



Problems and Risks of the Modern World and the Ways of Their Solution

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Abstract

The article deals with global problems and threats that greatly impact society in our time. The political and economic situation in the modern world is characterized by extreme tension and instability. Crisis phenomena cover all spheres of human life. In this situation, a reliable assessment of global risks is extremely important. Experts of the World Economic Forum conduct systematic work on the analysis and synthesis of the most dangerous risks for the world community. The theme of the current forum, "Creating a common future in a split world", points to the main world problem – disunity in today's global society. The main global risks of 2018 and the following period, according to experts, are the problems of climate and the environment; threats of a new technological wave and an increasing stratification of the level of incomes of the population. The destabilizing factor in the world was also the crisis of globalization. Prime Minister of India N.Modi called the crisis of globalization one of the main problems of mankind, along with climate change and terrorism. He stressed that protectionism becomes a global threat hampering world development.

The paper examines the impact of risk groups and certain global threats on society, analyzes views on the problem of various expert centers, and formulates conclusions.

Keywords: World Economic Forum, globalization, global risks, risk groups (geopolitical, social, technical, environmental, economic), cyberspace, cyberattacks, crisis, protectionism, risks, Club of Rome, countries, threats, experts.

1. Introduction

The current situation in the world is characterized by extreme tension, instability and unpredictability. Crisis phenomena are observed in virtually all spheres of human life. It is climate and natural environment, world economy and international politics, growth of social heat and scientific and technological progress impact on the human society.

Today, the political, economic and social intensity in the world has reached heights, and to reduce it, we need dialogue and consensus-building, the development of joint ways to overcome the global crisis; need a sober view of the ongoing global processes; for this it is important to have the most reliable, objective forecast of the development of events.

One of the most authoritative expert sites in the world for several decades assessing the global risks and trends of the modern world is the annual World Economic Forum in Davos. The main goal of the forum is the improvement of the socio-economic and political situation in the world, an attempt to find ways to resolve world problems.

Davos is the place where the world's elite meet: experts, businessmen, politicians, heads of states, international institutions, foundations, alliances, blocs, transnational corporations – about three thousand participants from 134 countries, including presidents and prime ministers Argentina, Brazil, Britain, Germany, India, Canada, the United States, France, Ukraine, the leaders of the European Commission, the International Monetary Fund, other countries and international organizations.

The theme of the forum, "Creating a Shared Future in a Fractured World", points to a major world problem – disunity in today's global world. While previously, Davos was the place where globalization was glorified and for many experts it seemed inevitable, this year for the first time the forum organizers loudly declared that globalization is passing through a severe crisis, the united world undergoes "geostrategic crack", which will have broad political, economic and social consequences [17].

Nevertheless, in spite of all the difficulties of the moment, experts from the World Economic Forum held a regular systematic work on the analysis and generalization of the most dangerous risks, making thus an important contribution to solving the problems of managing global threats to humanity.

2. Research questions

According to the existing classification global risks of the current year are divided into five groups: economic, environmental, geopolitical, social and technological. However, in most cases, the impact of particular risks affects more than one specific group. For assigning specific risks to a certain group, the most significant characteristics for each of them are traditionally defined.

We emphasize that the group of global economic risks include situations and conditions that have a significant impact on the macroeconomy. These are economic recession in key economies; crisis phenomena in infrastructure systems; instability of prices for energy, raw materials, agro-industrial products; fall in asset prices, critical debt burden; decrease in liquidity; inflation pressure;

fiscal, budgetary, banking, financial crises; bankruptcy; high unemployment and underemployment rate, etc. [5].

A group of global environmental risks includes environmental threats to humanity. Our time is characterized by an increase in the number of emergencies, extreme natural and weather disasters, which takes human lives, infrastructural and environmental damage, hampering economic development of countries and regions. The measures taken do not provide mitigation of their consequences; they are not able to prevent man-made disasters. The number of environmental disasters is increasing due to the human factor: oil spills, nuclear accidents. An irreversible threat is the collapse of the ecosystem, associated with a significant depletion of biological resources in many areas of land and ocean.

The geopolitical risk group covers global problems related to the proliferation and threat of the use of mass destruction weapon; crisis of internal and foreign policy of states, political and military blocs; widespread international organized crime, terrorism, corruption; the interference of some states in the internal affairs of others, criminal military and political pressure, the implementation of an unjustified sanctions policy; failures of global governance, weakening of the influence of international institutions, violation of agreements.

The category of global social risks includes risks associated with unstable population dynamics, social crises and human survival. This is the water and food crisis, the threat of hunger; the massive spread of infections, the emergence of new diseases and imperfect systems to combat them; large-scale (often uncontrolled) forced migration; uncontrolled urbanization; increasing income inequality and the gap in living standards between the richest and poorest citizens; strengthening political and social instability; a decrease in citizens' trust in power.

In today's world, an exceptionally important influence (direct or indirect) on all spheres of human activity is provided by technological risks. These include the following global problems: negative side effects of science and technology achievements use; failures in work and the failure of key information systems on which industrial production, state, municipal and corporate governance, service, finance and communication depend; large-scale cyberattacks; an unprecedented scale is acquired by the theft of electronic data, the criminal or illegal use of personal data.

Therefore, the question we put in this research is to define today's global problems for the world community and Russia in particular for the near future, taking into account data collected by important world organizations.

3. Research methods

The author used methods of analysis and synthesis, comparison, classification, statistical analysis carrying out this research.

4. Findings

Singling out the Top-5 global risks of 2018 by the probability of their occurrence, we can note that three of them relate to environmental problems – extreme weather conditions, natural disasters, failure of measures to mitigate the effects of climate change; and the two ones to technological – cyberattacks, data theft and their fraudulent use. In terms of their importance among top-5 global risks geopolitical risk is rated in the first place, i.e. the threat of use of mass destruction weapons; then there are three environmental risks – extreme weather conditions, natural disasters and insolvency measures to mitigate the effects of climate change; the fifth position is given to one risk from the social group – the water crisis.

Indeed, the weather conditions, natural anomalies and cataclysms of 2017 and the beginning of the current one are the best illustration of the scale of these threats. A major breakthrough leading to significant progress in changing the environmental

situation in the world at last year's forum included the ratification of the Paris Agreement on the Climate of 2015 by more than 100 countries, which provides measures for the regulation to release carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Although this does not fundamentally improve the situation, it is an important step in overcoming the critical ecological situation. However, contrary to the interests of mankind and common sense, the US, out of its utilitarian interests, announced its withdrawal from the agreement. One cannot but agree with the conclusion of the forum experts that one of the main groups of global risks is technological risks associated, paradoxically, with the achievements of scientific and technological progress [7].

One of the main topics of the current forum is a new technological wave and its components: the fourth industrial revolution, artificial intelligence, expansion of cyberspace, digital economy, crypto-currencies, robotization. Here we see new threats – unexpectedly low efficiency of introduction of innovative technologies (including artificial intelligence, Internet and others), their high cost, adverse consequences of using the achievements of science and technology, cyber dependency, the danger of destroying important information databases and information systems. This includes mass theft of personal and other data and their criminal use, large-scale cyberattacks (which, incidentally, sin the US intelligence agencies with their entire systems of total electronic surveillance); illegal wiretapping, unauthorized collection, theft and global storage of data, both on organizations, companies, foundations, parties, and private individuals around the world, including their citizens and leaders of allied states, hybrid wars, and the use of the Internet in manipulation the creation of a distorted information background, the deliberate use of social networks to spread disinformation and other risks.

Another significant group of modern global risks, closely related to technological threats, is the growth of fraud and corruption. At the same time, it should be emphasized that in the context of socio-economic instability, the problem of economic crime is exacerbated. The most "popular" crimes in the designated sphere are: tax evasion, money laundering, forgery and concealment of accounting data, transactions with securities based on insider information, misappropriation of assets, raiding, violation of intellectual property rights, bribery and corruption. Here we are talking about huge sums of money, not comparable to the damage from other crimes. Suffice it to say that according to the estimates of the International Monetary Fund, due to only corruption, the world economy loses \$ 1.5-2 trillion a year, which is comparable to 2% of world GDP. In Russia, (according to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the damage from corruption in 2017 amounted to 37.5 billion rubles, another 66 billion rubles were state losses from illegal cash withdrawal and 76 billion rubles from the revealed facts of withdrawing funds abroad [14].

A particular category of fraud is high-tech crime classified as so-called "new" risks. Of the total number of economic crimes in the financial services sector, almost half is accounted for by cybercrime.

So, according to the expert report prepared by Symantes, in 2017 hackers stole 172 billion dollars from 978 million consumers in 20 countries. In the US alone, 143 million consumers were affected by cybercriminals (more than half of the country's adult population), and the damage was \$ 19.4 billion. In the UK, according to the national Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 20% of the country's companies have suffered from cyber-attacks [12].

According to the NAFI (The national Agency for Financial Research) Analytical Center, about half of Russian companies faced cyber-attacks last year, 22% of them suffered financial losses. In the whole country, the damage from cyberattacks amounted to 116 billion rubles [12].

At the same time, there is a clear tendency towards the active growth of crimes in cyberspace. So, for example, in 2017 in Russia scammers attacked ATMs 5,000 times, stole 5 billion rubles, it is twice as much as a year earlier. In Europe, according

to European ATM Security, in 2016 scammers committed 26.6 thousand attacks, which resulted in banks losing \$ 415 million; In 2017, the number of attacks increased by 30% [1].

One more global problem from the category of the most important threats to humanity was noted by forum, - that is the growing income gap, which looks truly hypertrophied today. Another report of the international charitable and expert organization Oxfam was published, which notes that 1% of the world population owns 82% of all world wealth. Over the past decade, the wealth of the super-rich has increased even more with the increase in the absolute and relatively poor population [8]. "The Bloomberg Billionaires Index, published one month before the forum, demonstrates that the wealth of the world's 500 billionaires, many of whom are forum participants, grew by 23% compared to last year, making them \$ 1 trillion richer than at the end of 2016 year" [16]. This contradiction will inevitably lead to a socio-economic crisis.

The next global problem, closely related to the previous one and also capable of leading to a social explosion, is unemployment. According to the estimates of the International Labor Organization (ILO), the world's unemployment rate has not declined for decades. The number of unemployed in 2017 was about 201 million people; in 2018 another 2.7 million people will be added. This, according to ILO Director General G. Ryder, is due to the fact that economic growth rates remain low and not sufficiently inclusive; the number of workers grows faster than new jobs are created [10].

The worst situation for unemployment is in South Africa, where its level is estimated at 26.7%. However, in a prosperous Europe in a number of countries the situation also remains critical. The unemployment rate in Bosnia and Herzegovina is 26%, Macedonia - 25.5%, Greece - 23.4%, Spain - 18.3%, Portugal - 11%, Italy - 10.9%, France - 10%, in the Eurozone in general - 9.9% [18]. Dannye na 2017 god). At the same time, long-term unemployment has increased significantly. About half of the unemployed in Europe cannot find work for more than a year, and 12% - for 4 years [11].

This causes severe austerity measures introduced by the European Union and the International Monetary Fund. Countries such as Greece, Spain, Portugal and Italy over the past five years have extremely reduced their budgets, laying off hundreds of thousands of public sector employees and drastically cutting the salaries of the remaining employees. According to the director of the European Department of the IMF P. Thomsen, the return of unemployment in Greece to the pre-crisis level is expected no earlier than 2038; the reducing of unemployment to less than 10% will take 12 years in Italy, 10 years in Portugal and 6 years in Spain [11]. Experts note that the critical level of unemployment among young people and the hopelessness of the solution in the coming years of this problem are of particular concern.

A serious socioeconomic threat is the fact that high unemployment and low living standards lead to a number of other risks: social tensions, protest moods, up to uncontrolled street riots; there is uncertainty in the morrow, depression, mental disorders, suicide; there is an increase in crime; the purchasing power of the population is reduced, which further exacerbates the problems of business and leads to a further reduction in the potential of the economy; the burden on the state sphere is growing due to the increase in the state support of the non-working population.

5. Discussion

According No matter how the experts discuss the weather, the main unresolved problems of the modern world lie in the sphere of geopolitics. Here, in contrast to previous groups of global problems, the contradictions are antagonistic in nature and continue to grow. This is evidenced by a survey of more than a thousand participants of the WEF (representatives of science, business and government circles), which showed that in 2018

about 93% expect political or economic contradictions between the major powers to intensify, 79% of respondents note an increased risk of military conflicts, and 73% drew attention to the growing threat of violation of trade rules and agreements [21].

Indeed, compared with 2017, the set of major global risks has changed little, the real situation in the world having changed dramatically. Conflicts spilled out. The crisis of globalization was first marked. The problems of trade and economic confrontation, protectionism and unfair competition in the world market became acute.

Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi called the crisis of globalization one of the main problems of mankind, along with climate change and terrorism. He stressed that protectionism is becoming a global threat hampering world development [23].

German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Emanuel Macron also stressed the negative impact of protectionism on the European economy and the leveling of WTO efforts.

This global world threat arose, in fact, because of the policy pursued by US President Trump. During the period of his election campaign and after, he opposed the globalization, declaring it a threat to the sovereignty, prosperity and security of the United States. He claimed that the open market, free trade and immigration took millions of jobs from Americans.

Protectionism is, in particular, the adoption in December last year of the new US National Security Strategy, where one of the four foreign policy priorities is "spreading American influence" and, accordingly, limiting and infringing the interests of other countries. In it, Russia and China are identified as the main threats to America's interests, which prevent it from maintaining a "unipolar world" with US domination. But the sanctions paranoia against Russia infringes the interests of other countries, including allies of the United States. In particular, Washington's desire to oppose the construction of the "North Stream-2" and the imposition of expensive liquefied gas of the US is categorically unfavorable to Europe. This includes statements on the US withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership, as well as on blocking the appointment of new members to the WTO Appellate Body, which could lead to the termination of its activities in 2019 due to the inability to resolve trade disputes. Protectionism and unfair competition of the States is also manifested in the introduction of new foreign trade tariffs, which actually led to the entry into a trade war with China.

This was followed by the reaction of the official representative of the European Commission M.Schinias, who said: "We are ready to respond promptly and proportionally if the US touches upon our exports. We will take appropriate measures to protect the EU industry" [20].

However, confrontation and mutual accusations do not form the basis for a constructive search for mutually acceptable solutions.

Are the experts always right?

At the same time, there are questions to supporters of globalization. Davos WEF is an authoritative collective expert, but their opinion is not the ultimate truth. Not all estimates and conclusions can be unequivocally agreed. They, as practice shows, are not universal, are to some extent engaged, responding more likely to the interests and requests of lobbyists, who defend not the positions of globalization but their interests in the global world. In fact, they are opposed to the globalization of the world, in particular, - the destruction of the unipolar world; strengthening of influence in the world of Russia and China; leading rates of economic development of China, India and a number of other non-European countries; a high level of development of the "Asian tigers" and the beginning of the process of moving the world financial and economic center from the US and Europe to Asia. If earlier the tendencies of globalization were promoted by the leading countries of the West, now new trade and economic alliances, large-scale projects and agreements arise in the East. For example, the project "One belt - one way" covers almost 60 member countries with an investment portfolio of about a trillion rubles. However, all these processes, which have become realities,

cause severe criticism and opposition from the “Western partners”.

Paying tribute to the experts of the WEF, leading for many years purposeful work on the identification, analysis and systematization of global risks; stressing that at this year’s forum another attempt was made to find the reasons and solutions for the current tense situation in the world, it should be noted that there are no serious decisions here, rather it is only a platform for the exchange of views, where each participant expresses his point of view, by the way, not always sincere. Many today speak about the decline in the quality of expert opinion and the crisis of confidence in expert estimates. If earlier the forum itself formed the directions of global politics and the world economy, now it increasingly follows the world trends

Within the framework of existing stereotypes, the proposed set of risks does not fully determine and exacerbates the threats that the modern world has.

Sometimes it seems that respected experts deliberately bypass the assessment of processes and phenomena that are not beneficial to certain influential political circles of the modern world, and to a certain extent play along with them. Therefore, the classification of global risks proposed by the experts of the WEF cannot be called universal.

In particular, for Russia, not so acute as for other countries are many risks that have been defined by global forum experts for several years already. Our country has no problems with energy resources and energy supply, a water crisis, the threat of hunger, epidemics have long been defeated. Also, the problem of unemployment (its indicators at the level of the world’s prosperous ones) is not acute.

The biggest threats for Russia, in our opinion, are: critically low economic growth rates, the lack of investment, and the stable raw material structure of the economy (especially at the present stage, with significant adverse fluctuations in prices for energy and raw materials).

Negative impact on the development of the Russian economy is unacceptably high for investing financial resources in the real sector of the economy by the existing level of bank rates. For the Russian economy, a problem that has not been solved for a long time and one of the key risks associated with a significant shortage of taxes and a deficit of investment resources is the problem of capital outflow, which amounts to about 50-60 billion dollars annually. According to the assessment of the adviser to the President of the Russian Federation S. Glazyev, over the past 30 years, the outflow from Russia of capital exceeded \$ 1 trillion. “Half of this money rotates between offshore and the Russian economy, although for now, frankly speaking, we do not know where they are ... And the second half of a trillion has disappeared in an unknown direction” [13]. Comments, as they say, are superfluous.

A serious risk to the economic system of Russia is the extreme instability of the banking sector, the uncertainty of business and the population in the reliability of the banking system. Currently, experts assess the current situation in the banking industry as a crisis [9].

Unsolved problem and significant risk of socio-economic nature is the high proportion of Russians living below the poverty line. According to the assessment of the chairman of the Accounts Chamber of the Russian Federation, T. Golikova, in 2017, Russia’s incomes decrease. “The number of citizens who are below the poverty line is 20.3 million people” [15]. According to the analysis of the scientists of the Russian Academy of Science, the share of poor citizens reached 13.1% of the total population, this is the highest rate for the last six years [4].

Looking at the world from a different angle

It should be noted that the pool of experts at the Davos Forum is one of the most representative in terms of membership and competence. At the same time, it is interesting to compare analysis and conclusions on topical issues of global politics and economics of other authoritative international expert communities. In

particular, the “Club of Rome”, which is considered one of the main intellectual centers of the world for about 50 years, on December 24, 2017, presented its anniversary report “Come On! Capitalism, shortsightedness, population and the destruction of the planet” [22]. It was prepared by two Presidents of the Club E.von Weizsäcker and A.Wijkman with the participation of 34 more members. This report expresses the consolidated position of the Club and declares the conclusion about the need to change the paradigm of civilization, as the planet degrades and capitalism degenerates, based on financial speculation 1980-s. This, by the way, gave birth to the global crisis of 2008-2009, when the financial bubble of derivatives broke, but after the crisis the situation did not change. And now “ninety-eight percent of financial transactions are speculative. In offshore areas, from twenty-one to thirty-two trillion dollars are hidden ... There is an overabundance of capital in fictitious, but profitable spheres, while the directions on which the future of the planet depends are in short supply” [22].

According to the Club of Rome, the current crisis of capitalism is growing and comprehensive, embracing politics, culture, morality, including a crisis of democracy, ideology, social sphere. The Earth is threatened by unforeseen consequences of scientific and technological development, the “dark” sides of the digital economy and the nuclear conflict. The resources of the planet are on the verge of exhaustion [22]. There is a global malfunction in the distribution of food (almost a billion starving, while two billion are overweight); there is uncontrolled urbanization. In order to change the critical situation, the Club considers it necessary to achieve a balance in all life-critical spheres: in relations with nature, between short-term and long-term perspective, between dynamics and stability, between individual and collective, equality and fair distribution, between state and religion, between men and women. The club stands for responsible globalization, sustainable economic development, overcoming the huge inequalities between countries and between social strata, for new education (education for the future) and the triumph of humanistic values.

One more attempt to assess the main risks to the world in 2018 is of a certain interest. This is the analysis of the Eurasia Group research center and the publication “These Are the Top 10 Risks to the World in 2018” by its President Jan Bremmer in the influential American magazine *The Time* on January 11, 2018 [2]. The study notes that liberal democracy today is less legitimate than ever, the world order is collapsing; geopolitical crisis in 2018 is comparable to the one of 2008. The expected economic and political depression creates a background for 10 major geopolitical risks. Therefore, assessments of global risks by American experts are reduced mainly to the problems of the US on the relationship with different countries on different continents.

6. Conclusion

Today the world is in a state of extreme tension and aggravation of the contradictions between the most influential states, political blocs and economic alliances. This does not allow reducing the degree of conflict in the “hotspots”, and sometimes the intervention of superpowers only aggravates the situation. Today, in the vast majority of countries, the internal social and political situation is also tense. A large impact on social and natural environment is provided by scientific and technological development; thus, the natural environment, climate, weather conditions are always in danger to collapse. It means that the man-made risks are the main threat to modern civilization today. These are geopolitical problems connected with the intensification of socio-economic and political instability, a systemic strengthening of the confrontation between the states-political opponents, the loss of trust of the main world actors to each other, and their disregard of basic diplomatic principles. This leads to government crises, social clashes, regional and international destabilization,

worsens the investment climate and undermines countries' financial system stability, blocs and alliances. Therefore, the problem of assessing global risks, the need for their analysis, consideration of development scenarios and their management is more acute than ever today.

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