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Global challenges for the world

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GLOBAL CHALLENGES FOR THE WORLD

While no-one can see the future, it is at least possible to indicate a few of the directions that change is likely to take.

Martin van Creveld¹

Introduction

We live in a huge world which is changing day by day in the 21st century. There are a lot of parameters of this big change which are directly connected. Most of us could realize these changes in our daily life but the most important part of this awareness is about perceiving their consequences. We cannot ignore that these alterations have some positive effects (developments) on human beings. On the other hand, most of these effects can lead to the end of earth or/and human beings. Definitely all these effects are pointing out a term called *globalization*. We cannot deal with *global challenges* without defining globalization.

At least we know that globalization is a process that has been taking place for a hundred years. Actually, globalization is a natural condition for human beings. People benefit from the advantages offered by the world. Nevertheless, this kind of pragmatic activities may cause some problems for mankind. At that point, it is more important to regard negative effects of globalization than considering positive effects of it.

Today's world is more chaotic and unpredictable than at any other period in history. Apprehensions about the future determine our present. If we want to live in a safe world at present, we should get ready for the future problems. Only if we do that, we can make this world better in the future and at present. From this point of view, we should find *global solutions* for *global challenges* not state centric solutions which are nominative solutions connected with different kinds of state. Since we should not forget that primarily we are the citizens of the world.

¹ *The Transformation of War*, The Free Press, New York 1991, p. 198 (from an essay named *The Global Security Environment: Emerging Trends and Potential Challenges* written by P. J. Gizewski).

In this paper I will try to emphasize the definition of global challenges. Also I will include my comments and predictions on these issues. I have used many kinds of sources for my paper but generally I have benefited by *The Millennium Project*² which was founded in 1996 after a three-year feasibility study with the United Nations University, Smithsonian Institution, Futures Group International, and the American Council for the UNU. It is now an independent non-profit global participatory future research think tank of futurists, scholars, business planners, and policy makers who work for international organizations, governments, corporations, NGOs, and universities.

Definition of global challenges

First of all, it is really important to define global challenges. Actually it is really hard to define this term because of the multifarious definitions. There is no exact definition of this term. As far as I am concerned, global challenges are bad results of globalization³, which have to be overcome by international actors including citizens, states, NGO's etc. While I was searching for these definitions I also noticed that there was a discrepancy between *global issues* and *global challenges*.

According to Cambridge Dictionary *global* means relating to the whole world, *challenge* means something needing great mental or physical effort in order to be done successfully, or the situation of facing this kind of effort, *issue* means a subject or problem that people are thinking and talking about. Consequently, if you are trying to deal with *global challenges*, it means that you are handling more coercive problems than *global issues*. Also dealing with global challenges needs a mental or physical effort and it means it is not enough to think about them.

On the other hand, according to Kirsten Gelsdorf⁴ *global challenges* are defined as any major trend, shock, or development that has the potential for serious global impacts.

We should review these challenges in a interconnected way. Global challenges cannot be project by making distinction between them. They have to be worked in a indoor pool. Even so, it is possible to categorize them.

² <http://www.millennium-project.org/> [access: 18.02.2014].

³ In my opinion, globalization is a beneficial and natural process for humanity but the problem is that all countries do not draw on globalization and it causes a gap between states. Also that gap leads to some kind of global challenges.

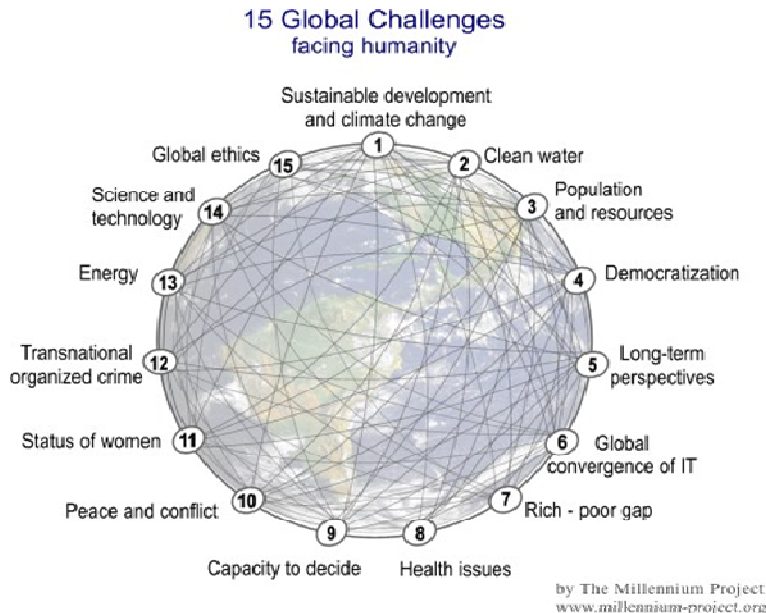
⁴ K. Gelsdorf, *Global Challenges and their Impact on International Humanitarian Action*, OCHA Occasional Policy Briefing Series – No. 1, January 2010, p. 4, https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/Global_Challenges_Policy_Brief_Jan10.pdf [access: 20.02.2014].

Classification of global challenges

Basically, I have decided to use categorization of The Millennium Project but before that I would like to arrange an order of global challenges following Kirsten Gelsdorf⁵. According to her, global challenges are as follows:

1. Climate change;
2. Extreme poverty and inequality;
3. Financial and economic crisis;
4. Food crisis;
5. Water scarcity;
6. Energy security;
7. Migration;
8. Population growth and demographic shift;
9. Urbanization;
10. Health pandemics and infectious diseases.

As I have mentioned before, I will handle global challenges according to The Millennium Project. This project shows 15 global challenges which we are facing and they will probably be faced in the future by the global society. On figure 1 we can see global challenges according to that project.



Source: www.millennium-project.org.

Figure 1. Global challenges by The Millennium Project

⁵ K. Gelsdorf, *Global...*, op.cit., p. 4-5.

I selected this picture because it is valuable for explaining interconnected world system. In this world map all global challenges are connected with each other and one movement in one global challenge affects all others. Therefore, we should consider all of them in the same way and deal with them in all-round way.

Current global challenges

The first challenge is **sustainable development and climate change**. Sustainable development is about capacity of our eco-system. We have some resources which are not limitless and we should carry them into future for the next generations. There are many kinds of definition on sustainable development but widely acclaimed definition is that *development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*⁶. In this case humanity at present has to be regardful of natural resources and should not forget that next generations will need the same resources as us. Therefore, states and societies are supposed to attach importance to this issue. There are some examples of sustainable development like solar and wind energy, sustainable construction, crop rotation, water fixtures etc.⁷

The second part of the first challenge is climate change that is very trendy topic nowadays. Climate change is directly related to global warming. Global warming is a result of high level of CO₂ in the air. This level of CO₂ generates another term named greenhouse effect connected with decreasing ozone layer. This ozone layer is what keeps the Earth's climate livable. Without it, the Earth's surface would be on average about 60 degrees Fahrenheit colder. Because of the change in this level, ice on the polar caps is melting and the level of oceans is getting higher. Also it is really harmful for some kind of animals not just for human beings. Climate change is one of the most important challenges for the world. For instance the winter in the USA was extremely cold in 2014. A lot of people died because of that problem. Actually, Earth's average temperature has risen by 1.4°F over the past century, and is projected to rise another 2 to 11.5°F over the next hundred years⁸. If we do not take some precaution about climate change and about its reasons, it can be the end of humanity and our planet. 68th United States Secretary of State, John Kerry, made a speech about climate change in Indonesia on 16/02/2014. In his speech

⁶ World Commission on Environment and Development, Brundtland Report, presented in 1987.

⁷ <http://www.sustainabledevelopmentinfo.com/> [access: 20.02.2014].

⁸ United Nations Environmental Protection Agency statistics, <http://www.epa.gov/> [access: 20.02.2014].

he mentioned that climate change is a fact and states have to cooperate about this challenge. On the other hand, the USA signed Kyoto Protocol⁹ on 11 December 1997 but, ironically, the USA has not put that agreement into practice. In my opinion, big actors (China, the USA) should take the initiative about climate change and collaborate to combat that problem. What is more, climate change is also a big problem for Europe and European countries, namely they have to do something about that challenge. Therefore, the European Union made some dispositions about climate change in 2013. A kind of strategy was launched by the European Commission.

Potable and Clean Water Problem. *Fresh water* problem is also an environmental challenge. Nearly 800 million people cannot have access to clean water. When we say clean water, it is not just drinking water. It is general hygiene as well. The problem of hygiene concerns all humanity. For example, in Africa children suffer from hygiene problem. As I have mentioned before, all regions can affect each other, therefore Africa may be a source of disasters for Europe, America etc. Because of lack of clean water, a lot of people have died to date¹⁰. Access to clean water is a basic human right and governments should handle this problem in human rights case.

For instance, China has a huge project relating to clean water. The Chinese government invested 60 billion American dollars in the project transferring water from the Yangtze River Basin in the south to the dry north. That project is also a great example for sustainable construction.

People need water for agriculture for growing world population. There is population's increase on the earth. We estimate that the population will reach 9.1 billion in 2050 and according to FAO (the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations) food production must rise by 70%¹¹. Therefore, we need more clean water for being alive and live in a welfare world society.

Population versus resources. The world population is growing rapidly and probably there will be 9.1 billion people in 2050. Basically, it means that we need more resources. Therefore, people should work on how they can supply more and more food. In my opinion, it is possible to achieve a bigger amount of food supply by using new technologies in agriculture. On the other hand, this challenge is not just about food supply, also it is

⁹ The Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is an international treaty that sets binding obligations on industrialized countries to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.

¹⁰ The United Nations have reported that more people die from water- and sanitation-related diseases than from all forms of violence, including war.

¹¹ <http://www.populationinstitute.org/resources/populationonline/issue/1/8/> [access: 22.02.2014].

about energy supply for human beings but that issue will be discussed later in the essay.

In my opinion, that challenge can create a group of people whom we can call ecological migrants. It may not happen in a short term but it is still possible that some people who are living in scarce lands, may move to some countries which have a resources potential like Canada.

Democratization. In this case we can talk about Arab world as a good example. Protesters in Arab countries are seeking democracy, the rule of law and greater social justice. This right which depends on self determination can be defined as *Freedom of the people of a given area to determine their own political status; independence*¹².

Certainly, that challenge will not be restricted by Arab countries. Actually, Arab protesters tried to change their regimes or political status. At the same time, there are some groups who want their independence like Kurdish people in Turkey. For these people it is also a democratization process. In this case Africa and Middle East regions are really problematic. I think democratization is about education. Well-educated society can stop this challenge and bring peace and stability in the world. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk who is the founder of the Republic of Turkey mentioned that the road of world peace comes from the peace of your own country.

Unfortunately, there are still a lot of communities who do not have their own countries and this will be a big challenge for the world in the future. Also a lot of countries are not sovereign in a true meaning of this word. For example, Freedom House notes that 51% of sub-Saharan Africa's population live in the 21 countries rated *partially free*, 39% live in 19 countries *not free*, while only 12% live in the 9 countries with *free* status¹³. If these countries accomplish democratization and clarification of their status, the world will change because of this challenge.

Long-term perspectives for prediction about future of the world. It is really significant to have a perspective about all kinds of global challenges. It helps international actors for predicting and blocking challenges before they appear. In my point of view, this kind of actions should be shared. States should share all information with international organizations. In this way, the world society can be ready for challenges and can take some measures against problems.

As I mentioned at the beginning my essay, if we work on the future, we save the present too. Future can be influenced by this kind of actions. However, future is not predictable, but, we can at least create some possible scenarios using this instrument.

¹² <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/self-determination> [access: 22.02.2014].

¹³ http://www.millennium-project.org/millennium/Global_Challenges/chall-04.html [access: 22.02.2014].

The global convergence of IT. The 21st century is the locomotive of information and communication technologies. Almost everybody has access to the Internet and it is changing the world in an unstable way. It means that societies can find all information about the topic which they want in order to get some information. Actually, that action has a lot of good aspects about getting well-educated. On the other hand, we can see negative effects of information and communications technologies such as terrorism.

The growing gap between poor and rich people¹⁴. The next challenge is economic inequality between people or even between states. It is a really serious problem nowadays and there are a lot of reasons for that gap but in my opinion the most important reason is education. When we look at poor segment of the community, generally they are uneducated individuals. On the other hand, it does not mean that they deserve to live in inequality. According to the World Bank the percentage of extreme poverty is about 20% of the world's population.

That gap between poor and rich states can cause terrorism and wars. Therefore, it would be good to solve this problem in a logical way for rich countries too. Also, in my opinion poor people may be taken advantage of for domestic political power by governments by giving poor people some *consolation prize* for their votes in elections. For me, this problem is a really grave problem for the order of world. Poor people or poor countries may hold a grudge against rich sides and this feeling may cause a collapse of the stable world system and may result in wars.

Even in the USA (superpower, police of the international system) there is a big economic inequality. For example, since the middle of 2009, about 95 per cent of all US income gains have gone to the top 1 per cent of its citizens. Now, even powerful financiers are alarmed by the increased income inequality between the rich and the poor¹⁵.

My solutions for that challenge is to start with education and in this way remove barriers between poor and rich people in the meaning of sociology. Also giving social aid for unemployed people is not a good idea for solving this problem. I think it is encouraging poor people not to work.

Health problems. Health problems have always been a challenge for the humanity. Science has progressed and therapies of many diseases have been discovered. Despite improvements, there are still many health challenges. For Instance, one billion people do not have access to health care systems in the 21st century¹⁶.

¹⁴ <http://rt.com/business/world-economic-forum-inequality-754/> [access: 22.02.2014]. I have enclosed this link as there is a picture showing the gap on this website.

¹⁵ <http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/2014/0105/Income-inequality-Does-wider-gap-between-rich-and-poor-threaten-capitalism> [access: 22.02.2014].

¹⁶ <http://www.globalissues.org/issue/587/health-issues> [access: 22.02.2014].

Especially in Africa, there are still many epidemic illnesses such as AIDS, tuberculosis etc. Anyhow, improvements have reduced the harm of these illnesses for human beings in the 21st century. This situation may worsen in the future if some illnesses are produced by bio-terrorist groups.

Capacity to decide. In my opinion, this challenge is really connected with the process of globalization. Day by day, everything is getting a new complex form. People are trying to observe and to saturate that process but it is not so easy to transform human beings.

That result causes a paradox in the process of decision taking. The new complex decision taking process has an inevitable effect on policies of states. States are becoming uncertain foreign policy actors and it serves us a changeable and an unreliable international agenda and aberrant interests of states.

Peace and Conflicts. In my opinion peace is a natural situation for modern societies. Actually, there is a stable peace in modern societies but there are still conflicts on the earth. Especially, there are some political and ethnic oriented problems in Africa and the Middle East. Moreover, the concept of conflicts might refer to external or internal issues.

According to realists, people are seeking power and this international system depends on the conflict of interest. Based on this idea, interest groups, terrorist groups, states, non-state actors, ethnic groups, religious groups are the major source of conflicts.

From this point of view, conflict is present when two or more parties perceive that their interests are incompatible, express hostile attitudes, or pursue their interests through actions that damage other parties. These parties may be individuals, small or large groups, and countries¹⁷.

In my opinion, these actions that damage other parties, do not have to be physical assault. Furthermore, those may include psychological aspects, economic warfare etc. as they cause violence. According to the United Nations, all kinds of violence are prohibited.

Therefore, we should solve those problems in harmony. At the same time, we should struggle with terrorist groups and organized crime groups. These groups are the source of asymmetric warfare and instability in the world. Conflicts may depend on different kinds of cultures too. We should promote cultural awareness and societies should be open-minded and tolerant towards other cultures. Thus, we can minimize the risk of conflicts.

Status of women. The United Nations define violence against women as *any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of*

¹⁷ http://www.creativeassociatesinternational.com/CAIStaff/Dashboard_GIROAdminCAIStaff/Dashboard_CAIIAdminDatabase/resources/ghai/understanding.htm#concepts-b1 [access: 23.02.2014].

such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

There are a lot of problems concerning violence against women in the world. It does not matter which kind of violence they suffer from. According to the rule of law, all kinds of gender are equal in the meaning of social, economic, physical rights and freedom of thought. What is more, we should try to establish and to maintain a reverse discrimination for women.

Unfortunately, women often work in bad conditions and at the same time they are less paid. There some barriers for women in the meaning of forced labor participation rate. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, there is a 57% participation¹⁸ but it does not mean that women have a real equality. Moreover, most of these women do not have a health coverage or/and they suffer oppression.

Furthermore, the analysis of WHO with the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and the Medical Research Council found that globally 35% of women have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence¹⁹.

At that point I claim that this rate is not real one. The real one is higher than this rate. For that reason alone, we can see psychological violence on women because of not being clear about their bad experiences. Most of women are trying to hide those harmful incidents because of fear. Especially in Arab countries, in Kurdish society and in Africa, women are not seen as human beings. We have to stop this kind of actions against women. At the same time, some organizations such as WHO, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of women etc. are trying to prevent that abuse of human rights.

Transnational Organized Crime. Transnational organized crime is a complex term that involves a lot of crimes such as money laundering, cyber crime, and of human, drugs, weapons trafficking etc. It is really hard to struggle with transnational organized crime groups because generally they corrupt with some statesmen and officials.

Transnational organized crime groups are closely linked with terrorist groups. There are some strategies how to deal with this challenge but they are not enough to stop it. We need a real collaboration among societies without seeking power and without *secret intention between states*. The UN, the White House, Interpol have put transnational organized crime on their challenges lists but we need a well-organized collaboration between these big actors against these crime syndicates.

Energy. We should consider this challenge in the meaning of non-renewable versus renewable resource. Generally, we are using non-

¹⁸ [http://research.stlouisfed.org/fred2/graph/?s\[1\]\[id\]=LNS11300002](http://research.stlouisfed.org/fred2/graph/?s[1][id]=LNS11300002) [access: 23.02.2014].

¹⁹ <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs239/en/> [access: 23.02.2014].

renewable energy such as coal, petroleum, natural gas, nuclear fuel instead of renewable energy such as geothermal energy, biomass, solar energy, water energy, wind energy etc.

According to one viewpoint, (view of sustainable development) using non-renewable resources is not logical because they are not limitless and they will come to an end soon. We should ask ourselves what next generations will do without these resources. Moreover, if we consider ecological balance, these resources are harmful for health of the earth.

Countries such as the USA²⁰ are working on using renewable energy. The USA has built the largest Solar Plant in the world. Some people criticize this project claiming that it will destroy the ecological balance in that settlement but in my opinion that project is better than using non-renewable power. We should promote this kind of projects on international agendas. If we do not care about energy, it can cause big chaos in the future, something like living without electricity or/and water, wars etc.

Science and Technology. The development of science and technology enables access to the Science and Technology (S&T) knowledge. For example free online university courses proliferate and open source hardware and software are sharing the means of production. Also web based highly educational systems, adaptive learning models such as genetic algorithms, emerging capabilities of collective intelligence systems are improving.

Global Ethics. Protests show that there is a sensitivity to unethical decision making by power elites. The world is still trying to recover from the proliferation of unethical decisions that led to the 2008 financial crisis. This proves that there is a connection between ethics and economy. There is no protection against a global crisis. Although there is a improvement in S&T, this will give rise to future ethical issues, for example if it is possible that one day in the future a single individual could make and deploy a bio-weapon of mass destruction. 160 countries and the European union ratified the international convention in 2012. This is only one instrument to unite universally anti-corruption. Today 12-27 million people are slaves, more than at the height of the nineteenth century. Slavery is due to organized crime. We need to create encouragement for ethics in global decisions. We also need to encourage respect for legitimate authorities.

²⁰ <http://www.itbusinessnet.com/article/SunEdison-Interconnects-164-MW-Solar-Power-Plant-For-Davis-Monathan-Air-Force-Base-3073243> [access: 23.02.2014].

Global challenges and predictions about the world in next 20 years

In this chapter, I would like to discuss global challenges which I predict we will face in 20 years' time.

I think we forgot that we are alive because of the nature and our life is based on oxygen. Mankind is destroying the nature of earth. Some people ignore the fact that there is a climate change and they underestimate results of this significant change in the climate. Even so, 97% of climate experts agree humans are causing global warming²¹. Actually, it is a result of growing population. Nobody can connive at population problem. If we do not stop damaging our planet, it will be the end of this life. I think states will handle that challenge because of climate change awareness. It may help people to take actions against climate change. I hope it will not be too late to save our planet.

On the other hand, sustainable development may become a necessity because people think that planet is imperil and we have to protect our planet to save our lives. If we implement fully 'sustainable development thinking', we can decrease global warming, thus we can protect new generations. In this context, developed states should consider it a duty because these states damage natural resources more than others. Moreover, these states should use solar power and wind energy. I hope that mankind will think of sustainable development more than now within 20 years.

Mankind cannot live without water, especially fresh water. Therefore, we should protect fresh waters and use some materials to clean it. If we do not preserve fresh water, we will fight each other, maybe not in 20 years but we have to think over this danger. Again, developed states should take responsibility because these states' factories contaminate fresh water. We may organize conferences about clean water protection for developing states as this may develop new technologies.

Another important issue is population growth that can cause big economic problems because when poor states' population is raising, developed states' population is aging. From this perspective, our planet may get poor and hunger level may raise. Therefore, we must follow some population policies because developed states will need young population. However, these differences may create a much wider gap between the rich and the poor because poor states, companies, people will be much poorer and rich states, companies, people will be much richer. This case will be dangerous for all mankind. I think that we should find balance between these sides and also we should provide welfare in all the world.

²¹ <http://www.skepticalscience.com/global-warming-scientific-consensus.htm> [access: 27.02.2014].

Another issue to deal with is the status of women. This matter can spark debate because women have different statuses in the world. Women cannot gain enough respect in poor countries that have more population than developed states. Moreover, this respect will not grow more than today. This is a pessimistic but possible idea. Contrarily, on a positive side, women may achieve a greater status and respect than today because the world will develop and developed states may have spillover effects on other countries of the world. We have to prepare some conferences, companies, organizations to fight for the right status for women. Thus, we can provide equality between women and men.

In next 20 years, technologies and science will definitely change. States and companies will develop new technologies, and machines, and methods because these bodies employ competition and also want to improve their own technologies. In this way, we can say that health sector will develop respectively. Protecting fresh water should be stressed in connection with health and sanitary conditions. However, the threat of organized crime growth may coincide with the development of new weapons and technologies and consequently their access to information will be easier. Paradoxically, the progress may both improve and worsen our lives.

Finally, peace and conflict can be connected with democratic peace theory because theorists say that democratic states do not fight with each other but authoritarian states do. Therefore, states should choose the democratic system for democratic peace. Thus, challenging world could be more democratic and peace could be perpetual. That could be noticed in the Arab spring. Non-democratic or authoritarian states' people wanted to reach democracy and enjoy human rights. On the other hand, growing population may not allow this development because poor and non-democratic states' population is bigger than democratic ones'. However, we can provide more democratic and more stable world by dint of new developments in 20 years.

Conclusion

The aim of this essay is to point out global challenges and find solutions to them. Firstly, global challenges were defined and The Millennium Project was used as the main source. At the same time, I tried to predict the future. Cooperation in how to deal with problems was mentioned as the most important point.

We are living in a mortal planet and humanity should take care of it. We should appreciate this great earth. It can be achieved with the collaboration between states and non-state actors. The international community should agree on challenges and their solutions. On the other hand, we still

need some time to establish an aware community because even some experts do not agree on climate change. Developed countries especially have to promote awareness concerning global challenges and it may result with a domino effect for other states.

In my opinion, the collaboration between states is not enough without the third world and developing countries. I think the cooperation in dealing with these challenges is a realistic action because of our human nature. Even if you are a realist, you want to prolong your lifetime because of human nature according to realistic view. Therefore, people need to work together on these challenges even if we talk about seeking power and clash of interests. Because it is a significant interest for global community to prolong our and earth's lifetime.

I hope that international community will agree on at least basic subjects about global challenges as soon as possible. Especially great powers like China and USA should mobilize states to cooperate. Dealing with global challenges is superior to the politics of states.

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ABSTRACT

GLOBAL CHALLENGES FOR THE WORLD

The aim of this essay is to point out global challenges and find some solutions to them. Firstly, global challenges have been defined using The Millennium Project as the main source in an attempt to predict the future. Cooperation is stressed as the most important point to deal with these challenges. Our great earth should be appreciated. As we are living in a mortal planet, humanity should take care of it with collaboration between states and non-state actors. International community should agree on challenges and their solutions. On the other hand, time is still needed to establish an aware community because even some experts do not agree on climate change etc. Therefore, developed countries have to promote global challenges awareness as it may result with a domino effect for other states.