



Global Governance and Solidarity Values for the 21st Century

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The collapse of communism in 1989 in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, 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, China, Cuba, and other countries 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. 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. The birth of Solidarity was the crack in the structure of the Soviet Block which began the end of the totalitarian system.

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 collapse of communism has made the world almost

¹ Tom Lansford, *Communism* (Marshall Cavendish, 2007), p.83.

² W J Korab-Karpowicz, "Freedom from Hate: Solidarity and Non-violent Political Struggle in Poland," *Journal of Human Values* 8.1 (2002), pp. 57-66.

into one single market that has been penetrated by transnational corporations. In addition, an expanding global system of communication, especially the Internet, has helped to establish a single global society. 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. Every second people are dying because of malnutrition. 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: 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?

There were four factors connected with the birth of Solidarity. 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 10 million members. The majority of society, representing different social groups, became united by its program of economic, social, and political reforms. 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 today's 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, be capable of uniting around its program a large portion of global society, and be institutionalized. Like Poland's Solidarity movement it would uphold the life-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 Global Solidarity will 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 will be a new establishment, is a technical question that is not going to be discussed here. The World Civil Forum could, in fact, be the first step in establishing Global Solidarity and promoting a world transformation. Again,

is such a transformation possible?

The world has escaped a global confrontation between communism and liberal democracy, and possible nuclear annihilation, but it continues to be divided—not only by economic and political differences, but also by differences in religion and culture. Conflict is a part of the reality of life, but it is not its essence as political realists claim. If life was only conflict, then nothing would ever grow. Growth, and not conflict, is the essence of life. Ideologies of all sorts try to hamper the process of growth and arrest time, by claiming that they represent the end of history, but time will always free itself and life will finally prevail. Positive world transformation is about minimizing conflict and averting the danger of war, protecting life, and allowing life to flourish.

Global Solidarity presupposes human fellowship, a unity that comes out of diversity, and, like Poland's Solidarity after 1989, is destroyed by discord. In the world of so many conflicting ideas and interests can such a fellowship be ever achieved and maintained?

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. 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 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.

Global Solidarity depends on the recognition of some fundamental human needs that are indispensable, not only for 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 from hunger,” “adequate standard of living,” and “liberty and security of person.” However, whereas rights are entitlements and imply that a claim can be made against some party, needs 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 understanding of what is right for life. It is based on the righteousness of life.

Politics is a part of life. It involves interests and power, but politics cannot be reduced to a mere power game. It is a mixture of ideas and forces. Poland's Solidarity defined itself against the Soviet totalitarian system. It was finally achieved when people, freeing themselves from 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. But when communism collapsed, the commonality of their interest was quickly replaced by the particularity of group and individual interests, and Solidarity disintegrated. 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.

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. For the materialists life is merely a pursuit of pleasures and material goals, and its mechanics can be reduced to the conflict of interests. 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 positivist 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.

Crime is destructive to life for it directly brings harm to its victims and degrades human beings. Sex trafficking 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. Those who are engaged in these practices are the most removed from the idea of human fellowship. Wars may be fought in the defense of life, but never against life.

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. Its foundation is provided by global

society, whose members are all the human inhabitants of earth, but it also acknowledges 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, 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 world government. There is no guarantee whatsoever that such a centralized world government would perform its function any better than the present state system, when it is inspired by ideas of cooperation, multilateralism, and the rule of law, promoted by the United Nations. It will certainly not eradicate the problem of human conflict and violence. Like Poland's Solidarity movement which has never aspired to become the government, Global Solidarity does not necessitate a new global authority. That has, in a limited form, already been provided by the UN. Global Solidarity exerts pressure on governments, so that they support international organizations and consider the welfare of all humanity.

The actual picture of the world is too complex to be reduced to simple ideological dichotomies of the oppressors and the oppressed, of the rich and the poor, or of those who are satisfied with their power and those who are not. It includes both old and new threats such as poverty, crime, religious and ethnic conflict, terrorism, global warming, energy scarcity, and so on. These threats are magnified by the widening spread and quickening pace of globalization. To deal effectively with them, one has to work on many levels of governance. Instead of weakening or denying the state, we should make it stronger internally, but at the same time more responsible to other states and more interdependent. 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 can replace neither family nor nation, but it adds a new element to them, namely humanitarian responsibility. It postulates that, in addition to being a responsible family member and citizen, one should also feel responsible for what happens to any other human being who lives on earth; that one should neither do harm to others nor be indifferent to other peoples' suffering. Global Solidarity requires more. It obliges us to defend and enhance life against those forces that are destructive of life. It postulates that we are guided by the righteousness of life; that we build a world in which there will be food, shelter, family, security, freedom, and justice for all.