

Wall Street International

[ECONOMY & POLITICS](#)

Between Globalization & Regionalization

28 — 29 Oct 2016 at the City Hall in Belgrade, Serbia



Futuristic metropolis

Over the past decade, the European Center for Peace and Development (ECPD), established by the United Nations University for Peace, has led systematic research into the general topic “Reconciliation, Tolerance and Human Security in the Balkans”, with substantial support from the governments of Japan, Montenegro, Croatia and the Republic of Serbia.

Considerable knowledge has been gained through a series of scientific meetings, seminars, focused round tables and specialized lectures involving prominent scientists from all parts of the world. Ten international conferences have been organized, each devoted to some current aspect

within the general thematic framework. The rich, relevant and lasting results of the work undertaken have been published in comprehensive proceedings, which provide a valuable basis for further research, a useful tool for projecting the future of the Balkans, and a means for perceiving international political, economic, cultural and spiritual dynamics and developmental trends in their regional and global context.

The Tenth Jubilee ECPD International Conference called for broadening the horizons of ECPD activities and its network of strategic partners and friends. Its previous experience would provide a solid foundation to link individual, regional and global plans to global processes. At the same time, ECPD should initiate a new cycle of educational and research activities, based on previous positive experience and accumulated knowledge.

After considerable deliberations on its results and lessons learned, ECPD has chosen as a new thematic framework “Future of the World between Globalization and Regionalization”. This topic can provide the conceptual space to define narrower themes and specialist areas of research to be addressed and discussed at future ECPD international conferences. This also reflects the increasing impact of globalization on economic and social development all over the world.

The process of globalization since the 1980s, stimulated by the technological revolution and scientific discoveries, has produced effects quite opposite to those expected. Dominated by neoliberalism, cooperation was replaced by exploitation with a widening gap between rich and poor, and “democratic principles” have yielded to market laws. The United Nations is losing influence to plutocratic groups (G-6, G-7, G-8....G-20), resulting in an almost complete absence of global governance. The European Union continues to have difficulties to find its place as a global player. It is still widely perceived as an economic player only, which does not correspond to its much broader tasks and responsibilities.

It must be noted that today 20,000 people die of hunger every day, most of them children from 1 to 5 years, while almost five billion US dollars are spent daily for armament and other military purposes. It is high time appropriate measures towards disarmament were taken.

The unprecedented explosion of global social inequality is also threatening its stability. In the short period the concentration of wealth has been speeding up, to the extent that today 1% of the world population has the same wealth of 82% of the world population. The 200 richest individuals now possess the same wealth of 2.2 billion people. This process of social inequality is growing without any control.

To this process, another trend is a threat for the stability of human kind. The last World Economic Forum was dedicated to the issue of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, or the increase of robotization. This accounts now for 12% of the industrial production, but it is estimated that will reach 62% in 25 years. The massive displacement of workers from all over the world requires an urgent debate on how to face this problem.

Recent tensions between the Russian Federation and the United States of America, as well as the EU on the other side, could still increase with unpredictable consequences, while the flux to migration, caused by five-year armed conflicts and poverty in the Middle East and North Africa

regions are a serious challenge to European stability and its economic sustainability and indeed its unity.

Unfavorable international situation, including the Russian – American-EU NATO tension, the Middle East conflicts, Islamic extremism, and the like, directly or indirectly impacts the Balkans, its peoples and states. Besides, most of the Balkan countries continue to struggle with poverty and low level of economic growth. Sensitive and conflict prone areas, as well as tensions between states and state entities also continue to persist. Signs of sub-regional arms race are also on the horizon. Moreover, (some of) the Western Balkans countries continue to have difficulties to move forward to fully functioning democratic systems based on the rule of law. Their way towards European integration and values has proven to be more burdensome and lengthy than many had hoped a few years ago.

In explaining contemporaneity, indisputably the process of globalization became commonplace in all social sciences a long time ago, because its strong actualization in the fields of technological development, economy, financial flows, communication networks and specified lifestyle and value systems cannot be disputed. In some very important dimensions the world has really become a “global village”.

One process that points to the possible new paradigm is macro-regionalization, which has also been addressed at ECPD international conferences. Considering the events and processes in the Balkans which are, due to their regional characteristics, a typical mid-region, exposed to the contradictory influences of the most influential agents of international relations, it has been concluded that the recomposition of the international order tends towards the creation of a specified number of macro-regions. Several pivotal states on the world stage aim to become the centres of gravity for a certain number of medium and small countries and thus create their own macro-regions. One result is inevitable friction and the clash of overlapping interests. In this scheme of things, the EU constitutes a single macro-region in which Germany emerges as an economic development leader. On the other hand, Russia is increasingly decisively working on the creation of its sphere of influence and is expanding the area in which it appears as a world power. China, on the other hand, has its own vision of the international order and there are also India, Turkey, Nigeria, Brazil and others with certain ambitions to become a (macro) regional power.

The perspective of a multipolar world has been welcomed on many sides as being a more logical and more viable than a unipolar one. It is questionable whether macro-regionalization is the first or best alternative solution, especially for medium and small countries. For a mid-region, like the Balkans, which has been and still is a medium region, it is of utmost importance that the region finds its place in the newly-established international configuration, albeit accompanied by considerable shocks.

There is a place for ECPD, in this world caught between globalization and regionalization, to address the need to neutralize the forces of division that are trying to fragment the world along lines of separation, and to reinforce those working for its unity, not in the sense of encouraging hegemony, but in finding legitimate expressions of diversity at the national and regional levels that enrich, rather than undermine, the essential need both for regional solidarity and for better global governance to address those problems that can only be tackled at the global level. This

builds on its long-standing focus to overcome the consequences of the recent fragmentation of the Balkans, which will be subject to increasing pulls from east and west, as well as likely spill-overs from the chaos in the Islamic world, that could feed its internal divisions if not actively neutralized. The ECPD should have an important role to play in this field.

At the same time those divisions seem to be increasing, the United Nations have overseen a new consultative process with wide participation to define the post-2015 development agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, with their targets and indicators adopted at a summit at the UN General Assembly on 25-27 September 2015. These represent a new set of aspirations for all countries for the next 15 years, and will define a constructive international agenda for the immediate future. These could help to set priorities in the Western Balkans, as they will for all other countries, including goal 16 which focuses on peace and human security. The UN Secretary-General has synthesized this process in his report: “The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet”. The breadth of this agenda will call for efforts beyond what governments themselves can undertake, and open many possibilities for research and collaboration to advance many issues that are still not well defined or that lack practical ways forward, and for which experimentation and collective learning will be necessary. ECPD is well placed to contribute to this process in the region.

The thematic domain covered by the formulation Future of the World between Globalization and Regionalization, which we are initiating as our new research cycle, in cooperation with other competent and all interested partners offers the potential to make a significant and serious step forward in the understanding and the interpretation of contemporary processes on the global plane, with significant regional implications, through joint scientific and professional efforts. More closely defined research topics and the exchange of views at round tables, specialist seminars and international annual conferences will enable the presentation of new ideas and concrete proposals for the creation of the harmonious relations between the irreversible process of globalization in many areas and the need to preserve cultural diversity of the world and political macro-regionalization, with the potential multiplication of relations of domination and subordination in the international community.

International scientific cooperation of this nature should include as many young people as possible in order to contribute towards averting the serious threats to peace and to strengthen the irreplaceable role of the United Nations, as well as to carry out the spirit of the principles implicit to the mandate of the ECPD since its establishment. Therefore, our research efforts will be the continuation of the hitherto mission of advocating for human security for everyone and everywhere.

New ideas and concrete proposals will emerge for the creation of more harmonious relations between the galloping process of globalization and a need to preserve cultural diversity. of the world and political macro-regionalization will be central point of the Conference. The Balkans, due to its efforts to overcome the consequences of recent fragmentation, must be taken into consideration as well, particularly in defining a new paradigm on a global scale.

For further information please visit: www.ecpd.org.rs

<http://wsimag.com/economy-and-politics/21473-between-globalization-and-regionalization>