

25th ECONOMIC FORUM

8-10 September 2015, Krynica-Zdrój, Poland

Is peace at risk in Europe ?

This is what we should be asking ourselves when discussing about global geopolitics.

Long-standing conflicts of high and low intensity have made the Middle East and Africa all the more unstable, while generating two phenomena, which are equally nearly impossible to manage:

- A resurgence of international terrorism in the name of Islam, whose militants perpetrate crimes against humanity every day and undermine the very security of Europe and the world at large, and
- The ever-growing flow of millions of migrants, who turn to Europe to find a safe haven away from wars, persecutions and poverty.

A conflict has been raging in the very heart of Europe since 2013. I am talking about the Ukraine crisis which has gone through periods of varying intensity – from red alert to lesser tense times. It is a crisis that has spilled onto the international community, involving the UN, the EU, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe – OSCE, NATO and the United States of America.

It is the most dangerous conflict after WW2, analysts say. They believe it could make Washington and Moscow stumble into a confrontation whose theater of war would be Europe in its entirety.

Europe has already paid the economic price of the sanctions the US and the European Union have imposed on the Russian Federation. European countries may run the risk of having their energy supply drastically cut.

No matter where a crisis or a conflict erupts, its consequences are felt by everyone in today's globalised world. Countries that border areas of instability are the ones to feel the brunt of it first.

The Middle East and Africa are Europe's neighbours and as a result it is Europe that gets hit the hardest by the conflicts plaguing those areas. Suffice it is to mention terrorism and migration.

- 230,00 victims and over three million refugees is the toll of Syria's civil war, which first broke out in 2011. It is a blunt violation of all and every international norms and of the principles of *jus cogens* in international *humanitarian* law and crushes human rights. It is a cruel war where non conventional weapons, such as chemical weapons and barrel bombs, are used against civilians to this date;
- Post-Saddam Iraq turned out to be a failure. The international coalition left it to its own means way too soon, when the country's institutions were still fragile and the confrontation of Sunnis and Shiites has not been settled yet;
- the question of Palestine has been left unresolved and set aside;
- the so-called "Arab springs" in Maghreb and in Egypt have imploded ripping Libya apart where two governments fight each other trying to gain power.

They are just the most blatant examples of the deterioration of the social, political and economic order on which the survival and coexistence of all people rest.

International organizations have deployed all the means and tools they have to solve these situations, but they have found it difficult to face up to the challenge. I would like to thank the Economic Forum for choosing a theme for this year's meeting, whose impact may jeopardize peace, security and economic development in Europe, as well.

The organization of the United Nations has not been able to carry out its role, especially as regards the restoration of violated rights, because of the veto power exercised by the members of its Security Council. It is a fact that the geopolitical interests of the Council's standing members always gain the upper hand in every conflict.

We know all too well that the composition of the Security Council mirrors the obsolete logics of the victors of WWII, rather than responding to the needs of international relations, which have changed so profoundly.

Resolutions on grave violations of human rights especially against civilians in Syria, have come late and often have been left unheeded, as in the case of the ban on the use of WMD and the attacks on civilians.

The same fate has befallen on the implementation of the UN Special Envoy's six-point plan, which was approved by the Resolution n.2042 of 2012.

Four long years of war have had to pass before a Resolution on the starting of peace talks was adopted. Such a recent achievement was possible because Russia has finally decided not to veto it.

Other important accords are still to be implemented, as in the case of the Minsk 2 agreements, drawn up by the Contact Group on Ukraine, consisting of representatives of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Ukraine, Russia and the EU. The agreements were conceived to help putting an end to the strife across the People Republics of Donetsk and Lugansk. It is still to be seen whether the recent peace accord on the ceasefire, which came into force on Sept.1, will hold.

If we allow brute force to replace our compliance with the law, then the world will soon get out of control.

NATO has to confront a difficult scenario, especially if we consider that one of the original causes of the Ukraine crisis is the fear Russia felt about a likely accession of Ukraine to Nato!

After the end of the Cold War, Nato has transformed itself from a strategic idea of a defense alliance into an alliance which strives to improve external relations, security and peace. It is a vision on which efforts should be made to solve the current complex phase with the Russian Federation.

OSCE is a most important observer and mediator, which has proven its competence also in the Ukraine crisis. Its mission is to promote peace, security and the full respect of international law. Unfortunately OSCE is often left alone in difficult situations that would require the intervention of other bodies. But the latter refrain from giving their contribution for a host of political reasons.

The European Union has always been active in facing up to crisis both in its neighborhood and in the world at large. It has done so by introducing multitask civilian and military missions pursuing the restoration of the rule of law.

However a common defense and security policy is still an intergovernmental issue, even after Lisbon.

Having singled out the strong and weak points of international and regional organizations, we should ask ourselves how we can best face up to the many different scenarios, which are still to be fully understood.

The concerns voiced by Central and Eastern Europe are well understood. More than any other country, they fear Russia's reborn imperialistic ambitions, on one hand, and the pressure of an ever growing flow of migrants coming from the Balkans and from the South, on the other.

Solutions aren't simple, and they are not easy. But we believe that the experience of over 60 years of democracy and cohesion within Europe cannot be forgotten by a dangerous return of nationalisms, especially the fiercest ones, that throw us back to the roots of WWII and its devastating consequences.

We are facing a profound global change, which demand the establishment of strong ties of cooperation between states, which would also optimize the use of whatever means and tools each country has implemented to secure its own process toward democracy and peace. Values that are at the roots of our societies.

As a result it is important that EU countries take part in the process to amend Dublin II and Dublin III rules regarding asylum seekers.

Laws and regulation crumble, when history makes them obsolete, as proven by Germany's decision to violate the Dublin Treaty!

Ever stronger events by the people and for the people will make even the highest walls collapse.

No country will call itself safe and at peace, unless we all participate in the EU decision-making process, which also deals with the reformulation of migrations rules and norms.

It is not a question of assigning quotas and welcome asylum-seekers. Just consider that the reconstruction of Syria would demand the return to their homeland of a very huge number of refugees, as it happened with the Balkans in the '90s. What is urgent for Europe is the establishment of a body in charge of coordinating the fight

against human trafficking, because our civilized society can no longer tolerate the massacre of migrants.

The Union should review its agreements with the countries lying along the Mediterranean Southern Coast, such as Turkey, Tunisia , Lebanon and Jordan so to allow for the filing of asylum applications.

The U.N. could provide first assistance to migrants in their own countries while setting up humanitarian corridors to transport them to Europe.

The European Union could review their readmission agreements for economic migrants.

It should be advisable for the EU to agree with the area's countries of origin over annual entrance working plans, as part of the area economic development policy.

We must stay together to find shared solutions, which may carry with them many sacrifices. But if the creation of a new order is at stake, then we should be determined to act with courage and strength and make use of all the peace tools we have, rather than fueling conflicts.