QUO VADIS EUROPE?

On September 20, 2017 the International Relations Program organized, with the support of the Permanent Mission of Italy in Geneva, a conference on the question “Where is Europe heading sixty years after the signature of the Rome Treaty on the European Economic Community?”

This event was held at the Seat of the Permanent Delegation of the European Union in Geneva. It was attended by members of the diplomatic community, representatives of international organizations, as well as students and members of the general public. The principal question addressed by the speakers was where Europe ought to be going today and in the future, in order to maintain the results achieved so far and what is required to assure the peace, freedom and prosperity of it peoples in the decades to come. The edited and updated proceedings of the Conference will be published in book form in early 2018.

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

The issues discussed at the 2017 Annual Fall Conference of the Webster International Relations Program were highly topical. Partly because the year 2017 marks the 60th anniversary of the signing of the Rome Treaty creating the European Community, one of the principal stages in the creation of a new liberal and democratic international order. But also because of the violence of the centrifugal forces to which the European project is currently being subjected: (Brexit, the populism and anti-European rhetoric of populist politicians in many countries, the continued effects of the international debt crisis and last but not least the dramatic events in Catalunia.

During the last 70 years the nations of the Western Community, of which Europe is an integral part, have achieved; 1. Unprecedented prosperity and social progress through integration, competition and solidarity. 2. Unprecedented freedom, respect for diversity and human rights under various models of effective democracy (“illiberal democracy” does not fit into this category). 3. De facto perpetual peace (war among the members of this Community has become unthinkable) through collective security and by renouncing the use of force among the members.

However, the future of the European project (and of the Western Community) is threatened by two potential trends: 1. The continuation and acceleration of the current centrifugal forces, and 2. The attempts of a gradual transformation of Europe from a strong dynamic European Union into a fragile centralized super State.

Unless we find our way back to a balanced approach to the above three areas (democracy, the economy and the issues and security) the current threats might gradually destroy the unique achievements of both European integration and the Western Community itself.

READ ON
HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Maurizio Enrico Serra, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Italy, Geneva: *The European Union and Multilateral Cooperation in Geneva*. The conference was opened by Ambassador Maurizio Serra who had expressed his support for the topic and the concept of this event early in the planning process. In his opening statement he gave a detailed analysis of the importance of multilateralism and of Geneva as the principal center of international organizations in the world. He illustrated the complex work and contribution of the delegation of the European Union and of the missions of the individual EU member states to multilateral cooperation through the example of selected major organizations such as for example the Human Rights Council. Ambassador Serra also explained the challenge of the interaction of the EU Delegation on the one hand, and of the Diplomatic Missions of the individual member states.

Otto Hieronymi, Professor of International Relations, Webster University, Geneva: *Quo Vadis Europe? The Outlook for the European and Western Communities*. In what direction is Europe heading? What is the future of the Western Community of which democratic Europe is an integral part? European integration, together with the development and consolidation of the Western Community, has been one of the most impressive and successful examples of institutional innovation and community building among free and sovereign nations. The three principal achievements of European integration and of the Western Community as a whole are: (1) unprecedented prosperity and social progress; (2) liberal democracy and respect for human rights; and (3) effective collective security (external and internal) and perpetual peace among the members (the idea of war among the members has become unthinkable). However in the last 12 to 18 months Europe and the Western Community were hit by a series of political tsunamies which could threaten their long-term survival. The current situation is marked by a profound paradox. The European Union has achieved and even overachieved most of its long-term objectives. Yet enthusiasm for the “European project” is at a low point. Indifference to Europe and “Euroscepticism” are widespread among both policy makers in the general public, also in countries that would be much worse off without the achievements of European integration. Countering the current revival of populist nationalism, which had been the principal source of domestic and international crises during the last two hundred years, is the key challenge for those who want to help secure the long-term future of a democratic, peaceful and prosperous Europe and Western community.

Péter Akos Bod, Professor, Corvinus University, Budapest, Former President, Hungarian National Bank: *Economic and Social Convergence in Europe in the Future*. According to Professor Bod economic and social convergence will remain an important challenge for Europe as a whole and for the individual European countries also in the future. The principal focus of his analysis was the speed of upward convergence of the relatively new members of the European Union and in particular the former communist countries in East-Central Europe. The gap in per capita income and in productivity between the Western market economies and the former Soviet satellites narrowed since the regime change that occurred in the early 1990s. However, this progress has been more limited than had been the case for the catching up of the European economies with the United States during the initial launching of European integration and world-wide between 1950 to the mid-1970s. The probability that the per capita income of the new members will remain well below the EU average is due to both various structural
Oreste Foppiani, Professor, Head of International Relations Program, Webster University, Geneva: *The Future Security of Europe* In his presentation Professor Foppiani reminded the participants that the failure in 1954 to launch European Defence Community was one of the principal factors responsible for the long-lasting shift of focus away from political and military integration in Western Europe towards economic integration, of which the signing of the Rome Treaty in 1957 was the first, decisive step. Today, once more, there is a widespread awareness of the need for a greater emphasis on more effective integration of the defence policies and resources of the European countries, without belittling the continued key role of NATO in European and Western security. One of the future challenges for EU’s Common Security and Defence Policy will be the increased integration and efficiency of the European defence industry, including dual use technologies and software and hardware.

Michel Veuthey, Professor of International Law, Geneva, Vice-President, Institute of International Humanitarian Law, San Remo: *The Challenge of Migration*. Professor Veuthey discussed the current and future challenges in the area of migration and asylum. He argued that it is in the interest of both the European and of the migrants and refugees to find equitable solutions that will reconcile the interests of both sides. These solutions have to respect human rights and humanitarian obligations as well as the values and preoccupations of the populations in the host countries. Integration and assimilation are essential elements in these solutions, with education being a key condition of success. At the same time European countries will have to help promote peace, reconciliation and development in the countries of origin of the migrants and refugees, in order to break the vicious circle of violence, poverty and despair, the principal factors responsible for the growth of forced migration.

Martino Lo Cascio, Professor, Università degli Studi di Roma Tor Vergata and Massimo Bagarani, Professor, Università Guglielmo Marconi, Roma: *Knowledge Driven European Society*. Professors Martino Lo Cascio and Massimo Bagarani, in their joint paper, raised the important question whether Europe, in the years to come, will be “driven or divided” by knowledge? They start their paper by drawing attention to the threat of a new open hostility towards “the other”, which is partly due to the impact of technology in time and space, on labour and employment. They also recall Schumpeter’s observation when the use of technological innovation is not sufficient to cover the real interests paid on debts, the society is consuming its capital. Their conclusions include the suggestion that in managing sectorial crises it is important to shift the focus from the safeguard of jobs to ensuring higher employability and possibilities to re-allocate workers through investments in high-level education and training.

Francisco Rubio, Professor, former Legal Director, Médecins du Monde, Associate Judge at the National Court of Appeals for Asylum Seekers, Paris: *The Future Role of Civil Society in Europe*. Professor Rubio raised the question “What is the future for civil society in the European Union?” He pointed out that on the plan of international relations civil society has been largely in advance on the states. He recalled that historians agree that the birth of an organized civil society goes back to the late 19th century with the creation in Philadelphia of an association for the Prohibition of the slave trade by sea and the launching of an international campaign which ultimately resulted in 1840 in the Treaty of London which prohibits the slave trade. Also, it is worth remembering that the idea of a united Europe was first an idea of civil society. It was during the Congress of the peace in 1849 that Victor Hugo in a speech that has...
remained famous launched the idea of a United States of Europe. However, today there is only one international normative instrument relating to NGOS, the treaty ETS 124 of the Council of Europe which is the treaty organizing the recognition of the legal personality of international non-governmental organizations. This Treaty which entered into force in the 1980s has been ratified only by 11 members of the Council of Europe. It is therefore a failure. Even more of a failure is that the member countries of the European Union have not all ratified this treaty. This shows how much the mistrust is large vis-a-vis any recognition of organised civil society. In short, institutional consultation between organised civil society and the European Union does not exist and has never existed. He argued that European organised civil society has been able to live and develop without the slightest support of Member States, either at the global or European level. Today we feel in Europe a threat to NGOs. In several member states of the Union restrictive texts have been adopted by the national parliaments. We are therefore, obviously, in a phase of decline of the freedom of association in the broad sense.

**Paola Lo Cascio,** Adjunct Professor of Contemporary History, University of Barcelona: *The Outlook for Spain and Catalonia.* Professor Paola Lo Cascio discussed the outlook for Spain and Catalonia and for Europe as a whole as a result of the rise of Democratic radicalism, populism and of misguided “identity rediscovery”. She illustrated, with the example of Catalonia, the emergence of new virulent “subnational” forms of nationalism that exert considerable centrifugal forces on the individual States affected and on the European Project and the Western Community as a whole. Similarly to Brexit, the promoters of these movements also have a recourse to “fake news” and to promises of future glory and prosperity once their goal of cutting the existing ties to a complex democratic Community will be achieved at the expense of a largely misled population and at the expense especially of young people and of future generations. The hope is that most Catalan citizens, as well as the Spanish citizens are able to understand – beyond the interests of some of their politicians – what is really at stake in Catalonia, Spain and Europe.