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Economic and Social Disproportion in the Modern World as the Stimulant for Terrorism

The problem of terrorism is an issue deeply rooted in history. Its numerous forms and manifestations have been present for centuries. They are the sum of a range of very different factors, including such issues as politics, ideology, religion, nationality and territory on the one hand, as well as culture, history and frequently neglected economic and social aspects on the other.

Economic and social factors can significantly affect disintegration trends, such as nationalism, radicalism, separatism, fundamentalism or terrorism. In many cases these trends are directly or indirectly related to poverty, economic crisis, mass and permanent unemployment, illiteracy or very considerable financial disproportion between regions, states or social groups. On the one hand they affect the level of frustration or the feeling of injustice; on the other they can stimulate increased aggression, violence and terror.

An interesting yet rarely tackled issue is to demonstrate the relations between poverty, social and economic backwardness and the emergence and intensification of terrorist attitudes. In numerous cases the list of the poorest countries corresponds with that of the location of the most frequent terrorist attacks. This can be exemplified by Afghanistan, Palestine, Indonesia or – paradoxically – Iraq, the state with the second largest resources of crude oil that could rapidly become one of the richest entities in the Middle East. However, nothing seems to suggest that this will happen in the nearest future, and terrorism and its consequences are among numerous reasons for this.

Obviously, this is not to mean that terrorism concerns only poor states. It also affects rich ones, yet considerably more rarely. Moreover, in this case the perpetrators frequently come from poor states or circles, and identify with them, explaining their acts with the need to defend the poor, retaliation for the injustice they have been suffering, or the need to draw the attention of the public to the injustice occurring. Therefore, poverty does not necessarily need to be linked to terrorism and lead to violence. Yet it can be an effective stimulus for both violence and terrorism.

There is a range of various criteria allowing us to consider the extent of poverty or economic and social disproportion that occur globally. Among those more frequently applied is the division of the globe into the so-called ‘rich

North' and 'the poor South.' The mechanism of differentiation applied here is economic and geographical rather than purely geographical. The measure of the current difference between 'the North' and 'the South' is provided by numbers. What follows from them is, for instance, that approximately 25% of the global population live in 'the North' while approximately 75% live in 'the South.' This juxtaposition assumes particular clarity and significance when accompanied by concrete economic indicators, such as participation in consumption or in global output. The range of differences is even more revealing here with 85% of them falling to 'the north' and 15% to 'the South.' It should also be stressed that the above indicators (and many more) are not static, but dynamic. Their values can change even over short periods of time, and they frequently do, usually in a way that is disadvantageous to the underdeveloped countries. To continue the examples above it can be said that the percentage of people living in 'the North' decreases whereas the participation of 'the North' in global consumption and affluence increases at the expense of 'the South.'

Table 1. The disproportion between 'the North' and 'the South'

Category	Population in %	Global capital in %
The North	25	85
The South	75	15

Source: Different sources.

Another way to present global financial disproportion is the division of the international community with respect to their share in global GDP, global trade, internal investment and internal savings. This is emphasized by the juxtaposition of three groups of states:

- a) the richest (developed) states – that are most important on the international arena (approximately one fifth);
- b) the middle group – developing states with a small or medium share in global economy (approximately three fifths of all states);
- c) outsiders – the poorest states with the least potential and economic significance (approximately one fifth).

Table 2. Global economic disproportion (% of the global sum)

States	GDP	Global trade	Internal savings	Internal investment
The richest 1/5	84.7	84.2	85.5	85.0
3/5 of states	13.9	14.9	13.8	14.1
The poorest 1/5	1.4	0.9	0.7	0.9

Source: G. Unser, M. Vimmer, *Die Vereinten Nationen*, Bonn 1995. Quoted after: E. Cziomer, L. Zyblikiewicz, *Zarys współczesnych stosunków międzynarodowych*, Warszawa-Kraków 2000, p. 51.

A more detailed formula refers to the data collected by the World Bank, where three main categories of states were identified:

- a) 'center' states with national income exceeding \$ 15,000 *per capita* (23 such countries were identified in 2007);
- b) 'semi-peripheral' states with income per capita ranging from \$ 7,500 to \$ 15,000 (13 states in 2000);
- c) 'peripheral' states with income below \$ 7,500 (96 states in 2000).

The asymmetry between the above groups does not only concern their income or population, but also numerous other factors.

Table 3. The world's 'center' and 'peripheries' vs. economic asymmetry

Itemization	Number of states	Population		National product per capita in USD	Population living at less than \$ 1 a day (in %)
		million	%		
Total	132	5 975	100	6 490	24.0
The center •	23	841	14.7	22 121	0.03
Semi-peripheries ••	13	340	5.7	9 962	9.84
Peripheries •••	96	4 794	80.2	2 815	25.62
The richest 10 states ••••	10	484	8.1	25 474	0.02
The poorest 10 states •••••	10	305	5.1	659	50.47

- States with national income exceeding USD 15,000 per capita annually.
- States with per capita income ranging from USD 7,500 to 15,000 annually.
- States with income below USD 7,500 annually.
- USA, Switzerland, Singapore, Norway, Denmark, Belgium, Japan, Australia, Canada, the Netherlands.
- Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Zambia, Yemen, Mali, Niger, Madagascar, Mozambique, Nigeria.

Source: Calculations based on the data from the *Word Development Report 2000/2001: Attacking Poverty*, published for the World Bank by the Oxford University Press, New York 2001.

In the 'peripheral' states as many as 25% of the entire population have less than one dollar a day to live on, whereas this proportion amounts to 0.03 in the states of the 'center.' An even more significant disproportion can be observed when comparing the 10 states considered to be the richest (the highest GDP) and the poorest (the lowest GDP) at the time. In the former group the average value of national product per capita exceeded \$ 25,000, in the latter - it was below \$ 700.00. Additionally, in the latter group as many as 50% of the entire population was surviving on less than \$ 1 a day. The differences can also be observed in the access to consumer goods or the size of the academic profession. The table below illustrates these.

Table 4. Global 'center' and 'peripheries' vs. the development of communication and the size of the academic profession

Itemization	TV sets	Cellular phones	Personal computers	Computers with permanent access to the Internet	The number of scientists and engineers
	Per 1,000 individuals			Per 10,000 individuals	Per one million individuals
Total	249	54	59	124	925
The center	681	267	321	810	3 173
Semi-peripheries	288	97	65	48	879
Peripheries	167	11	9	2	443
The richest 10 states	767	82	378	1 236	3 805
The poorest 10 states	20	0.5	0.5	0.05	No data

Source: Calculations based on the data from the *World Development Report 2000/2001: Attacking Poverty*, published for the World Bank by the Oxford University Press, New York 2001.

Departing from the typology and models that demonstrate the differentiation of states, one can present several selected examples of economic and social problems emerging in the modern world, and particularly in its poorest regions.

A. Approximately 2.6 billion people have to survive on less than \$ 2¹ and approximately one million survive on \$ 1 a day. This is shown in the data below on people living in poverty. For example, as many as 46% of the entire African population lives on less than \$ 1 a day.²

Table 5. Population living on less than \$ 2 - 1965-1999

Category/years	1965-1969	1975-1979	1985-1989	1995-1999
1	2	3	4	5
Share of population living on less than \$ 2 a day (%)				
- total of 39 in LDCs (the Least Developed Countries) including: Africa	80.8	82.1	81.9	80.7
Asia	82.00	83.7	87.0	87.5
- in the remaining 22 developing countries	78.8	79.6	73.4	68.2
	82.8	76.5	61.6	35.3

¹ *Human Development Report 2007/2008*.

² K. Mingst, *Podstawy stosunków międzynarodowych*, Warszawa 2006, p. 261.

	1	2	3	4	5
Population living on less than \$ 2 a day (million)					
- total of 39 in LDCs (the Least Developed Countries) including: Africa		211.1	277.5	360.5	449.3
Asia		131.7	174.4	239.5	315.1
- in the remaining 22 developing countries		79.1	102.9	120.3	133.3
		1405.0	1639.7	1599.0	1084.2

Source: UNCTAD, *The Least Developed Countries Report 2002*. Quoted after: K. Marzęda, *Międzynarodowe problemy społeczne*, in: *Międzynarodowe stosunki polityczne*, M. Pietraś (ed.), Lublin 2006, p. 502.

B. In 2001 GDP per capita amounted to approximately \$ 7,400 globally, with the North having an average of \$ 27,800 and a considerably lower level in poor states, ranging from \$ 7,200 in Latin America to \$ 1,600 in Sub-Saharan Africa.³ The top 20% of the richest population of the world yields around 82% of global income, while the participation of 20% of the poorest has shrunk to 1.3%.⁴ This is a continuation of a trend that has lasted for many years, which is exemplified by the details from the period of 1960–1990.

Table 6. The division of global income in the period of 1960–1990

Year	Global income falling to the 20% of the richest global population (%)	Global income falling to the 20% of the poorest global population (%)	The relation of income of 20% of the richest and poorest global population
1960	70.2	2.3	30:1
1970	73.9	2.3	32:1
1980	76.3	1.7	45:1
1990	82.8	1.3	64:1

Source: C. Thomas, *Poverty, Development and Hunger*, in: *Globalization of World Politics. An Introduction to International Relations*, J. Baylis, S. Smith (eds.), Oxford 1997. Quoted after: K. Marzęda, *Międzynarodowe problemy społeczne*, in: *Międzynarodowe stosunki polityczne*, M. Pietraś (ed.), Lublin 2006, p. 502.

C. The issue of water supply is another one deserving more attention, in particular its shortage both in the context of human needs and agricultural production. It is estimated that at present approximately 140 million people inhabit an area struck by a serious water deficit. It is forecasted that by 2050 a half

³ Ibidem, p. 256.

⁴ R. Gilpin, *Global Political Economy, Understanding the Economic Order*, Princeton 2001.

of humankind is going to have problems with their water supply. This has an adverse impact on other global issues, such as the increasing number of diseases, epidemics or the growth of hunger.⁵ This also leads to increased tensions in international relations, as water is frequently perceived as an exceptionally valuable commodity in short supply. This can be proven by the animosity and disputes between Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia over the control of the water system of the Nile; or those between Turkey, Syria and Iraq concerning the water drawn from the Euphrates and Tigris rivers.

D. Crises are another significant factor. There is an extensive range of crises, including social, humanitarian, political or financial ones to name but a few. Each of them can have an adverse impact on a state and society and cause consequence of varied significance. A possible scenario involves acts of terrorism triggered by a crisis (e.g. Algeria, Albania, Kenya, Rwanda, etc.).

A number of various events can be considered in terms of cause-and-effect relationships, for example armed conflicts, wars⁶, or the instances of exile. They have accompanied humankind from time immemorial. It is estimated that if the number of wars in the history of the world were to be measured it would encompass some 15,000 cases in which over 3.5 billion people were killed. Since 1945 around 200 wars have been waged and have lasted for a total of over 400 years.⁷ Conflicts frequently emerge in the states or areas characterized by numerous economic and social problems. This applies to some African states, the Middle East, Asia or South America among others. The most significant consequences of wars and conflicts, apart from human loss, growing pathology and a lowered security level, involve decreased income, increased unemployment, hindrances to humanitarian aid supply, a lowered education level or medical care, etc., thus they involve economic and social factors.

E. Another indication is provided by the issue of refugees. The outbreak of war, unrest, and any kind of disaster frequently make thousands or even millions of people leave their places of residence and move to safer territories over quite short periods of time. Under such circumstances it is one of the primary tasks for the international community to rapidly provide refugees with medical care, shelter and first and foremost water and food. Their shortage or inadequate distribution can cause the death of many of them. The international community (mainly specialized organizations and structures, such as the UN

⁵ Z. Cesarz, E. Stadtmüller, *Problemy polityczne współczesnego świata*, Wrocław 1996, p. 203; E. Cziomer, L. Zyblikiewicz, *Zarys współczesnych stosunków międzynarodowych*, Warszawa-Kraków 2000, p. 156.

⁶ For more on crises cf.: M. Dobry, *Socjologia kryzysów politycznych*, Warszawa 1995; R. Wróblewski, *Państwo w kryzysie*, Warszawa 2001; B. Balcerowicz, *Pokój i "niepokój"*, Warszawa 2002.

⁷ Z. Cesarz, E. Stadtmüller, *Problemy...*, op. cit., pp. 90-99; Cz. Mojsiewicz, *Globalne problemy ludzkości*, Poznań 1998, p. 46.

or UNHCR) has faced such challenges on numerous occasions, for example in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Rwanda or Sudan. This problem remains topical though. The UNHCR data for 2006 show that this problem concerns around 9,9 million individuals.⁸

F. Average life expectancy is a very expressive indicator. In economically developed countries it is more than 10 years longer than the global average. The situation is worst in Africa. As many as 22 states (all of them located in the Sub-Saharan Africa) were categorized as those of 'low social development.' Among others, this means that in nearly half of them two out of five children will not live to be 40 years old. In the most developed countries in turn at least nine out of ten children will live to the age of 60.⁹ This is conditioned by a whole array of factors including the quality of nutrition, medical care, access to water, sewage system, level of personal hygiene, etc. The following states are forecasting the longest life expectancy: Japan (81.5 years), Sweden (80.1), Hong Kong (79.9), Island (79.4), Australia (79.2), Israel (79.2), Martinique (79.1), Switzerland (79.1), Canada (79), and France (79). The shortest life expectancy is recorded in Africa: Botswana (36.1), Mozambique (38), Swaziland (38.1), Malawi (39.3), Lesotho (40.2), Sierra Leone (40.5), Burundi (40.6), Rwanda (40.9), Zambia (42.2), and Zimbabwe (42.9).¹⁰

Table 7. Average life expectancy in 1995–2000

Region	Life expectancy
Globally	65.4
Developed states	74.9
Developing states	63.3
Africa	51.4
Asia	66.3
Europe	73.3

Source: *United Nations Populations Division, 2004*. Quoted after: M. Czerny, *Globalizacja a rozwój. Wybrane zagadnienia geografii społeczno-gospodarczej świata*, Warszawa 2005, p. 64.

G. In 1980 the debt of the developing countries amounted to \$ 567 billion, in 1992 to \$ 1.6 trillion and in 2002 to \$ 2.2 trillion.¹¹ International indebtedness is a consequence of many elements. It frequently involves subsequent borrowing,

⁸ UNHCR Statistical Yearbook 2006, www.unhcr.org.

⁹ Human Development Report 2007/2008.

¹⁰ *Świat w liczbach 2005*, "The Economist," Warszawa 2005.

¹¹ K. Mingst, *Podstawy...*, op. cit., p. 259.

increasing costs of the debt, breakdown in the capital inflow to the states in a debt crisis, and the consequent transfer of resources to the debtor states, or various financial and social effects of the above.¹²

The issue of indebtedness has a considerably broader context, also involving political aspects. The first example concerns the International Monetary Fund reporting in 2006 that despite their former declarations, made for example at the G8 states summit in Gleneagles in 2005, the debt of the poor 'South' was never reduced in practice. This is evidenced by the ODA ratio (Official Development Assistance) changing by only 5%.¹³ Another reference is provided by data showing that since September 2001 the USA has spent around \$ 700 billion exclusively for its wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and for the related projects, such as the reconstruction of these countries.

H. The problem of famine. In the 1990s it concerned around 800 million individuals.¹⁴ At present, the Food and Agriculture Organization estimates that over 870 million individuals are suffering from hunger or undernourishment, whereas a further two million are coping with restricted access to food.¹⁵ Other data show that statistically a person dies from hunger every three seconds. The number of such deaths adds up to around 15,000 a day, and over a year it approximates the population of the eight largest Polish cities.

To sum up this part of our considerations, it can be said that poverty is not always related to violence or terrorism, as economic development in a given territory does not always have to lead to the emergence of democratic institutions and principles. China is among the more obvious examples here. However, the same rule works the other way round, which is to mean that the adoption and implementation of a democratic model does not have to signify improved economic and social living conditions. This can be illustrated by the situation of selected African states. The data collected by the Freedom House detail the interdependence between the stage of economic development and the extent of civic liberties.

Table 8. Global 'centers' and 'peripheral' systems vs. political situation

Itemization	Civic liberties	Democratization of the political system
	Point average on the 1-7 scale ^a	
1	2	3
Globally	5.3	5.6

¹² K. Marzęda, *Międzynarodowe problemy...*, op. cit., p. 469 et seq.

¹³ *Kto pamięta o Milenijnych Celach Rozwoju?*, www.global.net.pl.

¹⁴ For more cf., Z. Cesarz, E. Stadtmüller, *Problemy...*, op. cit., p. 202.

¹⁵ F. Major, *Przyszłość świata*, Warszawa 2001, p. 229.

1	2	3
Center states	6.4	6.6
Semi-peripheries	5.6	6.0
Peripheries	3.9	4.1
The richest 10 states	6.4	6.5
The poorest 10 states	3.6	3.9

^a 1-7 scale where 1 signifies the lack of political freedom, lack of civic liberties and no democratization of the political system, and 7 stands for comprehensive political rights, full civic liberties and full democratization of the political system.

Sources: Calculations based on the Freedom House data (*Freedom in the World 2002: The Democracy Gap*, www.freedomhouse.org/reports).

The interactions that can occur in a given state between an economic and social situation and democratization can be graphically represented by the inequality below.

Graph 1. The interaction between democracy and development

$$\text{Dem.} = \text{Dev.} \qquad \text{Dem.} \geq \text{Dev.} \qquad \text{Dem.} \leq \text{Dev.}$$

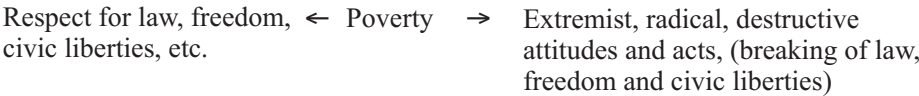
Dem. - democracy.

Dev. - development.

Source: Author’s own analysis.

Such factors as poverty or the lack of civic liberties can be a significant and effective trigger for radical attitudes adopted both by the state and its citizens. Poverty is more likely to contribute to extremist acts of terrorism or violence rather than to propagation of democracy or respect for law.

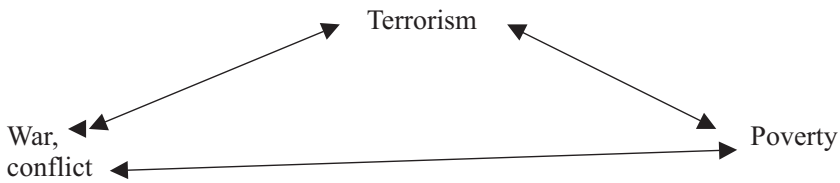
Graph 2. The impact of poverty on the respect for law



Source: Author’s own analysis.

A similar correlation is observable between military operations and the emergence of disintegration trends (including terrorism). For example, terrorism is more likely to escalate in the territories engulfed by war, which are unstable, or are at the so-called ignition points rather than in other territories. However, this does not mean that there is no danger in the latter case.

**Graph 3. The relations along the line:
military operations – terrorism – poverty**



Source: Author's own analysis.

Mutual interactions take place between the above elements and affect their scope, nature and frequency. The table below in turn presents the extent and location of armed conflicts from 1945 to 1990. A detailed analysis reveals that a significant proportion of these conflicts concern poor states or those where disintegration trends are present.

Table 9. Regional armed conflicts in 1945–1990

Region	Number of states	Wars
Europe	35	2
Middle East	25	16
Black and South Africa	43	22
Latin America	23	5
South America	12	6
North America	2	–
Asia	38	28
Total	178	79

Source: R. Pfetsch, *Internationale und nationale Konflikte nach dem Zeiten Weltkrieg*, "Politische Vierteljahresschrift," Jg. 32, Helf 2, Opladen 1991, p. 105. Quoted after: E. Cziomer, L. Zyblikiewicz, *Zarys...*, op. cit., p. 213.

On the one hand combating terrorism needs to involve the mechanisms allowing for the rapid elimination of the consequences of terrorism, inflicting punishment on its perpetrators as well as their patrons, on the other it needs to involve a broad range of preventive activity. Prevention does not only stand for the provision of national systems for crisis management to coordinate the initiative of various services and entities. It also covers the creation of supra-state institutions and mechanisms, such as central databases, joint training and the exchange of comprehensive information. This calls for concrete activity, not just declarations. It also requires that mutual superstitions, suspicions and different interests, which divide some states threatened by terrorist attacks, are

overcome. On the other hand preventing terrorism has to concern the reasons for terrorism which should be eliminated and limited. Its economic and social sources should be paid more attention than before. This is a consequence of the following two factors. Firstly, economic and social reasons can be much easier to estimate and analyze than others. Secondly, their prime mover is frequently neglected. In the research into terrorism one should both consider and analyze in detail the new factor of the so-called **social and economic climate for terrorism**. This will help us to learn more about the reasons for terrorism and to understand them better as well as to develop better mechanisms of prevention. This issue calls for a separate analysis though.¹⁶

Terrorist attacks in the USA, Spain, Russia, Israel, Iraq and many other states illustrate what a difficult, complex, dangerous and unpredictable problem we are facing. It manifests itself with varying frequency, force or dynamics practically every day. It is particularly difficult to prevent modern terrorism due to its nature and specific character. It poses a new generation of threat that could be named **flexible terrorism**¹⁷ owing to its dynamics and changeability.

¹⁶ A study in progress "Społeczno-ekonomiczna koniunktura terroryzmu."

¹⁷ For more cf. S. Wojciechowski, *Zmienność czy elastyczność terroryzmu?* – typescript.