmentalism and the religious revival in various parts of the world, the ideal of liberal democracy pervaded by strictly commercial and materialistic values has also become questionable. It has been criticized by postmodernists as yet another meta-narrative of modernity.^[7] This is the indication that in the age of globalization and post-modernity we need to transcend the limitations of modern ideologies. Positive world transformation that originates from the spirit of this age is based on the assumption that

conflict is an important part of life, but does not constitute its essence, and that social progress and enhancement of life are possible. On the practical side, such a transformation requires that we try to minimize conflict and avert the danger of war, protect life, and allow life to flourish.

Inclusive Values and the Righteousness of Life

Global Solidarity presupposes human fellowship, a unity that comes out of diversity, and, like Poland's Solidarity after 1989, is destroyed by discord. Without denying the possibility of the conflict of interests between individuals and groups, we should ask: In the world of so many conflicting ideas and interests can such a fellowship be ever achieved and maintained? Many scholars have in fact argued that human fellowship and the unity of humankind can be established on the basis of some basic or core human values.^[8] Where are such values to be found?

Instead of engaging in a comparative empirical research, compiling lists of core values derived from different cultures, discuss their relevance for human fellowship, and present the final list of them in a form of a declaration, we should rather look at the simple values of life that in the 1980s united people in Poland and that we believe can unite all human beings.^[9] We thus should engage in a classical philosophical inquiry in the context of post-modernity.

In spite of all their differences, human beings are able to recognize their basic needs. Food, shelter, family, and safety are needs whose recognition comes from life itself. They constitute inclusive values - values that unite and do not divide, and that people coming from different cultures can acknowledge as their own. It is true that some

people may forsake family and safety, and embrace solitude, adventure, and risk to obtain some goals. Solitude, adventure, and risk can indeed be a way of life, but on them life cannot be build. The same applies to conflict and war. They can be a way of life, or a part of life, and yet we cannot construct fulfilled life on them. The normal process of growth requires peace.

Furthermore, the development of individuals does not only necessitate the basic human needs, such as food, shelter, family, and security, but also liberty and respect. Freedom has a great value if it enhances life, but it loses its value if it turns against life. Individuals cannot develop intellectually without freedom. They also cannot be fully satisfied in life without recognition from others and without friendship. Life is not merely about physiological processes. Human life includes full psychological development, and this can be achieved only in certain conditions. Poverty, malnutrition, enmity, disrespect, injustice, violence, as well as ideas that are destructive to life, reduce our chances of becoming well-developed individuals. Cultures, religions, ideologies, nationalities, particular interests: they all divide us. Let us find a common ground. Let us ask if there is anything that we all share. This is life itself. 'Global Solidarity; depends on the recognition of life as the common platform on which all human beings, despite of their cultural differences, can meet.

There are certainly some fundamental needs that all human beings can recognize as indispensable, not only for simple spent in the pursuit of daily needs life but also for fulfilled life. Many of these needs have been described as internationally recognized human rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights lists such rights as 'freedom of opinion and expression', 'adequate standard of living', and 'liberty and security of

person’.^[10] However, whereas rights are entitlements and imply that a claim can be made against some party, needs of life or inclusive values derived from them do not have such a legal connotation. They imply knowledge of the essence of human life. Global Solidarity is not based on legal claims but on the growing common understanding of what is right for life. It is based on the righteousness of life.

The Common Interest in What is Right for Life

Politics is a part of human life. Certainly, it involves a play of interests and power, but politics is not all about power, as Morgenthau and other realists claim, and cannot be reduced to a mere power game. It is a mixture of ideas and forces. When Poland’s ‘Solidarity’ was born it contrasted and defined itself against the Soviet totalitarian system. It was finally achieved when people in Poland, freeing themselves from ideological propaganda, got the idea of what was right for their lives, and when they became interested and determined enough to put this idea into practice. Their unity and determination was their power. But when communism collapsed, their unity and the commonality of their interest was quickly replaced by the particularity of group and individual interests, and Solidarity disintegrated. It was divided in a number of political parties and other groups struggling for power.^[11] Life in Poland, and elsewhere, went forward, but only half way. Similarly, the understanding of what is right for life is essential but not enough for building a ‘Global Solidarity’ movement. In addition to the knowledge of the righteousness of life there must also be a common interest in bringing what is right into practice by a large portion of global society; an interest that can bring global society into a unity.

Life is the central concept around which humanity can unite. Consequently, while aiming at the fellowship and unity of all human beings, 'Global Solidarity' defines itself against those theories and practices of today that are destructive of life, especially against, ideological materialism, political totalitarianism, religious fundamentalism on the one hand, and crime, terrorism and militarism, on the other.

Ideological materialism is destructive to life because of its simplified picture of life that is reduced to its mere physiological, mechanistic or violent aspect. It is an outcome of modern political thought. For the materialists such as Hobbes and thinkers following him, life is merely a mechanistic pursuit of pleasures and material goals, and its mechanics can be reduced to the conflict of interests.^[12] This deviated picture of life dominates a substantial part of the tradition of political realism, into which students of politics and its practitioners are socialized, and is recaptured in thousands of today's books and movies, whose chief subject is violence. It is also present in the utilitarian ethical theories, behaviorist social sciences and critical social theories. Such a picture of life does not allow for any true human solidarity.

Political totalitarianism and religious fundamentalism are destructive to life because they deny human beings the freedom of questioning and unlimited inquiry, and impose on human lives their dogmatic interpretations.^[13] The unceasing process of life that in case of human beings reaches the level of culture requires that we can freely discuss, examine and exchange ideas, and that we can search for truth and a better organization of human societies. This search is in both totalitarianism and fundamentalism replaced by compliance with the doctrinal absolute, which cannot be

questioned and around which political and social life is organized. They both use coercion and violence, often destructive of human life, to cause this compliance.

Crime is destructive to life for it directly brings harm to its victims and degrades human beings. Beyond its direct effect as a physical or material harm, it has a destructive mental impact on both its victims and perpetrators. It erodes human sociability and inspires such negative feelings as mistrust and fear. It prevents human beings from a full exercise of their faculties and reduces them to objects. While fulfilled human life is based on partnership and reciprocal relations with others, in crime any partnership is denied. The victims deprived of their full humanity become just objects for the criminals, who in turn degrade themselves by this instrumental thinking of their victims.^[14] Sex trafficking, whereby women become reduced to objects, instruments for making profit, and trafficking in human organs are the darkest sides of globalization.

Terrorism and militarism are directly destructive to life because they imply no respect for life whatsoever. In terrorism and militarism, rules of morality are denied, war is glorified, and the value of other people's lives denied.^[15] Having no respect for the lives of others, those who are engaged in these practices are the most removed from the idea of human fellowship.

Global Solidarity and Governance

Global Solidarity can be achieved if there is a growing recognition of what is right for life and a growing interest in protecting and enhancing life against theories and practices that deny life. Its foundation is provided by global society, whose members are all the human inhabitants of earth, but its institution does not endanger the existence of

communities at the national and local levels. Not only are those communities important for life for they provide their members with opportunities to express life in different forms, but also they are important instruments of security. The decline of bonds that unite people at a national level and the erosion of states' sovereignty, which are the results of globalization, cause an increase in crime. Failed and internally weak states become havens for criminals and terrorists. Therefore, the idea that states can be replaced by a global authority, advocated for example by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, and more recently by Alexander Wendt, is perilous postmodern utopia (Korab-Karpowicz, 2009).^[16] While the process of globalization cannot be stopped, it is a mistake to think that states are no longer relevant in today's global environment, and that they should be removed and replaced by a centralized world government. There is no guarantee whatsoever that such a system of government would perform its function any better than the present state system, when it is inspired by the ideas of cooperation, multilateralism, and the rule of law, promoted by the United Nations.^[17] It will certainly not eradicate the problem of human conflict and violence.

Whereas states, as already Kant noticed in his work *Idea for a Universal History*, can eventually be socialized in rational behavior, and thus behave in a more predictable peaceful way, the postmodern non-state actors - the terrorist groups that endanger our lives today, especially those whose acts are animated by fundamentalist religion - are less likely to learn. To contain them, we in fact need stronger rather than weaker states. Accordingly, like Poland's 'Solidarity' movement that has never aspired to become a government, 'Global Solidarity' does not necessitate the replacement of the present state

system with a world state or the election of a new global authority. That has, in a limited form, already been provided by the United Nations.

The weakness of international organizations in the past was that the national governments, especially of great powers, would not support them. As a result many resolutions and initiatives that could potentially benefit humankind could not be put in practice. For example, the American withdrawal from the Kyoto Protocol in March 2001, during the George W. Bush administration, did incalculable damage to the efforts of the international community to construct a unified response to the global warming threat - the damage that will hopefully be repaired. In order to minimize such unilateral and potentially damaging responses to world problems by individual state actors moved by their national self-interests, 'Global Solidarity' should exert pressure on governments, so that they support international organizations and implement reforms that would facilitate a positive world transformation. At the same time it should also make initiatives of its own and propose them to international organizations. While wielding power that at present none of the NGOs represent, it would be a life promoting and enhancing instrument of global society through which a more humane world could be achieved.

The actual picture of the world includes both old and new threats such as poverty, crime, religious and ethnic conflict, terrorism, global warming, energy scarcity, and so on. The widening spread and quickening pace of globalization magnify these threats. To deal effectively with them, one has to work on many levels of governance. This can be achieved by building of international society based on the UN and other international organizations. States that are linked to others by international institutional and economic ties are important focal points of security and community.

There are different communities and social levels at which individuals can relate to each other: family, local community, nation, and global society. These communities serve various functions in human life and; therefore, they all have their validity. Global society, which is an expression of the growing global consciousness, can replace neither family nor nation, but it adds a new element to them, namely humanitarian fellowship and responsibility. It postulates that we should regard others as our fellow human beings and that, in addition to being responsible family members and citizens, we should also feel responsible for what happens to any other person who lives on earth. In short, global society requires that we neither do harm to others nor are indifferent to other peoples' suffering. However, Global Solidarity requires more. It obliges us to defend and enhance life against those forces that are destructive of life, and to exert pressure on governments, so that they support international organizations and consider the welfare of all humanity. 'Global Solidarity' calls us to be guided by the righteousness of life.

Notes:

[1] Philip Longworth, *The Making of Eastern Europe: From Prehistory to Postcommunism*. 2nd ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 83.

[2] W. Julian Korab-Karpowicz, *Freedom from Hate: Solidarity and Non-violent Political Struggle in Poland* *Journal of Human Values* 8 (2002), pp. 57-66.

[3] See Roland Robertson, "Mapping the Global Condition: Globalization as the Central Concept," *Theory, Culture and Society* 7 (1990), pp. 15-30.

[4] Korab-Karpowicz, pp. 60-61.

[5] International politics, like all politics, is for Morgenthau a struggle for power because of the basic human lust for power. He places power-lust and conflict at the center of his picture of human existence. See Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*. 2nd ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1954), p. 25.

[6] It was Fukuyama's claim about the triumph of liberal democracy and the end of history as expressed in Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1992) and earlier in his article 'The End of History', *The National Interest*, 16 (1989), pp. 3–18 that was roundly criticized, particularly by postmodernists.

[7] A. Gamble, *Marxism after Communism: beyond Realism and Historicism* *Review of International Studies*, 25 (1999) , pp. 125-144.

[8] See Wendell Bell, "Human Values, Social Change, and the Future" in *Traditional Religion and Culture in a New Era*, Reimon Bachika, ed. (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2002), pp. 125-140; Donald E. Brown, *Human Universals* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1991); Hans Küng, *Global Responsibility: In a Search for a New World Ethics* (New York: Crossroad, 1991).

[9] Core human values have also been discussed at a number of conferences. The most notable event was the Parliament of the World Religions that met in Chicago in 1993. It brought together more than 200 leaders representing more than 100 of religions. The result was a joint declaration: "Toward a Global Ethics." Among values listed in this declaration were respect for life, individual responsibility, dignity, forgiveness, kindness and generosity.

[10] See The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, articles: 3, 19 and 25.

^[11] Longworth, p. 28.

^[12] For Hobbes, human beings, extremely individualistic rather than moral or social, are subject to “a perpetual and restless desire of power after power, that ceases only in death” (Leviathan XI 2). While Locke tries to escape some unwelcome consequences of Hobbes’s thought, especially the Hobbesian absolutism, he follows Hobbes in acknowledging that what commands our actions is always some desire or uneasiness related to an absent good (An Essay Concerning Human Understanding 2.21.31). Post-Lockean liberalism, as represented by its prominent exponents Jeremy Bentham and his disciple James Mill, aiming at a rationalist ethics, dispensed with the Lockean notion of natural law as obsolete and replaced it with the principle of utility. The utilitarians accepted the Hobbesian view, which Locke also adopted, of human beings as self-interested, pleasure-seeking individuals. This utilitarian view of the human being has been carried forward to today’s social theories.

^[13] See Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew K. Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956); Bassam Tibi, *The Challenge of Fundamentalism: Political Islam and the New World Disorder* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

^[14] See P. Monzini, *Sex Traffic: Prostitution, Crime and Exploitation* (London: Zed Books, 2005).

^[15] See Christopher C. Harmon, *Terrorism Today* (New York: Routledge, 2000); Andrew J. Bacevich, *The New American Militarism: How Americans are Seduced by War*. Oxford: University Press, 2005.

[16] See W. Julian Korab-Karpowicz, “Empire and International Order: Should There be States?” *Spectrum: Journal of Global Studies*, 1.1 (Winter 2009): 85-91.

[17] See Kofi Annan, “Five Lessons I Learned as UN Secretary-General,” *New World*, Jan-March 2007, pp. 18-21.