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ГЛОБАЛИЗАЦИЈА И ДЕСУВЕРЕНИЗАЦИЈА
GLOBALIZATION AND SOVEREIGNTY DECLINE
(*Међународни темејски зборник Глобализација и
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I have read the anthology with great interest. The topic of globalization and decline of sovereignty is treated in a multidisciplinary perspective and a variety of issues are discussed: cultural, social, political, economic, military, and legal. Besides a number of international scholars, most authors come from parts of former Yugoslavia, i.e. from universities and institutes in Belgrade, Novi Sad, and Niš, as well as from the universities of Banja Luka, Pale and Skopje. Many of the contributions have been written by scholars living in Kosovo and Metohija, which is natural since the conference in September 2013 was held at the University of Kosovska Mitrovica.

In general the chapters are well-written and thought-provoking. A large part of the texts deals with theoretical issues related to the problem of globalization, discussing relevant authors and important themes in international and (post)Yugoslav scholarship. Conceptual issues are clarified and valuable observations are added. As a whole, the discussion reflects considerable knowledge and an intimate familiarity with the problems concerned. Also, there are original reformulations of key-issues and pertinent theoretical conclusions. The fairly large number of contributions makes for a comprehensive, multifaceted and detailed examination of the issues discussed. It may be added that, in view of recent history, most chapters are balanced, although

there are a few examples of a discourse which is historical-philosophical or moral, and expresses a degree of bitterness.

Most authors regard globalization as a multidimensional phenomenon, where economic, political, social and cultural aspects are closely intertwined, and will have tangible consequences for independent national states and autonomous cultures. However, certain characteristic differences of opinion are worth mentioning. One such topic is whether globalization should be looked upon as a distinctly contemporary phenomenon, primarily related to the end of the Cold War, or as a process starting earlier, perhaps reaching back to the onset of the modern era. Similarly, for some authors the process seems to be irreversible, while for others it is not. Again, for some it is a conscious policy on the part of the West, or rather, the USA, striving for economic and political dominance on a global level. Other scholars point out that the process as such is primarily related to general advancements in technology and communication, bringing different parts of the world closer to each other. Also, globalization will have secondary effects, and may actually lead, or has already done so, to a polycentric world, where Western dominance cannot be taken for granted, and will not be accepted without opposition.

The present reviewer tends to sympathize with the more complex and contradictory views on globalization and decline of sovereignty. No one can deny that in recent decades we have been confronted with a new kind of economy and politics with negative repercussions in many parts of the world, including the West. However, it seems one could distinguish between the political ambitions of the USA and more general social processes which may be positive or negative, depending on circumstances and the behaviour of social actors. It is true that after the demise of the Soviet Union influential American politicians, businessmen and scholars understood the United States as the natural leader of the world. However, this means that the most serious economic effects of what is referred to as globalization, are man-made, the outcome of political decisions, e.g. deregulations of financial markets, which were not self-evident (Mazower 2013). Today it is clear that these developments have been negative for the US itself. Not only is America losing its dominant economic position in the world; the policies pursued have led to serious problems within American society: rising unemployment, pauperization and a drastically increasing inequality, as well as a precarious situation for the "middle class". Higher education is no longer a guarantee for finding a job and the prospects of retirement are problematic. Above all,

America is consuming more than it produces, suffers from a huge trade deficit, and has accumulated large debts. This threatens social stability and the very myths on which American society was built – equal opportunity, social mobility and individual freedom (Stiglitz 2013).

The situation inevitably has affected the projection of US power abroad. The military actions undertaken by the United States in recent decades must be considered grave failures, whether in the Middle East or the Balkans (Mazower 2013), and were, moreover, wars on credit, which the “superpower” actually could not afford. It is indicative that others are supposed to pay the costs, at least for post-war consolidation and “state-building”. Whether America will collapse, as predicted by the French anthropologist Emmanuel Todd (2002), is an open question, but it is already clear that the unfavourable economic, demographic and educational situation at home seriously limits any dream of world dominance. As made clear in the volume, countries like China, Russia, India, Indonesia, or Brazil are both economically and politically too powerful to be ignored. In Europe there are similar trends and Germany or France are certainly not willing to accept American cultural dominance. After all, relying on social psychological and sociological theories, it is unlikely that Western culture, as some authors suggest, will dominate the world, other than on a superficial, mass-cultural level. For these reasons it seems improbable that national cultures will disappear even though in certain societal domains hybrid cultures may arise, as pointed out in the anthology. I also agree with those authors who argue that a neo-colonial policy inevitably will lead to objections, counter movements and the creation of a multipolar world. That world may retain general aspects of globalization, understood as a social process, and new powerful nations may even use existing international institutions (economic, political, and legal) to their own benefit (Mazower 2013).

On the other hand, it is obvious that American dominance in recent decades has, indeed, had negative, sometimes disastrous effects. It is characteristic, however, that the United States have tended to influence, respectively attack, weaker or vulnerable states, like Iraq and Afghanistan, or the former socialist countries of Eastern Europe, especially in the Balkans. (Incidentally, even personal idiosyncrasies seem to have played a role in certain cases).

On this point – what happened in former Yugoslavia – the empirically oriented texts of the collection are very illuminating. Without

doubt they illustrate the precarious socio-economic and political situation in which earlier members of the Yugoslav federation found themselves, as well as the arrogance which characterized American foreign policy after the Cold War. This is made painfully clear by just describing events in Kosovo, Macedonia or elsewhere. To some authors this is part of a sinister plan, which it might have been, but at the same time the narratives and analyses highlight the sloppiness and lack of long-time awareness which has accompanied US interventions. In itself, the idea that countries with a European tradition should import American-type institutions and models of behaviour is a sign of a narrow and banal ethnocentrism associated with inflated great-power ambitions. Several authors emphasize the lack of logic in the US approach. On the level of rhetoric there are solemn references to universal values, individual rights and democracy, but on the ground we are often witnessing support of nationalist movements and anarchy, or even worse, with no other purpose than control. This policy was the primal mover behind the unfortunate devaluation of the concept of genocide by the Hague Tribunal, at the same time as the US itself (like Russia and China) refused to sign the ICC treaty. As far as American involvement in the breakup of Yugoslavia is concerned, it has led only to further fragmentation and hazardous instability, not to mention the lack of sound economic development.

In general the texts are on a high academic level and the volume is well worth publishing. It provides interesting discussions of an important topic and illustrates the high quality of scholarship in former Yugoslavia. The editors might consider a shortened version of perhaps 300–400 pages for an English-speaking audience. This would make it possible for a wider circle to get acquainted with original thoughts and empirical research on questions which are of concern to all of us.

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- LITERATURE Mazower, M. (2013). *Governing the World. The History of an Idea*. London: Penguin Books.
- Stiglitz, J. E. (2013). *The Price of Inequality*. New York; London: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Todd, E. (2002). *Après l'empire. Essai sur la décomposition du système américain*. Paris: Gallimard.