

Pro Memoria

**THE CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK AND PANDEMIC
IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF SOCIO-POLITICAL CHALLENGES**
Working and continuously updated set of theses and observations
(as at 25.03.2020)

1. The coronavirus as an ubiquitous and invisible global aggressor that is changing the world

An apparent **new historical caesura** distinguishing the world before and after the crisis. Obvious links to the political sphere. Time for systemic change in the area of political decision-making. New conditions for social, political and economic activity.

The prospect of numerous strategic closures and openings. **A unique opportunity to reject old solutions (currently often frozen)** and implement new ones, which are now being blocked by the power of supporters of old solutions.

An unavoidable revision of the approach to building back-up alternatives. The need to draw conclusions from the failure of the global monitoring and warning systems.

Alert time for specialists in trauma relief for individuals and social groups and specialists in institution and system repair programs.

A time to test the usefulness of scientific research in areas relevant to the fight against the epidemic and its consequences.

2. The sphere of strategic geopolitical and political challenges

Changing the structure of strategic challenges and the importance of each of these challenges in the collective narrative - climate issues, the demographic crisis, immigrants and the guarantee of the rule of law - are all being pushed to the background. Into existence comes the danger of a worsening of the course of these issues.

Strengthening the position of the state as a basic structure for balancing and policy implementation. The return of the importance of policies that are cultivated using national and regional borders.

Tensions in the process of globalization - on the one hand, a confirmation that in the modern world it is impossible to act alone, and on the other hand, a strong need for states to differentiate their own and common interests. The risks associated with global networks of dependencies are more evident.

European integration more difficult - common interests under pressure from the growing power of vested interests. A new account of supranational solidarity and state autonomy. A favourable situation to strengthen systemic criticism of the European Union. A

major slump in the budget building period for the new EU budget perspective, an inevitable reshaping of future EU budget priorities. A new environment for building infrastructure for Great Britain's exit from the EU. Migrant camps in Greece become the site of an unavoidable large scale infection.

A moment of respite for the Polish government in the EU with regard to environmental (coal) and judicial matters. The danger of perceiving this as being the end of problems.

The tensions between Poland and the Baltic States are drawn against a closed border. **Confirmation of the importance of a rapid flow of information** between allies even in an emergency.

State borders. The emergence of a phenomenon unknown to the young generation: closed and tightly protected state borders in Europe. An important contribution to balancing the importance of maintaining European integration.

A new hand in the global political game. Material, equipment and human resources assistance to countries in the most difficult epidemic situation is the subject of a deliberate political game (military doctors from Russia in Italy, American movements in relation to Iran). A Chinese counteroffensive aimed at making people aware of its image as a country ready to help others in the fight against SARS-CoC-2. The strengthening of Sino-American tensions (e. g. due to the use of the term "Chinese virus"). President Putin on the way to constitutional changes extending his rule with fewer opportunities for opposition groups - a policy of maximum blockage of information on the state of the epidemic in Russia until the referendum scheduled for April. Practicing in Russia the return of the Soviet principle: there is no catastrophe as long as authorities disallow TASS to publish information on the matter. Not only Russia has a problem with celebrations regarding the anniversary of the end of the war. Increase in the level of unpredictability in the behaviour of the U. S. President in the conditions of crisis and in the face of upcoming elections (I am the president of a state of war).

Dispute over the role of the state in a crisis. Strengthening the importance of questions on the role and responsibilities of the state in a crisis: who should be primarily protected, who should be involved in covering the costs of the crisis, and to what extent and on what principles? The differences of opinion on the need to give preference to the weakest and to maintain the operating conditions for those who can create an added value product are growing.

3. **Area of political decision making**

Systematic change of policy conditions and attempts to win the crisis. Intensive use of power resources by authorities. Visible activity of the government subject to the optimization of the answer to the guiding question: How to mobilize support for the policy? Traditional questions in a new version - how to manage fears? How to use the public opinion's focus on unpopular operations? How to weaken earlier promises and how to hide mistakes made in economic estimation by writing them into the effects of a pandemic crisis? How to strengthen the conviction that power is in the right hands, leadership is properly implemented, and the opposition can only lament? How to impose and justify the political

calendar, which is subordinated to a particular political calculation (based - as is already clear - on the assumption that the effects of the current crisis will be significant after the summer holidays, and thus the result of A. Duda may then be worse)?

The epidemic crisis as the subject of political game in the country. Intensive implementation of the authorities' narrative, in which President A. Duda is a good host, and Prime Minister Morawiecki is an excellent chief of staff in the fight to restore normality. A clear intention to win the epidemic crisis in this particular fear and expectation of efficiency by those in power. Objectively difficult situation of A. Duda suspended between accusations of overactivity aimed at gaining public support and accusations of inactivity in fighting the virus. Visible cooperation in the building of their images by the President and the Prime Minister. Significant change in the media activity of individual government politicians. A clear media game with the well-selling Minister Szumowski. Strict rationing of the "microphone license" in the government. Three tenors prevail in social contacts: President A. Duda, Prime Minister M. Morawiecki, Minister Ł. Szumowski. Question marks on J. Kaczyński's loss of contact with the existing reality. A desire to keep hold of power in the background of a narrative about the lack of reasons for postponing elections, contrasting even with the Vatican's emergency decisions to move the Holy Week celebration to September. J. Kaczyński in the face of a personal dilemma of how to mark the anniversary of the Smolensk disaster. The inevitable differentiation of the government. Visible attempts by J. Gowin (a specialist in the discipline: to eat a cake and have a cake at the same time) to emphasize his own subjectivity. Political actors balancing the potential material losses associated with the postponement of the presidential elections, in which funds, often from loans, have already been invested.

A friendly time for all those who until recently have been subject to public account (e. g. President Banaś and others) and issues giving rise to criticism (e. g. the programmatic identity of public service media).

The conceptual absence and reactivity of the opposition (perhaps apart from M. Borowski's statements). In the external image, the opposition is more at the stage of hindering activities than of creating them intellectually in a strategic arrangement in the sphere of values, normative projections, standards and procedural solutions. A poor-looking image of a working government and complaining opposition. The authority seeking support in reports from the battlefield, fighting for medical equipment and bringing Poles back home. A leading opposition candidate seeing her role in informing that the budget will require necessary changes. No concept for the presidential elections beyond the general call for postponement. Signals on the ongoing game within some opposition circles to make use of the situation to change their candidate in the presidential elections. The opposition is subject to measures restricting its freedom of action through mock consultations and placed to face the alternative situations: support the government's anti-crisis projects (imperfect, but the only ones in the game) or prolong proceedings and thus take responsibility for delays in launching the rescue plan, when time is one of the most scarce resources.

The task of preparing now a post-crisis action plan. The task of setting the direction of social discussion, even in a preliminary outline, on the National Action Programme -

Poland after the crisis. In fact only J. Gowin is active in this respect - as usual when it comes to philosophical issues - *Poland needs to be rethought*.

The world of politics focuses on the current game and drifts away from ordinary people. Rebuilding, after a momentary weakening, the concept of politics built on the basis of the division of "we" and "they". A schematic political struggle over the government's anti-crisis shield. Opposition entities active on the political scene mechanically managing the disappointment of numerous communities with respect to the size and principles of support as defined in the anti-crisis government program. Trade unions are forced to fight to maintain their position, which is threatened by the idea of administrative solutions introduced without any agreements and negotiations.

A key political dispute over the timing of the presidential election was reduced to the question of profit and loss connected with maintaining the voting date. **It is increasingly clear that a false narrative regarding the elections is being imposed**, where the possibility of holding elections is only a problem of security and logistics of the voting itself. Only in the distant background questions about the political legitimacy and legal admissibility of elections without an election campaign, equal opportunities for presentation of candidates, meetings with candidates, debates between candidates themselves. Equating elections - a celebration of democracy with a logistic operation. A new dimension of political struggle in relations between the government and the opposition.

The inevitable need for the leaders of the government camp to seek a new concept for building support. In the context of diminishing resources the existing model of transactional democracy based on the relation: support for additional financial benefits becomes obsolete. A probable return to the intense search for an enemy and a focus on settling of accounts with the past. Probably the exposure of the obvious need in times of crisis for the continuation and support of the team exercising power. Resistance on the part of the opposition is situated as a wicked and indecent attitude. The Law and Justice (PiS) project to raise the minimum wage is a notion from a world that has ceased to exist.

The violent transfer of political struggle into cyberspace - a premise for further tightening of political language to a greater degree presented by anonymous or wielding false identities political actors. Memes, posts, a high yield of fake news and comments instead of meetings and speeches at rallies. Increasingly strong political lobbying in the Internet. Strengthening of the anxiety management policy.

4. Financial, economic and social challenges

The need for systemic preparation of solutions for a real economic recession. **A global economic infection.** The real possibility of disrupting the security of the banking system and the collapse of financial settlement liquidity. Blocking of supply and production processes in systems implemented under the principle of lean stock management.

Financial massacre of entire industries reaching far beyond the time of the epidemic as a premise for systemic changes on the map of economic activity. The need to prepare comprehensive systemic projections in finance and economy for times after the crisis. Strategic challenge of the limits of acceptable dependence in the supply chain and on cooperation with external partners.

A sharp drop in the value of the zloty - a difficult problem for business entities and individuals (e. g. foreign currency loans and price levels of imported goods). Systemic intervention is necessary.

An unprecedented in recent history **decline in tax revenue** in terms of amounts and percentages. Maintaining the public finance deficit level is unrealistic. Good times for those in favour of reducing state spending rules. The temptation to think about maintaining the relaxation of the EU prudential threshold standards even long after the crisis.

The rapidly **approaching date of the first monthly collapse** in the financial balance of many households: often without a salary and sometimes with termination of employment.

The real **prospect of the emergence of a large group of new types of unemployed**, i. e. people who have been so far active, often well-educated and stabilized, usually with credit commitments, suddenly excluded from their jobs following the bankruptcy of the companies they worked for or which they themselves ran.

5. Challenges in the area of freedom and human and civil rights

The temptation to use near-emergency states to deal with political opponents. The need for persistent monitoring. The question of the admissible limits to the restriction of constitutional rights and freedoms in a non-statutory manner is becoming increasingly topical and worrying, even when referring to the law (the question of the admissible limits to the use of general legal delegation). It's very important. Once crossed a border is no longer a border.

Disturbing signals on the departure from current principles guiding staffing and jurisdiction of courts. Close prospect of a dispute over the change of the First President of the Supreme Court.

The tensions between freedom, privacy and security are growing. The supposedly obvious electronic monitoring of the isolation of people with suspected viral infections makes use of models of electronic surveillance solutions known in non-democratic countries.

Unfavourable conditions for the organization of protests and resistance in matters of rights and freedoms.

Cases of judicial devastation beyond media interest. Indirect strengthening of the position of supporters of the thesis that the crisis in the justice system is a media product and not a real problem.

6. Challenges in the health care system

A collapse in areas of health care other than the fight against the epidemic. Urgent need to implement a parallel systemic action to maintain the financial, equipment, logistical and human resource capacities of health care operations in areas other than epidemics, especially for urgent life-saving and health-saving operations. Real danger of lack of reserves in the blood bank. Childbirth and dialysis problems. The impending depletion of decimated infected health care personnel active in the fight against the virus. Picture of the extent of infections limited by the number of tests performed - an inevitable increase in the number of people infected as the number of performed tests increases. The worrying prospect of avalanche growth of patients requiring help due to infection.

7. The sphere of the authority bodies system

Executive power in assault. The prospect of further significant strengthening of the position of the central state executive in the system of power. Exercising power through regulations on the very edge of interference in the matter of laws.

Greater public acceptance for attempts to mechanically proceed government initiatives through the legislative process.

Less room for consideration of values. Increased social consent for effective actions even at the expense of the rule of law. A discussion about values displaced by existential needs. The need to persistently maintain the axiological thread in the public narrative.

8. The technological and social communication challenge

A sharp increase of the networking load. Danger of slowing down and periodic blockage of electronic communication. Additional tasks for operators.

Strengthening of the bargaining position of supporters of the strategy to accelerate the state's computerization. Clear limitations due to the broadband internet gap.

Additional situational conditions in the 5G technology development process during the period of contracting system solutions.

Progressive dependence on Internet communication. Social media corporations temporarily relieved of the need to combat the concepts of deconcentration. Growing global dependence, including in the public sphere, on the policies of global commercial Internet communication corporations. Confirmation of the importance of Internet communication in the process of real time, interactive, personalized mass communication, across national and regional borders. Additional confirmation of the importance of online communication in such areas as: guarantees of transparency, mechanisms guiding the spread of good practices, detection of risks and the possibility to learn from mistakes made by others.

Less advertising money. Strengthening changes in the streams of advertising funding between government-friendly media - here still possible announcements of strategic companies with State Treasury shareholding and other media - those recently fed by companies that will now primarily reduce advertising spending.

9. Procedural challenges in the public sphere

The need to overcome the impasse resulting from the course of various (sometimes directly enshrined in laws) administrative and judicial deadlines of fundamental importance for administrative and legal relations in a situation of obstruction of normal communication channels. **There is a risk of a procedural collapse of the public sphere** and relations between the State and other actors, as well as between non-state actors. Difficult to estimate the consequences in terms of legal and ownership relations.

10. Cultural challenges

Inevitable **difficulties in guaranteeing behaviour that excludes or restricts direct human contact** and collective religious practices over Easter. Holidays and family gatherings. A difficult problem with funeral gatherings. The need to postpone wedding ceremonies.

11. Psychological challenges

The consequences of a traumatic situation. Stress build-up due to increased uncertainty and anxiety. Destructive influence of the consequences of real existential threats on the mental sphere.

Trauma of social exclusion in the sphere of electronic communication in an important part of society.

Non-disclosure of disease. Psychological tensions associated with being in a state of prolonged home isolation. Frequent attempts to escape the restrictive isolation limitations by infected people by concealing suspicions about the possibility of a coronavirus infection - a side effect of parallel information regarding restrictive isolation rules, limitations on financial benefits during isolation and the usually mild course of the disease.

Increase of symptoms of co-occurring diseases, including various types of depressive states, with weaker help from health care services, now focused on epidemics.

Tensions in numerous families that are not emotionally prepared to stay together constantly in one apartment.

Increased demand for continuity, simple answers and strong and effective authorities. Less room for deliberation. Treating change - including political change - as a new source of uncertainty - an increase in behavioural trends.

The danger of strengthening populism - in demands and in assessing the activity of the authorities.

Favourable conditions for supporters of conspiracy theories, preferably with the participation of strangers (those "aliens").

12. Developing activity, employment and education through remote mechanisms

Accelerated development of rules and procedures for transferring numerous activities to the online world.

Strengthening the position of electronic forms in means of mass communication at the expense of "paper" forms.

Accelerated creation of systems of emergency functioning by means of electronic links.

Development of e-learning and other forms of remote learning.

13. Global testing time for e-administration

Testing the adopted solutions in practice. Strengthening of system development projects. The need to implement evaluation procedures.

The situation of supporters of digitization of the public sphere sees an improvement in future budget tenders.

14. Verification of crisis management systems

Confirmation of the strategic importance of crisis management capacity at all levels of the functioning of social communities and public and commercial institutions.

Strengths and weaknesses of crisis management. Clearly visible coordination tensions at management and operational level. Poor activity of the Government Centre for Security (assessment valid on a comparative scale despite the statement of the RCB Director). Visible inactivity in the crisis management system of the minister in charge of internal affairs - the nominally key authority in the crisis management system.

The decision to declare a state of emergency dependent on political considerations. Confirmation of the rule that the decision to activate a state of emergency is in the hands of the state executive authorities and is subject to political calculations.

15. Significant impetus to improve the mechanisms of undeniable online personal identification

Accelerated **dissemination of the trusted profile.** The need to strengthen mechanisms for monitoring the security of this area of the IT system.

16. Accelerated education in interactive communication via electronic links

Opportunity to improve social competences in terms of electronic communication skills. There is a need for a series of accessible TV programmes on how people who are not active in the internet can enter online communities.

17. The need to strengthen the capacity to govern in a false information environment

Increased dumping of false information dangerous for the functioning of communities, institutions and individual people. The formation of a situation in which one cannot be sure about the truth and falsehood of information. **Enhanced conditions for the formation of a world of parallel truths.** The need for monitoring and active counteraction.

The epidemic is a subject written into the agenda of internet manipulation, including manipulation in relations between countries. There is a need to quickly counteract false information. The coronavirus is already the subject of operations known from psychological war.

18. A time for reflection on e-democracy

A new climate for the consideration of electronic electoral procedures. **Strengthening the transfer of political campaigns to social media.** Increased interest of collegial bodies in electronic decision-making. Costs of abandoning the search for ways to include remote public decision-making mechanisms.

19. Good times for electronic criminals

A new category of epidemic-related crimes. A rising wave of counterfeiting aimed at defrauding financial resources by provoking certain online behaviour. Need of an alert in the electronic communications security system.

20. CONFIRMATION OF THE IMPORTANCE OF KEY CAPABILITIES IN THE POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE:

- *ability to **obtain and manage information** in real time;
- *ability to make decisions and **programme arrangements** on a time scale and in the structure of administration departments and in a multi-level layout;
- *ability to **manage tensions and the crisis** and to transform a crisis situation into a tool which strengthens the authority and position of a given political entity;
- *ability to strengthen **intra-system synergy**;
- *ability of **optimal implementation**;
- *ability of interactive **social communication**;
- *ability to perform a rolling **evaluation**;
- *ability to **maintain leadership and to make flexible changes** in conditions which make the maintenance of existing directions and principles and techniques difficult.