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Małgorzata Zachara, Ph. D. is an Associate Professor at the Faculty of International and Political Studies, Jagiellonian University, Poland. Her recent publications and expertise span the areas of diplomacy, global governance, social change, political economy. She is an author of *Mechanisms of Influence in the International Sphere* (Jagiellonian University Press, 2015); *Global Governance: International Relations after the End of the American Century* (Jagiellonian University Press, 2012). She also edited *Poland in Transatlantic Relations after 1989. Miracle Fair* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017) and co-edited *Digital Diversities: Social Media and Intercultural Experience* (with Garry Robson, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014). She has accumulated several years of management and academic experience lecturing in different European Universities (Centre of Social Innovation, 2015, Vaxio University, 2010, Oslo University College, 2010, LUMSA University Rome, 2016) and coordinating several business-oriented projects. Over the last years, she has received several grants to carry out research in both academic and business-oriented settings.

The Millennial generation in the global quest for power. A leadership dilemma.

Millennials have begun, in theory, to be a decisive power in Western politics, and questions concerning their political preferences and the possible social shifts that would be embedded in their empowerment have caught the attention of scholars and pundits. The group is a potentially influential political force, yet its members do not pursue traditional forms of civic engagement – they are reluctant voters and are widely considered to be neither ideologically aligned nor politically knowledgeable. Millennials seem to reject the idea that global and domestic imbalances can be solved through politics. There are concerns that Millennials may be following radically different trajectories than prior generations, adding another factor of uncertainty to the long list of the challenges that the international community has to face.

This article concentrates on the transformative potential of the Millennial generation, particularly in relation to the global leadership. The on-going generational shift has become an increasingly important area of leadership investigations and it is being directly related to broader arguments about the nature of a social change. The relation is however two-fold and this article aims to indicate different aspects of political leadership as conditions that create distinctive opportunities and risks that young people must navigate.

Global power shift

From a global perspective, the Millennial generation has the potential to transform the existing geography of power. A review of popular and sociological literature suggests that the world is entering into a 'Millennials Moment' – a phase in the world's history in which one generation will be the dominating economic, cultural and political force. Although, this group is widely studied in the United States and Europe, major qualitative representation of the new generation is to be found elsewhere. About 58 percent of global Millennials live in Asia, with 385 million in India alone (United Nations, 2011). This overall generational picture coincides with transformations within the global arena. The political and economic pulse of the globe is shifting from Europe and United States towards Asia. The issues of demography may hold a decisive role in the quest for position in the hierarchy of international powers. Millennials live in a time of great transformations and they constitute a potentially revolutionary segment of the population whose impact is not limited to state or even regional context.

Leadership dilemma on the West

Born after 1980, Millennials constitute the first generation to come of age in the new millennium, and in the United States they are the most populous generation ever (24 per cent of the U.S. population, U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). They are also the most educated generation in history (Fry & Parker, 2012).

Literature regarding leadership has compared Millennials to other generations in terms of perspectives and leadership theories, identifying values and organizations commitment, as well as what Millennials want to see in their leaders. The findings suggests that some of the Millennials most visible orientations towards the general workplace and career strategies, clash with the very nature of the traditional political sphere. For example, work–life balance is critical to Millennials and, unlike previous generations, Millennials are unwilling to sacrifice personal pursuits for any type of professional success. Millennials value their personal lives, families, and hobbies over the desire for control, recognition, or responsibility through leadership positions (Twenge, 2010, Deloitte, 2016). In effect, what is potentially the most powerful generation in the history of the Western world does not find the political environment attractive, neither is it willing to engage to transform the frameworks of traditional politics and adapt them to their own expectations. Engaging in politics is seen as a personal choice, not a civic obligation. They question the frames of the traditional political leadership concept, they are reluctant to step forward in the conventional, command-and-control culture. They naturally should be the ones setting policies, pioneering new solutions, controlling budgets and defining cultural trends, but they can't do it beyond the existing institutions of power.

Whereas also in the past, politics has been perceived as being depraved, young people still found incentives to become a part of political realities and try to change them. Millennials seem to reject this path. The most recent and extensive study of the political behaviours of US Millennials by Shauna Shame reveals that those most suitable for playing leading roles in politics – graduate students at Harvard and Suffolk Law Schools and Harvard's Kennedy School of Government – find electoral politics unrewarding (2017). Their decision-making process is based on rational calculations, and the costs (a lack of privacy, constant fundraising requirements, hyper partisanship, or other additional costs for women like sexism or double standards) prevail over the benefits (solving important problems or making positive change). The Harvard Institute of Politics' data indicates that between 2000 and 2017 trust towards the federal government decreased among American youth by 10 points, dropping to historically low levels (Harvard Kennedy School, 2017). In 2014, the majority of Millennials (52 per cent) stated that they would choose to recall all members of Congress, were it possible. In 2017 the proportion of young people interested in public service dropped from 31 to 25 per cent. Nine per cent of 18 to 29-year-olds expressed interest in pursuing some kind of public office between now and when they turn 50 (Harvard Kennedy School, 2017).

Within the last three decades civic participation has been in decline across all the mature democracies; people, especially the young, have become more individualistic and abandoned traditional forms of community participation (Putnam, 2000). This factor undermined social capital and trust in political institutions such as parliamentary or and legal systems. In response to this reality, new models of conceptualizing and measuring community arose. Geographically defined identity and sense of belonging has been replaced by the concept of social networks of interpersonal ties. Traditional forms of political activity, such as party membership, attending rallies, signing petitions or contacting government officials provided support, information and a sense of belonging. Nowadays, people – young people in particular - are getting connections and this kind of social gratification outside of political platforms. The problem is, however, that the whole concept of democracy is based on a will to participate. As a result, the structures of traditional politics, which still constitute the foundation of modern statehood, have become a space for the professional development of a narrow group of politicians, and no longer hold a distinctive value for a perspective leaders from the Millennial generation.

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