

**THE TWELFTH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON
UNITY AND PLURALITY IN EUROPE
(ICUPE)**

30th July– 1st August 2017
Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina



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A. International Forum Bosnia

International Forum Bosnia (IFB) is a non-governmental organisation that brings together individuals and institutions from Bosnia and Herzegovina and abroad. Our mission is to support the creation of a harmonious and united society in Bosnia and Herzegovina, based on dialogue, trust, respect, and best practice in the fields of human rights protection, the rule of law, and democracy.

IFB members believe in

- *Bosnia and Herzegovina as a sustainable plural society within a unified polity,*
- *With a rich political and cultural heritage that exemplifies the best aspects of the European spirit.*

We believe that preservation and development of our common Bosnian heritage requires

- *The restoration of trust across society, based on*
- *The development of a new intellectual community and new perspectives, through social and political analysis, and an exploration of the diversity all our traditions.*

IFB approaches these goals in two ways:

- *Deconstructing divisive ideologies based on the abuse of ethnicity, religion, and other identity and belief systems to generate mistrust, intolerance, social tension, social exclusion, and conflict in the region.*
- *Developing and promoting a new synthesis for Bosnia and Herzegovina, based on a vision of social development free from fear, hostility and intolerance and a political model that mediates rather than exacerbates antagonisms.*

Just as Bosnia and Herzegovina must be sustained as a whole, IFB believes that any progressive understanding of the country's present condition and future prospects requires an comprehensive and holistic approach, seeking a new understanding of Bosnian unity in diversity that incorporates all aspects of society, but especially geopolitical aspects, education, cultural and religious traditions and dialogue, environmental and ecological perspectives, advanced and information technologies, energy policy and responsible use of natural and renewable resources, gender issues, regional co-operation, distributive justice, sustainable development, the rule of law, human rights, social inclusion, and other issues related to the efficient transition of Bosnia and Herzegovina towards harmonious membership in the community of European countries.

One major way in which IFB pursues its objectives is through the organisation of intellectual gatherings and undertakings (workshops, panels, symposia, conferences, public lectures, exhibitions, the advancement of knowledge about Bosnia and Herzegovina, etc.), and the presentation of significant perspectives on culture, society, scholarship, and politics related to Bosnia and Herzegovina and its place in the world through its journal Forum Bosnae, working documents, and the IFB web page: <http://www.ifbosna.org.ba>.

IFB was founded in Sarajevo in 1997. It operates through its members, projects, and associated ventures. Its headquarters are in Sarajevo and there are regional centres in Banja Luka, Mostar, and Tuzla. There are thirteen thematic-research centres: the Centres for Strategic Studies, Education, Language Studies, Media, Protection of Natural Heritage, Students Programs, Historical Studies, Regional Cooperation, Gender Issues, Cultural Heritage, Interreligious Dialogue, and Technology and Economic Development (with two sections: entrepreneurship and public/private partnership and advanced and information technology), and the Centre of Interdisciplinary Research for Visual Culture.

Abstract

International Forum Bosnia is pleased to announce the Twelfth International Conference on Unity and Plurality in Europe, to be held in Mostar from the 30th of July to the 1st of August 2017. The main theme of the conference will be “Migration and the European Identity Crisis.” The conference will take the form of a dynamic exchange between researchers, activists, and media around three plenary sessions:

1. Religion, Identity and Society;
2. Migration and the European Identity Crisis; and
3. Europe’s External and Internal Others.

Each session will involve a number of individual presentations followed by general discussion. Time will be allocated for up to 18 speakers, with a pool of up to 50 participants overall.

As in previous years, there will be an Inaugural Lecture on Religion and Public Life, to be given by a guest lecturer chosen for their expertise and leadership in the field. There will also be a complementary series of public lectures or panel discussions on related themes.

The plenary sessions and the public discussions will take place at the Hotel Bristol in Mostar, where all official participants will be provided with accommodation. Papers presented during the sessions and the inaugural and special lectures will be published in the proceedings of the conference, as in previous years. Those interested in participating are invited to apply using the registration form included with the conference documentation, available on the International Forum Bosnia website, www.forumbosna.org

1. Project Description

IFB is pleased to announce the **Twelfth International Conference on Unity and Plurality in Europe** to be held in Mostar in July-August 2017, on the theme of Migration and the European Identity Crisis. This is a continuation of the topic from last year, due to the continued worsening of the situation and the ever-increasing need for critical reflection on the social and political crises it is a symptom of and a contributing factor to.

The three main panels will be on *Religion, Identity, and Society: Europe and the Plurality of Public Life; Migration and the European Identity Crisis, and Europe's Internal and External Others.*

International Forum Bosnia has hosted eleven annual **International Conferences on Unity and Plurality in Europe** (ICUPE) since 2006 in the town of Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Previous conferences have been on: the *Muslim Question in Europe; the Roma Question; Cultural Diversity; Religion and Public Life; Diversity, Religion, and the University; Globalization, European Universalism, and the Other Europe; Peripheral Perspectives on European Identities; Bosnian Religious Plurality in a Global Context; Economic Recovery, Social Reconstruction and Environmental Stewardship; and The Spectre of Migration in Europe.*

The conferences have attracted participants from leading universities in the Balkans, Europe more widely, the Near East, North America, and Japan and China, as well as from relevant non-governmental and civil society organisations and political life.

Since 2009, the conferences have been opened by an inaugural lecture. The keynote speakers for 2009 and 2010 were Prof. Miroslav Volf of Yale and Prof. David F. Ford of Cambridge, respectively, the speakers for 2011 were the noted American author and public intellectual, Jim Carroll, and Prof. Olivier Thomas Vernard of the *Ecole Biblique* in Jerusalem, and in 2012 the inaugural speakers were H. E. Prof. Aref Ali Nayed and Prof. Gil Anidjar of Columbia University. In 2013, the inaugural speakers were Prof. Fikret Caušević of Sarajevo University and Prof. Ian Almond of Georgetown University in Qatar. In 2014, the speakers were Prof. Gareth Jones of Ming Hua College in Hong Kong, and Prof. Kadrija Hodžić of Tuzla University. The speakers in 2015 were Professor Hasan Muratović of Sarajevo University and Dr. Mile Babić of the Franciscan Theological College in Sarajevo. In 2016, the speaker was Prof. Goran Larsson of Goteborg University.

Since 2009, the conference has also included a number of public lectures on topics of plural heritage, plural traditions, and human rights, as well as an annual public panel on nationalism in the Balkans, in which leading experts, Prof. Ivo Banac of Yale and Zagreb Universities, Sonja Biserko of the Serbian Helsinki Committee and Prof. Rusmir Mahmutćehajić of the International Forum Bosnia, present their report on developments over the preceding year and their assessment of the outlook for the coming year.

2. Introduction

The Conference is a unique global initiative. It combines pluralist perspectives on religious thought with social scientific research on tolerance, civil society, cultural heritage, and identities and the interpretation and application of modern and traditional understandings of the relationship between religion and public life. The entire conference is conceived as a long-term exercise in developing international networks for this type of exchange of knowledge, views, and approaches. The organizers believe that this will contribute to the interpretation of religion as an active factor of peace and act as a barrier to its abuse by ethno-national, ethno-religious, and other ideologies and sources of tension and conflict.

3. Situation analysis

At one level, the past year (2016) has been one of major political change worldwide, heralding even greater shifts in the economy and society. At another it has simply seen an intensification of the trends which we had identified in our situation analysis for last year's conference. Our situation analysis for this year therefore repeats much of the analysis from last year: What Communism once was, migration now is, a spectre haunting Europe in the name of a universal class of the dispossessed. What has changed over the year is that this "threat" has resulted in an at least partial triumph of the forces of reaction, accelerating an ongoing hardening of attitudes over borders, immigration, economic protectionism, and national identity on the part of a very substantial minority of the population, based upon a sense of grievance, disenfranchisement and alienation from the established order. Two rival standard-bearers of dispossession and alienation, the refugee or migrant and the domestic underclass, are thus now facing-off in a challenge to the established political and economic order in the West the likes of which it has not seen for 80 years. In other words, we are in the middle of an identity crisis for Europe and the European ideal.

This has led to somewhat hysterical analogies regarding a return to the 1930s, the resurgence of fascisms, and the threat of new totalitarianisms. Such reasoning by analogy tends to underestimate how much the world has changed and the differences that inform the current situation. To mention just one, there is the demographic greying of not just the West, but of the European periphery too, and its reliance on mass migration into, rather than out of Europe. A second is the radically integrated and cooperative nature of national economies in Europe, in contrast to earlier patterns of competition between national monads. A third is that, despite the continued interests of largely Western derived forms of global capital in the fracture zones of the world, the importance and role of the West, both European and American, has declined massively relative to those of other global players and regions and is set to continue to do so to the benefit of all, including Europe. Europe is in the process of being “provincialized” and is finding certain aspects of the process unpleasant. It is finding itself compelled to downgrade its universals to at best aspects of a universal to which it no longer has a unique claim, at worst to seeing in them the cultural equivalent of psychological projection, narcissism, and ego-defense mechanisms.

It is a considerable irony that this provincialisation of Europe is taking place at the same time as its increasing dependence on migration to sustain its socio-economic system, as they combine to produce a sense of being overwhelmed by the other and of its own identity and values being under attack. What these differences imply is that history is not repeating itself and that the new situation will bring with it new challenges and new dangers. In particular, the advocates of an end to the project of European union had better be careful what they wish for. They may get it and they are very unlikely to like what they get.

It is crucially important then that we engage in critical reflection on the opportunities this provincialisation offers for a reformation of Europe’s attitudes to the rest of the world and to itself *as a means of renewal*. Premature universalisation of Europe’s values paradoxically led to a dilution of our commitment to and alienation from them. What was universal could no longer be politely claimed as properly European, under threat of the censure of Eurocentrism. Provincialisation allows Europe to reclaim its right to its identity, or rather to the ongoing processes of identity formation as a never completed process that is informed, but not overwhelmed by our dialectical embrace of our many others, internal and external. As one contributor amongst many to the emergence of the universal, Europe has

the same right to its historically informed identity as any other region or civilizational complex and the same right to view the world in terms of its historically inherited categories and concepts. It has the same duty, moreover, to learn about the categories, concepts and world-views of the other cultural and civilizational traditions with which it interacts and from which it may learn. Finally, it has the same need to grow and develop by adapting to and assimilating difference and being itself transformed by the resulting new equilibria.

The impact of migration and of the current refugee crisis, on the one hand, and of reaction and push-back on the part of the domestic dispossessed and those who feel both their identities and the economic basis of their communities are under threat, on the other, therefore require a deeper meditation on what Europe is becoming and whether it can continue to provide an encompassing framework for the differences it was meant as a concept to mediate. Europe must engage with its identity-in-crisis and reforge it.

This is nowhere more relevant than with regard to the changes being demanded in the world economic and political order whose impact on the new forms taken by the globalisation of capital will be considerable. In particular, they are likely to reinforce the ongoing resurgence of geopolitical power-politics that has marked the last 10 years. Europe has responded to this emerging situation by remaining resolutely passive and, where possible, divided – a richer and more exclusive UN. It has embraced a merely humanitarian approach to what are not merely humanitarian but profoundly political crises and conflicts. It is Europe that has allowed the crises in the Ukraine and Syria to develop. It was not responsible for them breaking out, but its lack of response has allowed them to fester and spread and seen some of the most important changes in the international system of alliances in the Middle and Near East since the Second World War. The consequences of this European identity crisis and consequent inaction for the countries of South-Eastern Europe has already been particularly severe. These countries on either side of the European front-line are seeing a rising tide of populist nationalism, just like those of the centre. From Hungary through Croatia and across to Serbia, there is a new sharpening of regional relations, a resurrection of old grievances and old and tried political practices. One result with potentially tragic consequences is the scapegoating of the small and interstitial nations, the countries and peoples that their larger neighbours tend to consider illegitimate, problematic, or even irredenta to be cleansed and recovered. They are once again being addressed as a source of disharmony, a malignant and malevolent presence whose excision

is required for the health of the regional body politic. This is not a return to the Balkan politics of the 1930s or even of the 1990s. It is a new politics in response to the self-inflicted malaise of Europe and the new emerging regional order and it promises little good.

4. Objectives

The Conference objective is to investigate both theoretical models and concrete practices through which religious orientations and secular models of politics and society engage with one another in the European space, with a particular stress on minority perspectives. Its guiding principle is that if relations of tolerance and understanding between groups are to be built and a civil society shaped, the perceived barrier between secular modern and more traditional religious values must be broken down. Political orientations and social practices must be developed that will draw on both religious traditions and the insights of secular modernity in new and creative ways.

5. Partnerships

As this is a regional project, it is supposed to enhance regional cooperation and collaboration by creating stronger cross-border cooperation between citizen and other groups to address common challenges, sharing best practice throughout the region, establishing regional networks, building networks among governments, NGOs, civic initiatives, or other institutions working to improve understanding and cooperation throughout the region.

6. Programme

The conference programme has two separate but related components.

1. The core activity is the three plenary sessions, at which academics and activists from Bosnia, the wider Balkan region, the near East, Europe, and further afield will present individual papers, to be followed by open discussion. The three sessions are thematically linked with a view to developing new understandings of the intersection of value systems with public life, particularly with regard to social coexistence and plural communities. The topics proposed are:
 1. Religion, identity and society;
 2. Migration and the European Identity Crisis; and

3. Europe's external and internal others.

These sessions will be introduced by an Inaugural Lecture on Religion and Public Life, to be given by a guest lecturer chosen for their expertise and leadership in the field.

2. The second activity is a series of three public lectures and discussions.

The three plenary sessions will be on:

a. *Panel 1: Religion, identity and society*

As in previous years, the first panel will be on "Religion, Identity, and Society," a problematic of increasing relevance and urgency in today's world. There are no forms of society or of identity which are not informed by values. Such values need not be monolithic or shared by everyone in a given society, but they must include at least the possibility of coexistence and mutual acceptance as a framework. Religion is a term for one of the major channels through which such values have traditionally been passed on and forms of identity reinforced. A free society will respect the role of religious and traditional identity systems in the creation of its constitutive diversity. It will allow them a public voice and a role in public discussion of policy, rather than insist on a reduction of the terms of debate to the level of the supposedly objective or technocratic. The converse is that religious viewpoints must not be accorded cognitive or emotional privilege in argument and debate. Nor do they provide grounds for exemption from fundamental moral or legal obligations. If a religion cannot stand up to critique based upon the transcendental conditions of liberal, that is free, community, then it has excluded itself from the public sphere, which is simply this: the common area guaranteed by the transcendental conditions of free discourse. It is imperative that the public sphere be constituted so as to allow the fullest possible range of views to be expressed that do not violate the sovereign principles of coexistence and mutual toleration as expressed in this concept of the conditions of liberty.

b. *Panel 2: Migration and the European identity Crisis*

The European Union was born out of war. So was the international system more generally. Neither has proved capable of transcending war, however. The period of the Cold War was a period of proxy conflicts and the displacement of Western or European conflicts (Russia is a European power and the USA is a post-European one) through the “developing” world. In at least one of its aspects, the current forms of globalisation represent a further stage of this process. One result has been the rise of migration for economic and political reasons and increasingly because of the spread of localised forms of this globalised conflict to form a chain of war zones and anarchies that runs from North to South and East to West throughout the Muslim and the post-Colonial world. Such migration is of the new dispossessed. In many cases, they are less poor and better educated than their ancestors ever were. But they are also deracinated and deterritorialised within societies that are being transfigured by the pressures of rapid modernisation and simultaneous post-modernisation. This powerful Molotov cocktail of combined aspiration and despair, of knowledge and radicalisation, of a simultaneous thirst for the West and a hatred of all it represents, is what generates both the push and the pull factors of global migration. If Europe is to develop a morally adequate response to this situation, it must engage critically with the factors driving contemporary migration, whether voluntary or forced or falling somewhere in between. Receiving the poor and the wretched of the world and giving them temporary succour, while cherry-picking the best and the brightest, is neither ethical nor practical long term. It will not work even as a form of recruitment of emergent elites to the requirements of the global system. The only solution is to ensure a globalisation of opportunity and prosperity, to replace both the aspiration to relocate to the West and the resentment of Western lifestyles with the real prospect of building the conditions of an acceptable life at home.

c. *Panel 3: Europe’s External and Internal Others: Rethinking the Refugee*

The concept of the refugee is built up out of the ideas of persecution and refuge. Its roots lay in ethical considerations and a consciousness of the fragility of human societies. Due to the development of an international system for managing risk, however, it has become a term of Machiavellian art. It is a way of avoiding

responsibility for and so the obligation to respond to evil in the world. Ensuring that the humanitarian moment outweighs any political one is increasingly a way of supporting and sustaining the exercise of power against the weak, while burnishing one's own halo. Refugee has also become a term of distinction, allowing the "recipient" countries to differentiate between the various classes of migrant on the basis of their moral sanctity, their motivations for seeking sanctuary, the purest of which is the imputed desire to return home, a home they have left only because of unbearable threat to their lives. In other words, the refugee becomes the counterpart of extinction and of genocide, which alone justifies migration. So long as mere life remains possible, a better life is no longer a sufficient justification for not keeping to one's pre-ordained place. The refugee thus becomes the negation of or the vaccination against the migrant, genocidal conflict the limit point of sustainable misery. Perhaps the time has come to retire the concept of the refugee. At the very least it must be rethought for a globalising world in which the tendency is for all flows to become free and unrestricted, except the flows of people.

8. Materials and interaction

Chair speakers will be expected to prepare written contributions in advance. The complete agenda and accompanying materials (original contributions and selected readings) will be prepared for each panel and sent to participants in advance.

9. Participants

The conference programme includes researchers from all over the world, as well as participants in various enterprises focused on understanding and strengthening trust among the different collective identities in contemporary societies. Participants at the conference are leading researchers from all over the world. The panels are open to interested politicians and policy makers, researchers, third sector activists, and the media from the region and beyond. Scholars from organisations involved in the preparation and implementation of the program are invited to be introductory speakers.

10. Publications

Following each conference, the materials that were basis for the plenary sessions have been collected and conference proceedings prepared as issues of the journal *Forum Bosnae*.