

Call for Papers

CONFLICT.

STABILITY.

DEMOCRACY?

The Serbian Political Science Association (SPSA) Annual International Conference
28-29 September 2019, Belgrade

In the last decade, various old conflicts were inflamed and new ones broke out in European states. Clashes over economic and social policy originate from growing socio-economic inequalities and dramatic consequences of the global financial crisis. Struggles over ethnic and national identities and national self-determination, rooted in the legacy of conflict and/or violence, flared up due to the erosion of minority rights, migration crisis and broader instability on the international stage and within regions. The crisis of political representation and political instability bolstered the rise of populism across the continent but also, in many cases, authoritarian trends, such as the decline of media freedom, political competition and the rule of law. On the other hand, many groups demand reforms of democratic procedures and alternative models of decision making to boost political participation, fair distribution and greater epistemological and ecological responsibility.

In some cases, conflicts over socio-economic, ethnic and national, and democratic issues unfold within institutions and independently from each other. In other cases, various clashes spill over from political institutions, connected within broader waves of political mobilization and conflict on the public stage, thus revealing fragile institutions and major challenges faced by ordinary people. Emerging movements and popular protests in many states contest the capacity of democratic institutions to deal with accumulated problems. Although the conflicts principally develop within states, their impact is felt across borders, with considerable implications for the regional context in the Balkans and Europe as a whole.

In times of crisis, governments and EU promote stability as the prime goal. Within states, governments often aim to reduce conflict by curbing rights. When it comes to democracy and ethnic conflicts, the rights of ethnic and new minorities suffer, fear of migrants abound, while media freedoms, checks and balances and/or political competition are at risk. With respect to social issues, welfare programmes are undermined, workers' rights are circumscribed, often to the benefit of domestic and foreign investors, but also the rights of pensioners and other vulnerable groups, while public funding for education is reduced. Simultaneously, socio-economic inequalities rise considerably, just like clientelism and corruption.

Does the resolution, or at least reduction, of conflict in unfavourable domestic and international conditions justifies temporary restriction of rights of some groups? Or is this just an excuse to shore up interests of political and economic elites? What are mid- and long-term implications of such policies: stability or perhaps the bolstering of old and the rise of new conflicts? To what extent are foreign

influences, especially those from the EU, in terms of implicit support to nondemocratic governments and policies in order to maintain stability of weak states and to tackle remaining “frozen” conflicts in the Balkans, justified and successful? Do authoritarian trends in some former communist states emerge principally from such “stabilitocracy” or from internal factors? Would a broader support from the EU to democratic forces within states – including opposition parties, social movements and other parts of civil society – safeguard not only stability, but also democracy?

We invite authors who study causes, forms, development and implications of these kind of conflict, and democracy and democratization, from various theoretical and methodological perspectives in political and social sciences, to submit paper proposals that focus on the following issues, broadly conceived:

- The diagnosis and prognosis of the state of democracy: crisis, decline, fall, defence, post-democracy?
- The spillover of the global financial crisis into the Balkans and socio-economic conflicts
- Socio-economic inequalities and democracy
- Democratic decision making and the privatization of natural resources
- EU, “stabilitocracy” and the regulation of national self-determination conflicts: Bosnia and Hercegovina, North Macedonia, Serbia/Kosovo and/or Montenegro
- Democracy in plural societies in the Balkans
- Regional approaches to conflict regulation
- Transitional justice and democracy in the Balkans
- Decline in media freedom and political competition in Central Europe and the Balkans
- Populism and democracy in the EU and the Balkans
- Popular protests and democracy in post-communist states
- Party system change and new parties and movements
- Broad coalitions of opposition forces – political parties, social movements and other parts of civil society – and democratization in the Balkans
- “Stabilitocracy” and high and low tides of international democracy promotion

International Selection Committee: Denisa Kostovicova (London School of Economics and Political Science), James Dawson (Coventry University), Tonči Kursar (Faculty of Political Science, Zagreb), Vladimir Božinovski (Law Faculty, Skopje), Damir Kapidžić (Faculty of Political Science, Sarajevo), Ivana Spasić (Faculty of Philosophy, Belgrade), Vesna Knežević-Predić, Ana Milojević, Slaviša Orlović, Dušan Pavlović and Nemanja Džuverović (Faculty of Political Science, Belgrade).

Please email paper proposals (including a paper title, abstract of 250 words, author’s email address and short biography) to conflict.stability.democracy@gmail.com.

Deadline for paper proposals is **7 July 2019**. The selection committee will inform all applicants about the outcome of their applications by 20 July. Papers from the conference will be published in conference proceedings or in a regional academic journals *Političke perspektive (Political Perspectives)* and *Journal of Regional Security*.