

Conference Report

STATE (IN)STABILITY

Past, present and future perspectives for the nation state

Topic for 2020 – State collapse: actors, processes, justifications

The first international scientific conference *STATE (IN)STABILITY: Past, present and future perspectives for the nation state* was held on November 13, 2020 at Libertas International University, in Zagreb, Croatia. The conference, funded by Libertas International University's project *State collapse: actors, processes, justifications*, featured 25 conference speakers from 10 different countries and 15 research and/or higher education institutions for a total of 22 presented papers. The annual topic was dictated by the title of the funding project, but the conference also accepted papers connected to the its long-term goal of investigating various aspects stability and instability of states and the state system.

The conference panelists explored the challenges connected with actors, processes and (moral, political, legal and other) justifications of state collapse, and did so through a range of academic fields and disciplines such as political science, history, national and international security, international relations, philosophy, economics and sociology. The motivation for this type of exploration, as stated a year earlier in the initial Call for Papers was formed by a number of factors connected with the above fields. Namely, in the 20th century a large number of new states was created worldwide. The creation of these new states was caused, among other things, by the processes of collapse and weakening of European colonial empires and the correlative processes of decolonization and anti-colonial nationalism, both in the interwar period and after World War II. The collapse of existing states and creation of new one's was initially legitimized by classical European liberals or liberal nationalists, and was most popularly expressed through the idea of national self-determination as stressed in Wilson's fourteen points. Several new states were created based on this idea at the end of World War I, and the same trend would soon be followed by peoples from other continents. The processes of state creation and state collapse in Europe continued at the turn of the millennium with, among others, the collapse of Yugoslavia, with

various separatist movements actively functioning on the continent and elsewhere. In addition to these, new social, political, and economic trends driven by the Covid-19 pandemic influenced not only the organizational challenges of the conference, but also the topics chosen by its plenary speakers. The conference Book of Abstracts was published at the conference website: www.stateinstability.org.

The daily proceedings of the conference were scheduled into four modules: (1) the plenary lectures, (2) the first set of panels, (3) the second set of panels, (4) conference conclusions.

The first plenary lecture - *Securitization of health and the (in)security of the constitutional order* - was delivered by Mirko Bilandžić from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Zagreb. Bilandžić connected the issues of public health issues, medicine and national security. The main claim stated in the lecture was that the extension of the state's repressive capabilities and the introduction of a state of exception/emergency as a response to threats within a redefined framework of security conditions, are becoming (or have become) a more permanent norm of political life. In a time when health has become securitized, the dividing line between health policies and security policies has been erased, and because of this the security of health drives the transformation of political authority towards a state of "institutionalized exception/emergency". The question which Bilandžić opened for discussion was: Does the above state of affairs lead to the (in)security of the constitutional order?

The second plenary lecture - *The global order in a post-Covid world* - was delivered by Petar Popović (Faculty of Political Science, University of Zagreb). Popović considered two parallel tendencies which cause political doubts and contradictions about the organization of the post-pandemic global order: the possibilities of deglobalization and hyperglobalization. These two fundamentally contrary tendencies have been latent in political discourse since the beginning of the global recession in 2008. In its ideological, theoretical and practical form, Popović explains, deglobalization is a process which begins in 2013 at the earliest, and gains concrete political expression with the rise of populist movements, such as Trump's "revolution", Ergodan's "counter-revolution", and Brexit. Hyperglobalization, on the other hand gains more ground with the fourth industrial revolution, artificial intelligence, hybrid warfare etc. Popović then discussed possible reforms of the institutions of global governance, state power and its interest in adapting to the newly formed circumstances, and the disproportion in economic and security challenges.

Panel A1 and B1 featured presentations spanning various time zones, from Montreal to Yekaterinburg. The panelists focused on issues of national identity, the character of the contemporary state faced with challenges of integration of ever diverse populations, the challenges of growing economic inequalities to the stability of democracy, the relevance of higher education standards, current securitization issues pertaining

to the Covid-19 pandemic and the anti-vaxxer movement, and the significance of various levels of group autonomy and agency within a state. The presentations offered an interesting mix of quantitative and qualitative research and created a fertile ground for lively discussion.

The speakers in panels A2 opened discussions on fundamental topics such as the possible role of artificial intelligence on the future of the nation-state, the role and nature of rationality in political decision-making processes, the idea of state collapse in the philosophy of Carl Schmitt, and the future of the nation state. Panel B2 focused on issues of state (in)stability and collapse in Croatian political history, from political ideas in Croatian democratic opposition in exile in 1960-ies, local political issues at the beginning of the 20th century, to the comparison of the roles of individual statesmen, human rights issues, and conflict resolution strategies.

The closing session was given by the organizers and focused on two topics: future development of the conference and publishing opportunities for the presented papers. The first topic concluded with an announcement that the topic for 2021 would be officially declared on the conference website stateinstability.org by December 15 2020 with a new Call for Papers, with the second annual conference taking place at Libertas International University in Zagreb in November 2021. As for the second topic, the organizers announced that all interested participants should submit their papers for review for a special edition of *International Studies* scheduled for publication in June 2021.

This conference report was assembled with assistance from all the conference chairs (Vjekoslav Raos, Josip Lučev, Damir Mladić, Vladimir Filipović) and with full access to conference materials provided by the organizers, for which I thank them.

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