



**FORUM
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Democracy: In need of a critical update?

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**CONFERENCE
REPORT**

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SUNDAY

#DemocraCE: Civil Society Renewal in the Digital Era

October 7, 2018, 11:00 – 12:30, Goethe-Institut, Foyer

In cooperation with Visegrad Insight

Moderator:

Wojciech Przybylski, Editor-in-Chief, Res Publica Nowa, Poland

Participants:

Daniel Prokop, Sociologist, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University, Median, Czech Republic

Zsuzsanna Szelényi, Former Member of Parliament, Hungary

Zuzana Kepplová, Editor and Commentator, SME

The joint debate on civil society in the digital era opened with a statement by Wojciech Przybylski on the importance of transnational debate in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). Przybylski stated that in the current climate of political uncertainty permeating the wider CEE region, the importance of civil society is in danger of being forgotten; it is essential that the proponents of civil society renew and revitalize the concept to meet fresh challenges posed by the rise of far-right sentiment and threats to integrity that CEE faces. In doing so, civil society will need to adapt to the digital era and learn to better represent the values and priorities of the younger generation.

Zuzana Kepplová noted that the protests in Slovakia during Spring 2018 (over the killing of journalist Ján Kuciak and his fiancée, Martina Kusnirova) held an important lesson for civil society: face-to-face political activity remains more effective than protest solely through social media. Up until these protests, noted Kepplová, far-right groups operating in Slovakia were more effective at engaging young people in political activity, as they operated throughout the social and cultural space at all levels, not limited to social media as liberal counterparts frequently seemed to be. “We have things to learn from the far-right,” she claimed, “they promoted themselves the right way. Like Ukraine on Maidan, we should be reminded what our fundamental values worth fighting for are.”

Speaking from the Czech perspective, Daniel Prokop commented that the political climate at present remains volatile and unpredictable, stating “the current success of [the Czech Pirate Party] could not have been predicted two years ago.” Furthermore, he agreed with Kepplová’s suggestion that valuable lessons could be learned from the far-right, particularly targeting disparities and inequalities at the sub-national level. In the Czech Republic, he argued, inequality and disparity remain two areas that generate strong sentiments which the far-right capitalizes on. Prokop also suggested that proponents of civil society should give greater priority to the social rifts caused by inequality and disparity in Central European nations.

These rifts also remind us that open, progressive debate and the maintenance of civil society is crucial for the long-term future of Central Europe. Zsuzsanna Szelényi brought the Hungarian perspective to the table, supporting Kepplová’s points regarding the better social outreach programs of the far-right. She pointed out that in Hungary the far-right is more socially active and creates a stronger sense of belonging for young people, appearing to provide better social “caretaking” than liberal figureheads. Speaking of the recent protests in April 2018 in Budapest, Szelényi asserted that “Corruption is the key that brings young people together in

demonstration,” and that the far-right was generally better at appearing to stand against corruption than so-called liberal elites.

Therefore, as Przybylski argued in closing, civil society advocates’ objective ought to be to reinvent civil society to fit the new generation. He stated that “you cannot take what was defined [in the past] and uphold it,” and that “democracy is like life; democracy needs to evolve.” He explained that rather than withdrawing from the “democratic battlefield,” civil society proponents need to engage with opposing viewpoints directly on social issues relevant to the individual countries of Central Europe. Prokop agreed, stating that it is long past time for the “de-abstraction of government and state” in the eyes of Central European society, and time to reclaim the notion of populism as a necessary part of democracy, albeit one that has been used by far-right influencers for undemocratic purposes. The notion that the common public is unable to engage in democracy (“people don’t have time for democracy”) is a dangerous myth, Kepplová held, and one that civil society must dispel if it is to engage Central Europe’s populace and secure a democratic future in which civil society is resurgent.

Future Scenarios for Central Europe

October 7, 2018, 13:00 – 14:30, Internal Workshop, Goethe-Institut, Foyer

In cooperation with Visegrad Insight and the German Marshall Fund of the United States

Participants:

Joerg Forbrig, Senior Transatlantic Fellow, Central and Eastern Europe, The German Marshall Fund of the United States

Wojciech Przybylski, Editor-in-Chief, Visegrad Insight, Poland

Wojciech Przybylski opened the discussion by asking, “where is Central Europe going?” He underlined the idea that “understanding the possible futures of Central Europe may bring us closer to understanding what might be the future of Europe in general.” Influenced by Francis Fukuyama’s *End of History*, Przybylski claimed: “there is no end of history, there is no certainty about the institutional order of democracy as we knew it and something new is coming.” According to Przybylski, current issues like resurging nationalism, as well as the “return of geopolitics, interventions, and war,” raise questions about the future of Central Europe.

The panel prepared a framework (referred to as a “scenario-building exercise”) for the debate about “possible and also desirable futures” for Central Europe. Przybylski stated: “the region we call Central Europe ... has a very interesting future.”

Joerg Forbrig followed by introducing five scenarios for 2025. He was guided by the following question in the first scenario entitled “Triumph of Illiberalism”: “What happens if this dynamic captured by illiberalism, nationalism, and sovereigntism becomes mainstream across the European Union?” Forbrig suggested that the impact of this dynamic would result in “the EU integration stopping, stalling and even reversing” and individual states becoming “nominal democracies.” The second scenario, “Central Europe Fractured,” predicts the disintegration of Central Europe as a result of the Visegrad Four countries addressing security issues differently and the risk of marginalizing individual countries. Forbrig suggested that the third scenario would see Slovakia remaining at the core of European integration; Hungary making illiberal democracy a broader dynamic; Poland moderating its policies and taking a pro-European stance; and the Czech Republic staying in the single market but not within the EU. The next scenario, “Shotgun Wedding,” envisions that economic and security crises in the region will make the Visegrad Four states reconsider their positions on European unity and will positively affect the process of EU integration. “Central Europe Spring 2.0” predicts changes in society and political culture towards a more pro-European position as a result of younger generations challenging the current order. The fifth scenario, “Security Vacuum,” predicts the collapse of collective security and the isolation of Central Europe due to regional security developments and the “prioritization of security above all.”

With these scenarios presented, Przybylski explained that we need to “put [these proposals] in front of decisionmakers ... [and] engage them in a discussion.” He asked, “which would you prefer” out of the possible scenarios, and “what would you do to make it happen,” before highlighting trends being amplified in Central Europe today. From a “return of isolationism” to a “rising tide of disinformation,” Przybylski encouraged the audience to consider “certain [policy] decisions” and asked them “which scenario does it fall in to?”

Potential “tipping points” Przybylski pointed out were events such as the “outcome of Brexit” and the “EU’s response to illiberalism.” Recommendations both speakers presented on policy were mainly routed around the rejection of illiberalism. Przybylski posited that “[illiberalism] is

undermining the institutional order without offering any new order." It becomes rooted through "devious ways" when there "are no clear rules," he insisted.

Forbrig and Przybylski fielded questions from the audience. Forbrig answered one question on how the EU could be revised if proposals from Central Europe are not taken seriously, by saying the issue is more about "how collective security [can] be reshaped." "EU and NATO are seen as something extra" when it comes to security, and "Central Europe needs to take itself seriously, take responsibility with these entities" he added. Another question addressed democracies which "[fail] to meet the expectations of people." Przybylski responded that "when someone is unsatisfied, it is not [what is lacking] in democracies, but how the framework is currently functioning" within them.

Democracy Dialogues: How Do We Define Democracy Today?

October 7, 2018, 16:30 – 18:00, Goethe-Institute, Foyer

In cooperation with the Zentrum Liberale Moderne and Czech-German Future Fund

Moderator: *Ramin Jahanbegloo*, Political Philosopher, Member, Program Council, Forum 2000 Foundation, Canada/Iran

Panelists:

Ralf Fücks, Managing Partner, Zentrum Liberale Moderne, Germany

Irwin Cotler, Founder, Chair of the Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights, Canada

Ramin Jahanbegloo began by stating that we are living in a new version of democracy. He then asked the panelists whether they would describe this new democracy as the rise of “hollow democracy”; valueless elections and the decay of the cultural democratic institution. Irwin Cotler replied that it is “disturbing that democracies have not come to neither the defense of democratic ideas nor to the unmasking and exposing of the injustices of the authoritarian resurgence.” The silence of democracies incentivizes further repression. Ralf Fücks commented that there is a mixture of apathy and indifference, but that in the end the future of democracy will be decided in a global agreement. He added that as we are facing a new type of authoritarian regime—China, which is very modern and economically successful— “we have to deal with very serious economic and social problems we are confronted with and we have to deliver solutions.”

Jahanbegloo continued by asking if there is a decay of democratic culture, institutions, and ethics. Cotler mentioned that there is an erosion of the ideals and values of democracy and respect for its institutions. He assured that not only is affirming democracy’s foundational principles important, but that we have to act upon them more effectively, adding that democracies do not stand for the idea of democracy. Fücks questioned how willing we are to get into conflict with these authoritarian regimes. He argued that there has been an increase in discourse regarding Neorealism in foreign policy, which focuses mainly on interests. Cotler argued that interests and values can converge, and that we have to find the tipping point.

Jahanbegloo mentioned that in today’s world there is a lack of leaders and citizens are largely disappointed with the current ones. Cotler stated that political actors have become unresponsive to demands, and that we do not see moral leadership in the world today. Fücks pointed out that politics in Europe has lost any kind of vision of political management and is more reactive to what is happening in the short term.

The panel answered questions from the public. The first covered countering China’s desire to impose its power on other states. Cotler claimed that standing alone does not work, but if a concert of democratic countries came together they can leverage China—instead of the other way around. Another audience member asked if democracies should take an aggressive or passive stance during the rise of non-democratic regimes. Cotler mentioned that the Rwandan genocide was preventable, and that many countries knew about it, but did not act. He added that the real problem relating to migration is that states often deal with consequences when they should address the causes. Fücks commented that the responsibility to protect must be serious and based on deliberation. Another observer asked what the democratic world will do about the conflict in Yemen. Cotler asserted that Yemen is currently the worst humanitarian catastrophe in the world while the general focus is on other conflicts. Fücks felt that addressing Yemen would overstretch the West’s capacity to address issues around the world. With Trump currently in office, the US has abandoned the obligation to intervene, and it is up to civil society and the

independent media to exert pressure. Jahanbegloo concluded the session indicating that the Middle East has been very unstable in recent years and civil society is important for democracy.

Opening Ceremony

October 7, 2018, 19:00 – 21:00, Prague Crossroads

Introductory Remarks:

Jakub Klepal, Executive Director, Forum 2000 Foundation, Czech Republic

Participants:

Caroline Stoessinger, Author, President, Mozart Academy, Professor, The City University of New York, USA

Ivan Havel, Scientist, Former Director of the Center for Theoretical Studies, Member, Forum 2000 Foundation International Advisory Board, Editor-in-Chief, *Vesmír*, Czech Republic

Nyaradzo Mashayamombe, Executive Director, Tag A Life International Trust (TaLI), Zimbabwe

Juraj Šeliga, Student Leader, Slovakia

Rafaela Requesens, Student Leader, Venezuela

Andrea Papus Ngombet Malewa, Founder, Collectif Sassoufit, Consultant, Activist, Congo-Brazzaville

Arzu Gebullayeva, Journalist, Activist, Azerbaijan

Jakub Klepal introduced the ceremony, commenting that democracy, “which has delivered unprecedented freedom, prosperity, and peace to the parts of the world which have been lucky enough to enjoy it, seems to be stuck in a self-destructive cycle.” Democracy faces both internal and external challenges; tensions arising from social and economic problems—amplified by the effects of social media—have eroded trust in democracy. Internal challenges are being amplified and abused by external forces, namely authoritarian regimes in countries like China and Russia, but also others. These external forces aim to increase their power, influence, boost their international standing, gain economic advantage or to simply sow uncertainty and chaos in the democratic community. In light of this, Klepal explained Forum 2000’s goal of “addressing the problems [democracy] is facing in a democratic way,” by addressing these difficult issues and hosting an ideologically diverse group of delegates. He dedicated the ceremony to Forum 2000 co-founder Elie Wiesel.

Caroline Stoessinger discussed the importance of Wiesel’s ideas today. She detailed how the inspiration for Forum 2000 developed through informal conversations between Wiesel and Václav Havel; there was “no written proposal, no meetings—just a handshake between two great men.” Stoessinger described Wiesel’s defense of the powerless around the world, “urging the power brokers to choose justice over politics.” She closed her remarks by paraphrasing Wiesel’s views on the Jewish legend of the Lamed Vav Tzadikim (the 36 honorable men), stating that “we need the 36, or 36,000 or 36 million just men and women ... we need them now.” A short film about Wiesel followed Stoessinger’s speech.

Ivan Havel discussed potential interpretations of the conference’s title. “Its obvious meaning invites a straight answer,” he commented, but noted that it also implies a thought-provoking question: “What sort of criticism incites us to deliberate about the need to improve democracy? Is it an inherent weakness of democratic systems [that] accounts for their susceptibility to [the challenges they face today]?” Havel emphasized that physical, in-person debate and assembly remain crucial today.

Following Havel’s address, Klepal introduced five activists who each answered the question, “what do I wish for my country?”

Arzu Gebullayeva stated that she wants a liberal democracy in Azerbaijan. She added that “I love my motherland, but the place I call home has never been mine” due to the regime’s repression and crackdown on journalists. Gebullayeva cited Ambrogio Lorenzetti’s depiction of good governance in *The Allegory of Good and Bad Government* as Azerbaijan’s ideal future, one “where civic ideals and plurality of opinions are celebrated ... and where our nation isn’t governed by fear, but by solidarity and freedom.”

Juraj Šeliga outlined his goals for Slovakia. He advocated for “decency as a structural element of our society,” and called for increased interpersonal trust as well: “with no trust there is no real discussion; with no real discussion, there is no democracy.” His final demand was justice— “for everybody, from powerless to powerful”— to protect his other goals.

Andrea Ngombet expressed a desire for food security, healthcare, education, and technological advancement in Congo Brazzaville. The country’s corrupt regime prevents it—despite sitting on top of some of the largest oil reserves in Africa—from achieving these goals. He emphasized that only legitimate rule of law will make his hopes possible. “I think democracy is a universal idea,” he concluded, “keeping it alive should not be the burden of Western countries alone.”

Rafaela Requesens stated that democracy is her sole goal for Venezuela. “For me, democracy represents the opportunity to give life to those who are dying today, to give freedom to those who are behind bars”—including her brother, former Forum 2000 delegate and a deputy of the Venezuelan National Assembly Juan Requesens. “As a sister, as a daughter, as a Venezuelan, [I ask you] please, do not leave us [Venezuelan activists],” she implored before adding, “I refuse to surrender.”

Nyaradzo Mashayamombe expressed herself through song. “My struggle is a struggle within a struggle,” she said as she stepped onstage, “When I am thinking of democracy, human rights, I am thinking of the women, the youth.” She performed her rendition of “Wathint’ Abafazi Wathinti’ Imbokodo” (“You Strike a Woman, You Strike a Rock”). In a spoken-word passage, she declared that “democracy is democracy when everybody is included ... where women and girls are not rewarded with insults, profanity, humiliation, [that force them] to stay out of politics.”

After Mashayamombe’s performance, Klepal expressed his gratitude for supporters of this year’s conference. The ceremony concluded on an upbeat note, with Mashayamombe performing another song, “Happy Day.”

MONDAY

Digital Dictatorship: China's Social Credit Score and 21st Century Digital Monitoring of its People

October 8, 2018, 8:00 – 9:00, Žofín Palace, Knights' Hall

In cooperation with Information Centre for Democracy and Human Rights in China

Moderator:

Ondřej Klimeš, Oriental Institute, Czech Academy of Sciences, Czech Republic

Participants:

Xiao Qiang, Founder, China Digital Times, Professor, UC Berkeley School of Information, China/USA

Ivana Karásková, Project Chief Coordinator, ChinfluenCE, Czech Republic

Dongfang Han, Executive Director, China Labor Bulletin, China

Darren Byler, Anthropologist, University of Washington, USA

Ondřej Klimeš began by detailing the rise of China's technological capabilities in the wake of the digital revolution, which allows for the cross referencing of facial recognition, surveillance, and online identities.

Xiao Qiang held that internet and mobile phones potentially empower democratic values, but also give the government the ability to monitor its citizens. With 800 million mobile phones being used in China, everything Chinese citizens do digitally is monitored by the state. The government uses data, algorithms, and microchips to form the basis of China's facial recognition apparatus. Qiang explained that such capabilities manifest in everyday life: he used the example of a jaywalker who will be fined directly to their mobile after the government cross references facial recognition with the offender's mobile phone number. He went on to discuss the broader international implications of this technology, saying that China has begun to export their facial recognition technology, with at least five other countries also using it.

Darren Byler focused on China's northwestern province to illuminate the booming technology security industry that is being used to control its Uyghur population, which is believed to pose a separatist threat to the state. What China has done with its tech industry (coupled with AI) is log the Uyghur language, cross reference it with face and text recognition in order to identify "safe," "neutral," or "unsafe" individuals.

Dongfang Han drew parallels to various Chinese dynastic cycles and their downfall, suggesting a similar trend was taking place. He suggested that the noble elites will exercise extreme power to protect their lives and families. However, Han also noted that a large portion of the population—rural farmers and laborers, for instance—are too far removed from the seat of power to implement change. A solution he posed was to develop a new program which uses the same technology of the regime in order to shed light on issues, such as how many workers in China go on strike at any given moment.

Ivana Karásková, focused on the transparency and security of China within the relative international context and terms. She said China's system is not specifically unique to a totalitarian regime, noting that even democratic countries have many systems in place that also use data collection. Both models also use social norms and laws to enforce cultural and judicial

conformity. She posited that China is following Russia's example, in terms of disregard for certain international protocol.

In the question and answer section, an audience member asked about what forces within China can hold the authorities to account as the regime's technological capabilities proliferate. Qiang was quick to answer in saying there are no checks on this power and no civil society resistance. Byler added that the allure of profits provides an incentive for relevant actors to remain in line with the status quo. Another attendee asked the participants: "Do you think that the central authorities do not have a picture of what is going on, [and] that they are not driven by the potential for unrest?" Han responded saying they know very well. He believed that there are parallels between what is happening now and what happened at the end of previous dynasties, just without the same level of technology. A question came up about the Belt and Road Initiative's potential to give China the ability to export more of its control. Qiang answered that either states trust China or are indebted to China, and therefore have no choice.

It Can Be Done! New Trends in Civic Activism

October 8, 2018, 8:00 – 9:00, Žofín Palace, Delegates' Lounge

Moderator:

Rodger Potocki, Senior Director for Europe, National Endowment for Democracy, USA

Participants:

Nyaradzo Mashayamombe, Executive Director, Tag A Life International Trust (TaLI), Zimbabwe

Mete Coban, Politician, Strategist, Charity Worker, United Kingdom

Haykuhi Harutyunyan, Activist, Human Rights Lawyer, Armenia

Developments within civic activism and the forms in which they have succeeded or failed in varying international environments was the guiding point in “It Can Be Done! New Trends in Civic Activism,” using the examples of Zimbabwe, Armenia, and the UK. Three main points were established as vital for civic activism: First, a focus on youth and women to gain preferred results in a representative movement; Secondly, the need for a message to inspire the masses and to be used as a defining feature that distinguishes activists from the opposition; Lastly, getting support for the cause and message—from local communities and protesters, to the activists and human rights groups able to come to the aid of those in trouble and the oppressed.

Nyaradzo Mashayamombe used her home country of Zimbabwe to emphasize the importance of civil societies' participation in protests and actively helping mobilize the youth to register and vote. Citing the downfall of ex-president Robert Mugabe, the importance of society coming together was emphasized, along with the vital role women and youth had, playing out in some of the highest youth voter registrations in the country's history and the following of independent candidates. “Protests are good if they're done responsibly,” Mashayamombe said as she warned of polarization within society and the lack of spirit of construction that leads civil society to be labeled as the opposition by regimes.

Mete Coban spoke about Brexit and the lack of education in democracy amongst young people, which was the main inspiration for the creation of My Life My Say's “Democracy Cafes”; a platform to get people together over coffee to discuss politics and restore a sense of trust in the system by gaining insight into regional institutions and government functions. Coban named Jeremy Corbyn and the Labour party as an example of leadership and a way to open discourse on the troubling issues that affect young people today, aiming to find innovative ways to reach those who do not have a voice and attract disadvantaged communities to engage politically.

The positive example of Armenia and civil activism was discussed by human rights lawyer Haykuhi Harutyunyan, whose opening lines illustrated what occurred earlier this year in her country: “Powerless people have the power to change their country and take ownership of their future,” she said, referencing the small communities that mobilized in towns all over Armenia. The resignation of the prime minister in response to such demonstrations was deemed a victory and continues to serve as an example to many countries fighting their own battles.

The final question was, “what is the role of civil society now?” Haykuhi reiterated civil society's importance as an active watchdog and their participation in institution building and democratic reform. This includes working with different government representatives and taking responsibility for designing policy documents and their implementation. The struggles of Zimbabwe, Armenia, and the future of Brexit depend on more representation, greater political engagement, and open communication with the international community.

The Media: In Need of a Critical Update

October 8, 2018, 8:00 – 9:00, Žofín Palace, Delegates' Lounge II

In cooperation with Project Syndicate

Moderator:

Jeremy Druker, Co-Chair, Prague Media Point Conference, Executive Director, Transitions, Czech Republic/USA

Remarks:

Vivian Schiller, CEO, Civil Foundation, Former President, National Public Radio, Former Head of News, Twitter, USA

This discussion between Jeremy Druker and Vivian Schiller addressed the current state of the global media landscape, exploring a number of key challenges faced by media outlets in an era of transformation and change.

Schiller began by giving an assessment of the health of the global media sector, stating that “we’re not in a great place.” She identified two different “streams of crisis” in journalism: sustainability and trust. Schiller held that instability in just one of these areas should be considered a crisis. Both in concert could be catastrophic for the media and for journalists.

The first of these, the crisis of sustainability, has arisen from the progression from traditional print media, through digital, and into mobile as the preferred mode of consumption of media by large segments of the population. Schiller identified the failure of traditional funding models to adapt to these shifts. While platforms such as Google and Facebook now attract large portions of advertising revenue that would traditionally have been directed towards news media outlets, robust alternative funding models for these outlets have failed to emerge.

Secondly, she identified a diminishing trust in the media as a major challenge. Stating that “trust in journalism is eroding around the world,” Schiller held that “the ability for journalists to operate around the world is becoming more difficult.” She attributed this to a range of factors including the erosion of a facts-based foundation for news reporting. Citing the United States as an example, she described the way in which “people used to agree on some sort of evidence-based foundation” when consuming news media. Reflecting on the current state of the US media, she expressed a belief that this is no longer the case.

In response to a question from Druker on the mood among journalists today, Schiller once again spoke to the US as an example, describing attacks on the media by the Trump administration. However, she identified the irony that despite, or perhaps due to, this immense pressure on traditional media, both financially and politically, journalists are more invigorated and have found a new sense of purpose in defending independent media against these attacks. She noted increased applications to journalism schools in the US, in addition to a shift towards a more activist approach from media outlets such as CNN.

Schiller also addressed the difficulty in maintaining journalistic impartiality in the face of antagonism from governments. She conceded that it can be difficult for the media to remain impartial “when it has to defend itself against a torrent of lies,” noting that, while the word “lies” sounds aggressive, this is what the media is facing. She stated that while it may appear that media outlets are taking sides, this is largely due to the fact that they are holding public officials to account when they are not telling the truth.

In response to questions from the audience, Schiller spoke about the role of social media in shaping the way people consume news media today. She stated that, while more people than ever receive their news through social media and click through from there, the problem lies in the “flattening effect” that social media has on news content—in other words, that legitimate news outlets and so-called “fake news” outlets can become difficult to distinguish when viewed on a social media platform. To illustrate this point, she used the example of a (fake) story which circulated on social media in the leadup to the 2016 US presidential election, alleging that Donald Trump had been endorsed by the Pope. This story became the most viewed article during that period.

Schiller concluded by speaking about the Civil Foundation (CF), of which she is CEO, and its role in ensuring that media outlets remain sustainable and trustworthy. She described the mechanisms by which the CF proposes to achieve this, and the reactions to the work of the CF by journalists and civil society groups.

European Union Amidst Ideological Withering and Its Consequences for Liberal Democracy

October 8, 2018, 8:00 – 9:15, Goethe-Institut, Conference Room

In cooperation with International Republican Institute

Moderator:

Balazs Jarabik, Consultant, Hungary

Participants:

Miriam Lexmann, EU Regional Programmes Director, International Republican Institute, Slovakia

Jan Hartl, Founder, STEM Institute, Czech Republic

Antje Hermenau, Political Consultant, Germany

Balazs Jarabik moderated the panel, focusing on competing visions of Europe, economic governance issues and the concept of the East-West divide in post-transition European politics.

Jan Hartl contended that many Central European states like the Czech Republic and Slovakia have very unique histories and cultures that made a uniform transition strategy impossible in the 1990s. He emphasized the impact that five decades of totalitarian rule has played on the organization of these societies but maintained that frustrations with liberalism are seen in both Eastern and Western European countries. Speaking about the situation in Central and Eastern European states, he noted that local media often present the international situation to the population in a biased way: public authorities tend to manipulate information and blame the EU instead of addressing long-standing domestic issues. Therefore, their population is not fully aware of its potential.

Antje Hermenau drew on her experience with the German Green Party and highlighted the inherent contention between leftist policies of high social welfare and open borders. She emphasized the need for leftist parties in both Eastern and Western Europe to engage and work with parties like Germany's AfD, and conceded that the idea of constructing a United States of Europe is hardly feasible since national identities are not going to disappear soon: "There cannot be a United States of Europe ... Europe is far more diverse than we thought before," she stated. She maintained that this was a key point that liberal parties must comprehend moving forward. Jarabik added that "Orbán is a liberal who understands that liberalism failed Hungary."

Miriam Lexmann moved the conversation to the topic of the EU and how it has contributed to the problem of illiberalism in Europe. She contended that one of the original issues for the EU and Central and Eastern Europe was that Visegrad countries acceded in a period of transition from the principles of the Maastricht Treaty to the Treaty of Nice. As soon as these countries joined the EU, European leaders started to discuss the Lisbon treaty that subsequently changed the EU dramatically. This transition, along with the West's handling of the Iraq War and the migration and financial crises, created doubt in Central Europe about the effectiveness of the liberal democratic model. She further argued that the EU is asserting its soft power by issuing reports that go far beyond its competencies; she said that "the biggest problem of the EU is not adhering to the subsidiarity principle ... if this soft power is out of the competencies of the EU, then we have a problem."

The participants responded to questions from the audience. One audience member commented that the EU is no longer able to find answers to the numerous challenges that it faces nowadays

such as economic stagnation, terrorism, and the aftermath of the migration crisis. In his view, the EU suffers from a profound democratic deficit and is now at the stage of cultural civil war. Additionally, Germany's influence has receded behind the competing Macron and Orbán views of Europe's future. Another member of the audience commented that in the case of the United Kingdom, the fact that left and right parties were unable to address people's insecurity led to the country's withdrawal from European politics and the rising success of populist parties. Hermenau responded by reiterating the importance of engaging with populist parties and added that conservative parties can address the "populist problem" by giving alternatives instead of copying populist tactics. Hartl highlighted the lack of awareness among European citizens about current political issues and the activity of EU institutions, emphasizing the importance of public communication. Lexmann finished the discussion by adding that the EU is facing a moral crisis, and that its leaders know that addressing issues like the migration crisis by sending refugees to Turkey to live in inhumane conditions does not adhere to the EU's core principles and values.

Free Space on the Left in Central Europe

October 8, 2018, 8:00 – 9:00, Goethe-Institut, Foyer

In cooperation with Czech-German Discussion Forum and Czech German Future Fund

Moderator:

Libor Rouček, Former Vice President, European Parliament, Co-Chairman, Czech- German Discussion Forum, Czech Republic

Participants:

Jana Maláčová, Minister, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Czech Republic

Petra Ernstberger, Former Member of the German Parliament, SPD, Director, German-Czech Future Fund, Germany

Iveta Radičová, Sociologist, Former Prime Minister, Member, Program Council, Forum 2000 Foundation, Slovakia

This panel reflected on the current state of democracy in Central Europe. There are many challenges, from outside and within, facing the democracies in this region. The panel examined what the left needs to do to avoid losing to the populists.

Petra Ernstberger pointed to social, political, and cultural reasons for why the populist tide has risen. The financial collapse of 2008-2009 and the ongoing migrant crisis have caused people to distrust traditional parties and institutions and look for alternative parties to support, many of which have been populist. The greatest change has been in a decreased “style of living,” which makes people feel like losers—they feel left behind in the welfare state. For a long time, the Social Democrats represented the people and their interests, but are no longer seen as representative. They have become a part of “the establishment” to many.

Jana Maláčová offered a Czech perspective. She noted that the Social Democrats have fared somewhat better in the Czech Republic than in other countries. Leftist parties saw 30 percent support in eight towns in the most recent elections, and in five towns they got over 40 percent. However, their support has largely withered. People simply do not feel properly represented by the Social Democrats any longer. She commented that, “the left has no recipes to the problems we face today, is what people [say].” The problems facing the Czech Republic today include an aging population seeking entitlements and a changing economic sphere. Maláčová believes that these issues actually call for answers from the left.

Iveta Radičová acknowledged the societal changes underway in Central Europe. The information revolution is a watershed moment in Europe’s history. It caused new forms of social stratification dissimilar to trends of the previous century. Governments are trying to counteract current economic crises with outdated solutions. New answers must emerge. “The ability to think is the greatest social mover, not education,” she declared. Radičová posited that if God created legitimacy for governments in the past, followed by human rights. Today, “Big Data” does.

The panelists offered solutions to how the left should counteract populist forces. Ernstberger believes the Social Democrats should go further to the left to differentiate their platform from other parties. The Social Democrats could also try to unite with other leftist parties so they do not compete with each other for support. This has been done in countries like Portugal already. Maláčová said that the left needs to modernize like the populists have. Radičová called Central European democracies “defective,” and that corruption needs to be better regulated. Trust in democratic institutions and investment in them needs to be restored. Politics is based on

identity, and this explains why “all politicians are either crazy or at least versed in crazy.” Radičová added that incomes need to be raised through a redistribution of some kind, whether it is free lunch for lower classes or something else, and the quality of health care needs to be higher.

During the question and answer session, a member of the audience said that the right is better at identifying the root causes of voter anxiety and fear. Radičová disagreed and said that socioeconomic factors still drive voter incentive. Another audience member said that people satiate their political thirst in online chat rooms, which serve as ideological echo chambers. All three panelists agreed with this assessment.

Threats to Freedom: A Critical Review of the Current State of Democracy

October 8, 2018, 9:15 – 10:30, Žofín Palace, Forum Hall

Moderator:

Šimon Pánek, Co-Founder and Director, People in Need, Member, International Advisory Board, Forum 2000 Foundation, Czech Republic

Panel Discussion:

Michael J. Abramowitz, President, Freedom House, USA

Tomáš Petříček, First Deputy Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Czech Republic

Alina Mungiu-Pippidi, Professor of Democracy Studies, Hertie School of Governance, Romania/Germany

Šimon Pánek introduced the opening panel, detailing the challenges democracies face today. Pánek first highlighted the situation of Hong Kong student activist Joshua Wong. Wong was unable to attend this year's conference due to travel restrictions stipulated by the Chinese government; he is awaiting trial for his involvement in the Umbrella Movement and more recent anti-Beijing protests. A pre-recorded video address from Wong was shown. Wong commented that although youth protests for additional autonomy in Hong Kong have faced intense government pushback, "we [the protestors] will try our best until the day we get back democracy—because time is on our side."

Tomáš Petříček stated that while democratic societies are in crisis, democratic ideals are not losing their appeal—democrats have simply "focused for a long time on input legitimacy [institutions], but we forgot for some extent to strengthen the output legitimacy of our societies." He argued that liberal democracies need to regain their message, and deliver more concrete, consistent results to voters to maintain their appeal in the long run. He noted that innovative use of technology at the community level are promising, but that it is difficult for traditional political parties to utilize these technologies in a similar manner on both the local and national level.

Michael Abramowitz remarked that after a long period of democratic advances, we have entered a period of decline. He claimed that "traditional parties have lost touch with broad, middle-class concerns in many countries"—from immigration to economic issues. He suggested that if democracies want to counteract this cynicism, "the first place to look is inward, at ourselves," and claimed that democratic countries need to genuinely carry out their ideals at home and abroad to counteract the cynicism many feel towards the liberal democratic establishment. He also argued that "the cause of global democracy will advance if the US returns to being a really strong proponent and lives out these [liberal democratic] values."

Alina Mungiu-Pippidi argued that it is liberal democracy, not democracy as a whole, that is in peril. She pointed out that in prior waves of democratization, "we simply filled the world with nominal democrats" who would presumably liberalize over time and reject kleptocratic practices. This was not the case, as young democracies "are good at making revolutions, but they lose the battle the next day," falling into corrupt or illiberal practices. She claimed that traditional elites in democratic societies face increased criticism, which politicians like Donald Trump parlay into electoral success. Mungiu-Pippidi held that if traditional elites are to be replaced, they need to be replaced by democrats who are willing to leave office down the line and are also willing to become representative of—and deliver results to—broader segments of the populace.

The panel fielded questions from the audience. Mungiu-Pippidi stated that "Europe is in a very weak moment," and therefore not in the position to provide as much democratic assistance

abroad as may be necessary. Abramowitz added that civil society and democratic assistance organizations need to ensure governments fight for democratic ideals, “not just grand strategy and the market.”

Pánek concluded the panel by asking the panelists about the prognosis for the future. All the panelists held that recognizing and adjusting to the new media environment will be the key. Petříček added that democracy is “not just about the resilience of institutions, but of the society as such.” Mungiu-Pippidi held that due to weak leadership in the West, expectations must be tempered for the next few years, but reminded the audience that democracy has survived similar challenges before. Pánek closed by reminding those present that “there is not a single bullet or easy answer ... the struggle for democracy is a long-term battle, and time is on our side.”

The Future of Information and the Impact on Democracy

October 8, 2018, 10:45 – 12:00, Žofín Palace, Forum Hall

In cooperation with AVAST Foundation

Moderator:

Eva Hanáková, Journalist, CEO, SingularityU Czech Summit, Czech Republics

Participants:

Ondřej Vlček, Executive Vice President & General Manager, Avast, Czech Republic

Jonathan Ledgard, Technologist, Novelist, Former Correspondent, The Economist, United Kingdom

Vivian Schiller, CEO, Civil Foundation, Former President, National Public Radio, Former Head of News, Twitter, USA

Suzanne Nossel, Executive Director, PEN American Center, USA

Suzanne Nossel began by providing her take on the current dangers to free speech and the immediacy of fake news as a threat. Deeming fake news a crisis of expression short of libel and slander, Nossel emphasized that the boundaries between trustworthy and untrustworthy media producers are harder for people to identify in cyberspace. With physical media publication, information was vetted and factchecked before it was released—that is not the case for much of the information on the internet. This, along with attacks on the news media by politicians, contributes to distrust widespread distrust towards the media. She noted that there are no easy ways to address this, but held that “ultimately, the solution is in inoculating the consumers so that they are equipped, informed, and able to discern between the fact and the false.”

Vivian Schiller continued the discussion by shedding light on her work with the Civil Foundation. She explained that its aim is to create platforms which can filter, handle, and promote trustworthy media for public consumption. Schiller stressed the fact that this platform fashions a decentralized system of management aided by cryptocurrency and blockchain. “You can create impression of somebody saying something they’ve never actually said,” Schiller warned, “that can quickly move to another stage—nobody believes anything they see.”

Jonathan Ledgard shared his experiences transitioning from the media business to becoming a technologist. He highlighted the dichotomy that struck him when moving to Africa after mobile phones became popular; that regardless of your financial status you can have access to the vast expanse of information on the internet. Ledgard claimed that it is necessary to present the news properly: “AI is a medium-term player, I think we should be more focused on the visual culture, how the young people perceive information.”

Ondřej Vlček noted that we are still in the pre-AI era and that technology will push us further, and at a much quicker pace, towards this so-called “AI era.” Vlček stated that we must find ways to protect society and democracy and stressed that although companies are taking measures to protect these ideals, they lack any strategic long-term vision for doing so. Security should be ensured by the consumers too; however, “they are generally not aware.” “And even though they were aware—the biggest fear that I have [is that] they wouldn’t necessarily care to the extent that they’ll be willing to sacrifice something,” said Vlček.

Following this initial session, Hanáková addressed the speakers with questions. “Could AI kill off democracy?” Schiller responded saying that AI does have the ability to manipulate audio and images as a means to create illegitimate impressions of certain people. She argued that this may lead to people not believing in anything they see or hear, which would spell out the end of

society. Hanáková then asked “are tech giants a threat to democracy?” Nossel responded: no, she does not think they are purposefully pushing certain agendas, and that we must be reminded that these corporations are centered on profit-generating systems which may be the root cause to this question. Lastly, Hanáková inquired whether a “cyber-NATO” should be established. Vlček began his response by stating that governments are relatively active in this sense in the wake of the potential for cyber warfare. He echoed the ideas of Nossel, reiterating that the desire for profit is a major issue creating a dichotomy where there are noble aims, and on the other hand, a need to create funding.

Hanáková finished the panel with a quotation of a famous Czech writer Karel Čapek: “No one, no nation, no state should feel safe as long as the human relations can be corrupted by the instruments of lie. There will be no certainty, no treaties, nothing valid and safe Each lie is an attack against the safety of the world. Freeing the world of lies is more than disarmament.”

The Role of Artists in Unfree Societies

October 8, 2018, 10:45 – 12:00, Žofín Palace, Delegates' Lounge

Moderator:

Daniel Konrád, Culture Editor, *Hospodářské noviny*, Czech Republic

Participants:

Agnieszka Holland, Film Director, Poland

David Černý, Artist, Czech Republic

Sofi Oksanen, Writer, Finland

Yanelys Nuñez Leyva, Activist, Curator, Art Critic, Cuba

The panel, comprised of artists from a range of cultural backgrounds and creative practices, discussed their individual experiences of creating art in unfree societies, and found commonalities between these experiences.

David Černý began the discussion by drawing comparisons between the creative experience under fascist and communist regimes, concluding that “communist victims are still a greater number than those under fascism.”

Agnieszka Holland picked up on this comparison, noting that communist practice differed more radically from its foundational ideology than that of fascism in Nazi Germany. She expressed a belief that this may have softened the way in which the reality of life under Communism is remembered today. Holland also discussed the effects that life under Communism had on the people who lived through it, stating that “animals raised in the zoo don’t want to be in the jungle. In the zoo you are fed and you are secure. Those raised in this environment are ill-equipped to be in the free world.” She also issued a warning to younger generations, saying that “like cancer, [Communism] can come back at any moment.”

Using the story of the discovery of mass graves in Karelia, Sofi Oksanen illustrated the way in which Russia has attempted to influence Estonian and Finnish domestic affairs. In response to Russian attempts to create confusion around these events, she added that “we have to fight for our right to write our history. We need to write what happened to these victims, and we need to write their names. The executioner kills twice: once by taking their life, and once by making them silent. We can’t bring them back to life, but we can give them a voice by remembering their name.” She also expressed concern over growing links between China and Finland. With more Chinese tourists visiting Finland, she said, China is able to exert more pressure over Finnish affairs, particularly in light of the growing strategic importance of the Arctic region. Oksanen also raised concern over the recent trend of Chinese interests purchasing Hollywood studios, and the way in which this may affect international perception of the Chinese communist regime.

Yanelys Nuñez Leyva described her experience working as an artist and activist in Cuba, explaining the many challenges faced by those seeking to work in the Cuban creative industries. She shared personal experiences of being punished for creating art, including losing her job, explaining that “when you say you’re a dissident or activist, the government says that you don’t have a place in their society.” She also addressed Decree 349, a new law that imposes significant constraints on artists’ ability to work freely and independently. Leyva discussed Cuba’s first biennale to highlight these challenges. Regarding the attitude of Cuba’s current administration towards artists, Leyva stated that the “new president doesn’t have a strong image with the people, so he needs to enact strict laws to show he has control of the country. If he doesn’t have control of this space, it’s very dangerous because the artists can go to the street.”

Fragile Democracy and Populist Threat in Latin America

October 8, 2018, 10:45 – 12:00, Goethe-Institute, Conference Room

In cooperation with CASLA Institute

Moderator:

Tamara Sujú, Human Rights Lawyer, Venezuela

Participants:

Edipcia Dubón, Former Member of Parliament, Nicaragua

José Miguel Vivanco, Executive Director of Americas Division, Human Rights Watch, USA

Gustavo Tovar Arroyo, Lawyer, Artist, Human Rights Activist, Poet, Producer and Writer, Venezuela.

Beatriz Becerra Basterrechea, Member, European Parliament, Spain

Tamara Sujú began the panel by reiterating that Latin America is a region inundated with populism and corruption, what their effects are—a topical issue, as the region faces a variety of issues, from dictatorships to economic crises.

Beatriz Becerra stated that “populism is not a new phenomenon, nor it is the owner of Latin America—populism is a symptom.” Its rhetoric relies on an idealized past, and needs poverty, fanaticism, and an enemy to thrive. Gustavo Tovar claimed that democracies in Latin America are fragile due to cultural factors, holding that “Latin America is an anthropological compendium of weaknesses.” He argued it is best to address its social flaws through education, not populism. Edipcia Dubón said that we have to question whether democracy is present in the region: according to the Latino Barometer, most of the region’s citizens do not think democracy functions properly. Dubón posited that “the fragile aspects of democracy sharpen in a continent that is plagued with economic disparity,” which facilitates the construction of discourses for leaders. José Miguel Vivanco talked about Brazil, indicating that in the last primary elections the leading candidate—Jair Bolsonaro—is a charismatic personality who is hard to oppose. Vivanco claimed politicians like Bolsonaro gain support because they play on the populace’s fears.

Sujú then posed four questions: What motivates Brazilian citizens to want Lula as a candidate again, even though he is in jail for corruption? In Venezuela, is corruption the complicity that made it possible for Latin America to become blind, deaf, and speechless for 17 years? How will the arrival of a new government in Mexico play out in upcoming elections? Becerra indicated that Brazilians wanted Lula as a candidate because he promised them a past that never existed. Tovar said that similar concerns to those in Brazil are present in Mexico, and potentially Colombia as well. He stated that the “most complex relation of the civilization is the one of the citizen with the power, and how the citizen finds mechanisms to reach the same power ... and forbid the power of stomping in their civilization.” Dubón indicated Brazilian society felt nostalgic for what previous leaders had offered. Focusing on Mexico, Dubón said apprehension about the new government’s political practices is bigger outside than inside but conceded that “populist regimes break democracy.” Vivanco, referring to the question on Venezuela, declared that democratic states do not act for values, but based on geopolitical interests.

The panel opened the floor to questions. They included: In Bolivia, it better to prevent rather than lament? How would a victory for Bolsonaro potentially impact the region? Becerra said the EU acknowledges the situation in Bolivia and assures a response to it. Dubón added that Bolivians must use new technologies to spread awareness about its situation. Vivanco stated that a government in the hands of a leader like Bolsonaro in Brazil could be detrimental for the region.

Sujú concluded the panel by reiterating the importance of civil activism when fighting populism and corruption, and its role in finding potential solutions to other political issues as well.

1918-2018! Is Democracy Part of Our Identity?

October 8, 2018, 12:15 – 13:30, Žofín Palace, Forum Hall

Moderator:

Oana Popescu, Director, GlobalFocus Center, Romania

Participants:

Juraj Šeliga, Student Leader, Slovakia

Sofi Oksanen, Writer, Finland/Estonia

Lenka Štěpánová, Teach Live, Former President, Czech High School Union, Czech Republic

Agnieszka Holland, Film Director, Poland

Oana Popescu started the panel by framing the discussion in light of one of the opening panel's conclusions: that "we wanted to develop liberal democracy, and we somehow stopped at democracy." She asked the participants to describe the situation in each of their home countries to help answer the panel's titular question.

Juraj Šeliga claimed that for much of Slovakia's recent history, people thought democracy was mainly about voting rights and the functioning of government institutions. He argued that after the Velvet Revolution, the country failed to educate its citizens about the role of civil society in democracy. This results in a deficiency of liberal democratic values and a disconnect between the electorate and their representatives, Šeliga reasoned, because "we did not learn in some way from [our] history ... I believe this is why my generation is not careful about [protecting] democracy." Populists have been able to use this situation to their advantage, giving them a more prominent place in public discourse.

Sofi Oksanen argued that while Estonia's government is relatively liberal, and its public is engaged, its situation is by no means perfect. Estonia is an EU and NATO country, yet its social welfare system and recent economic troubles contributed to a brief period of success for populist politicians. This wave subsided quickly after the movement's figureheads failed to deliver on their promises. However, "the popularity and the certain wind that they had has affected the other parties," Oksanen noted, detailing how more anti-refugee sentiment has entered mainstream political discourse. She also noted that in Finland, populists have gained support by exploiting social media companies' failure to adequately prevent hate speech.

Agnieszka Holland drew on her experiences living in Poland, the US, and France. She pointed out that in Poland, "the crisis is more difficult to explain than the heritage of Communism or the problems of the transformation" She detailed how the Law and Justice Party under Jarosław Kaczyński used a series of "nasty, but legal" maneuvers to erode checks and balances and ensure their success in future elections. She points out that while Poland's economic development has been a "success story," the internet revolution and changes in demographics has led many Poles to feel that they are losing their safety and stability—as a result, they are attracted to the anti-status quo rhetoric of PiS. She also lamented Poland's inability to deal with fake news and false information, citing the recent backlash against its mandatory vaccination laws.

While discussing the situation in the Czech Republic, Lenka Štěpánová commented that she "[doesn't] think that all people feel that democracy is a part of their identity." She posited that this attitude stems from stagnant social mobility in many poorer, rural parts of the country. Many people in these regions are less politically involved and tend to vote for populist candidates because "if you can't really live off your wages, you can't be thinking about very abstract

concepts, such as democracy.” This ambivalence exists among all age groups—according to a study by the Czech Academy of Sciences, only half of all Czech high schoolers believe democracy is the best way to govern the country. Štěpánová argued that by genuinely incorporating democratic principles and practices into school curricula—by adding more in-class discussion and allowing students more say in their school’s structure and policies—a true sense of democratic identity may be fostered in future generations.

The participants then addressed questions from the audience, many of which related to encouraging democratic identity through education and debate. Štěpánová reiterated that democratic education is about both content and pedagogy. Education may also play a role in counteracting the effects of fake news in Estonia and other countries, Oksanen added. Holland discussed the importance of actively engaging with people who share different points of view. Šeliga stressed that people should be inspired by the history of Václav Havel and democratic reformers who were “leaders, not rulers.”

Winners and Losers: Is Democracy Being Punished for the “Sins” of Global Capitalism?

October 8, 2018, 12:15 – 13:30, Žofín Palace, Knights’ Hall

In cooperation with Fundación para el Progreso

Moderator:

Axel Kaiser Barents von Hohenhagen, Co-Founder and Executive Director, Fundación para el Progreso, Chile

Participants:

Stéphane Dion, Ambassador to Germany and Special Envoy for European Union and Europe, Canada

Nyaradzo Mashayamombe, Zimbabwean Human Rights Activist

Jan Švejnar, Director, Center on Global Economic Governance, Columbia University, Member, Program Council, Forum 2000 Foundation, USA/Czech Republic

Ondřej Císař, Sociologist, Czech Republic

Axel Kaiser Barents von Hohenhagen structured the panel in two parts: the theoretical introduction of each participant and the open debate.

Stéphane Dion highlighted potential competitors to democracy: nationalism and populism, stating that “the rise of populism is strongly linked to ethno-control and insecurity.” In his opinion, people are facing identity issues concerning race, religion, and other socio-cultural aspects. Nyaradzo Mashayamombe explained the community-level point of view. She used her home country Zimbabwe as an example of democratic transition and its potential hurdles. Zimbabwe opened its gates to the world, which led to a displacement of citizens. This is why she asked, “to what extent can we link capitalism, human rights, and democracy together?”

Jan Švejnar claimed that “capitalism is not perfect. It just happens to be better than the alternatives.” He also asked, “is democracy natural like a plant which just grows?” He compared Europe with the United States—while the US is able to adapt to multiculturalism, Europe is still working on this transition. Ondřej Císař claimed the problem democracy is facing as stemming from globalization rather than capitalism. The increase of fear divides the society. On the one hand there is a proximate cause of fear, like the fear of cultural changes. On the other hand, there are increasing economic insecurities.

During the second part of the discussion, von Hohenhagen defined populism as reaction to an established elite. Dion explicated the fear of identity: “I want more equal opportunities. I am with you on that, but I say if you address these issues it doesn’t make you immune.” Švejnar saw the problem somewhat differently—in his opinion we should focus on people’s expectations. In the EU, many countries have concerns about immigration, some with and some without reason. He warned: “Europe is nowhere near [ready] to survive another shock.” Mashayamombe continued discussing identity, saying that “people unite and identify with something.” In the case of Zimbabwe people were tired of the ruling party and losing jobs. “All they wanted is change,” she stated. She clarified her point further, saying, “what makes a leader popular? People need to identify with someone.” Axel Kaiser mentioned a further concern: “To what extend is the elite responsible for what is going on?” Císař distinguished people of everyday life and the elite: “Traditional leaders, it doesn’t matter if left or right, get impressed by capitalism.”

This led to an open discussion. The first question asked if a possible identity issue caused Brexit. Dion explained that economic differences lead to inequality, which might induce authoritarian populism—however, he held that populism must not always be linked to the economy. The next question discussed democracy without borders. Where globalized markets are flourishing, global democracy is still missing. Švejnar’s prognosis: there will be less cooperation between certain actors like the US and the EU. Mashayamombe highlighted the importance of human rights, claiming that “globalization is better when leaders insist on human rights.”

Panelists then summarized their main ideas. Dion insisted on addressing cultural fears regarding race and religion. Mashayamombe highlighted the significance of human rights and the danger of lacking alternatives within a society. Švejnar proposed loans as possible band-aids for states. Císař advocated for rethinking narratives and suggested a possible return of former settings.

The Last Palace: Europe's Turbulent Century in Five Lives and One Legendary House

October 8, 2018, 12:15 – 13:30, Žofín Palace, Delegates' Lounge

Moderator:

Norman L. Eisen, Former Ambassador to the Czech Republic, USA

Remarks:

Daniel Anýž, Journalist, Czech Republic

Norman Eisen spoke with Czech Journalist Daniel Anýž about Eisen's book *The Last Palace: Europe's Turbulent Century in Five Lives and One Legendary House*, a detailed account of the lives of five different people who lived in the Petschek Palace since its construction in the late 1920s. Anýž introduced key points for Eisen to address, starting with his mother's story and how her experience fleeing Czechoslovakia after the Holocaust influenced his writing, and then the process of creating a relationship with General Toussaint's grandson. The discussion finished with questions about the behavior and weaknesses of major political figures in Czechoslovakia during the 1940s.

Anýž began by giving an excerpt of the book for Eisen to read aloud. It detailed Eisen's first moments in 2011 as an ambassador entering the palace. Upon being given a tour, he was told to look under an "oval receiving chamber," where a "black eagle with extended wings sat on an old paper label." This was not the only swastika to be found. "Traces of the Nazis' occupation were hidden around the palace" Eisen read, traces which became the topic to bring up when talking to his mother back home. Describing this experience to his mother, he was taken aback by her reluctance to share in his "curiosity." To reassure her, Eisen told his mother he "would be transforming the palace into a Jewish home ... what better revenge on Hitler than that!" Eisen noted the contrast between the curiosity this brought him and the trauma this reminded his mother of.

In response to Anýž asking if Eisen knew "the whole story of her family," Eisen replied that he learned "a lot by writing this book about my own family history." It let him categorize survivors as either coping with trauma by "never talk[ing] about trauma" or "talk[ing] as a form of coping." He noted that no other relative coped by talking "as much as my mother," which he also related to "Jewish tradition [being] an oral tradition."

Eisen talked about speaking with the grandson of General Toussaint, saying, "it was a process." "I took him to [Petschek Palace], spending time walking around," he read. They then spent time piecing together not only the General's notes, but his son's as well, to "reassemble stories." It "was hard for him to rediscover such memories," said Eisen of the grandson's reaction to the General's complicity with the Nazis' invasion of Czechoslovakia. Eisen used a quote from *The Economist* about his book, stating that there is "no compromise with evil" to describe this moment in history. Anýž followed this up by commenting on Communism being "like fire—you can't live with it in the same house because it consumes everything it touches."

Before answering questions from the audience, Eisen described his book as being "an effort in human terms to describe the oscillation of democracy, and attacks from its adversaries from the right and the left." His book is about seven characters: five humans, the house, and democracy.

He then discussed ambassador Steinhardt, and his actions in the 1940's in Prague. "He was one of the first people to see Stalin up close and knew the horrible aspects of him" Eisen said of Steinhardt, "he failed by overestimating the Czechoslovakian culture[s] ... resistance to Stalin." Eisen added that "people overestimated" the "diplomatic skill" of Beneš, whom Steinhardt was "too fond of." Maybe if Beneš was "younger, healthier, he could've done better."

The interview then turned to a final excerpt from Eisen's book, detailing the "dancing and singing" after the success of the 1989 revolution, before concluding with a book signing.

The Social and Political Struggle in Cuba: Future in the Footsteps of Its Past?

October 8, 2018, 12:15 – 13:30, Goethe-Institut, Conference Room

In cooperation with Centro para la Apertura y el Desarrollo de América Latina

Moderator:

Gabriel Salvia, Director, Centro para la Apertura y el Desarrollo de América Latina, Argentina

Participants:

Tania Bruguera, Artist, Activist, Cuba

Luis Manuel Otero Alcántara, Artist, Activist, Cuba

As Cuba welcomes president Díaz-Canel and continues the process of establishing a new constitution in an upcoming referendum next February, it seems as if the country has the world's attention. Yet, the current situation in the country has artists feeling skeptical that any substantial change is on the horizon. The polemic topic of cultural rights, the PR crisis of the Cuban government, and the institutional corruption that plagues the country and its citizens were a few points examined in the panel discussion, which intermediated between the psychological stress of living under the regime, the lack of international support for Cuba today, and the artist's duty to their work in the world of politics.

"I'm making art for the future ... to bring humanism that is missing in politics," Tania Bruguera said of her profession in the highly repressive country. The topic of international support and recognition was highlighted various times throughout the panel as Bruguera criticized the international left for not criticizing the Cuban government—cultural rights in particular. In regard to Cuba's new constitution, Bruguera believes it is simply propaganda to gain legitimization from the world and for those in power to further enrich themselves. Moreover, she admitted the change in power provided a small piece of hope, yet that credibility was tempered by repression against artists and activists.

Luis Manuel Otero Alcántara criticized the government's newly invoked Decree 349, which legalizes the censorship of artists that are deemed as critics of the government. Alcántara argued that the censorship puts artists' rights, permits, and livelihoods at risk, mentioning the government's lack of support and retainment of scholarships. "Political art is the art of opposition," he commented, highlighting the government's ability to determine what is and is not art and how the fight of "artistas" continues. On the topic of the opening of borders between Cuba and the US, Alcántara explained this not only allowed a cultural and economic opening but provided Cubans with an opportunity to dream.

Both panelists reiterated the significance of attending conferences such as Forum 2000, as many of their fellow countrymen and women were not allowed to leave Cuba. As discussions furthered into the migratory restrictions Cubans live under and the power of Cuban passports as a bargaining chip used by the government, the panelists discussed the ever-present threat they are under when they step outside their country and act boldly enough to criticize their government. For both Bruguera and Alcántara, these new cultural rights are the implementation of 60 years under Fidel Castro's rule, which will not change the political and cultural situation in Cuba under Díaz-Canel. Nevertheless, the overwhelming sentiment amongst artists and activists is that of continuation—of civic and peaceful work for rights and civil liberties for all.

Žofín Conversation: The Global Challenge of China?

October 8, 2018, 14:30 – 15:00, Žofín Palace, Forum Hall

In cooperation with Information Centre for Democracy and Human Rights in China

Moderator:

Tomáš Pojar, Vice President for International Relations, CEVRO Institute, Czech Republic

Panel

Lobsang Sangay, President, the Central Tibetan Administration, Tibet/India

Theresa Fallon, Director, Centre for Russia Europe Asia Studies, USA/Belgium

Discussion:

Tomáš Pojar introduced the panel by pointing out that at the turn of the millennium, the democratic world hoped that as China developed, “there would be an opening up in the economy, and also an opening in politics” towards liberal and democratic ideas. He asked the panelists to discuss China’s place in the international order today.

Theresa Fallon echoed Pojar’s observations, claiming that previous predictions that China would become a liberal democracy after joining international organizations like the WTO were merely wishful thinking. Since Xi Jinping’s rise to power, state ownership of business enterprises has increased dramatically: Fallon argued that coupled with China’s rising global power, this presents a potential “clash of two systems” with more economically liberal and democratic countries.

Pojar asked Lobsang Sangay if Xi Jinping’s regime has the same level of control over Chinese society as it does over the economy. Sangay posited that “on one hand, China is very secure—on the other hand, it is more vulnerable than ever.” He detailed the regime’s ability to enforce harsh limits on freedom of speech and informational access, as well as its targeted use of propaganda. At the same time, migration from rural districts to cities—and the accompanying increase in urban labor market competition—has some segments of China’s citizenry on edge. Sangay reasoned that the regime hopes the Belt and Road Initiative may help alleviate this pressure.

Fallon continued on a similar line of reasoning, claiming that “Xi Jinping becoming emperor of everything is a sign of fragility.” She framed the recent disappearances of Chinese film star Fan Bingbing and of Meng Hongwei, the head of Interpol, as potential markers of desperation. Fallon also noted that the US and China have experienced “delinkage” as their diplomatic and economic relations drift further apart. In the past, military conflict with the US was seen as implausible due to extremely close economic ties. That is no longer the case.

Pojar then shifted the discussion’s focus to the West’s relations with China. Fallon claimed that “where Russia and Europe meet is an area where China is exerting influence,” and that the EU has done little to counter this influence. She cited the EU’s “watered-down” response to China’s Belt and Road Initiative—a 14-page document explaining that the initiative is a way to affect Europe’s norms and values, and not simply an economic project. Later on in the panel, Sangay drew parallels between the Belt and Road Initiative and China’s occupation of Tibet, which began with the cooperative construction of a road.

Sangay added that many European countries, including those that normally take hardline stances against authoritarian regimes, maintain and expand their friendly economic relations with China. He argued that it is difficult to address China’s influence in Europe, as there is no common EU foreign policy, and that “generally consensus is not yet there” amongst the member

states. He claimed that countries taking unilateral stances against China are likely to fail; as a result, a multilateral approach must be adopted, and existing international forums must be utilized, to combat China's influence. "The choice is very clear," Sangay warned, "you either transform China, or China transforms you."

The participants agreed that China is cooperating with Russia and exerting pressure via "debt-trap diplomacy" to expand the potential reach of its hard power capacities. Fallon pointed out that the continuing relationship between the two ran counter to prior expectations, and that China's cooperation with Russia will allow it to "eventually overshadow" Russia. Sangay added that "in proximity [to Europe], Russia is the bigger threat, but in atrocity, China is the bigger threat."

In the concluding comments of the discussion, the participants advocated for increasing awareness of China's use of technology "to create reality, [to] censor the outside world," and its practice of exporting this technology to other authoritarian regimes. In spite of this, the participants expressed hope that China may eventually democratize.

Illiberalism and Populism: The New Normal?

October 8, 2018, 15:00 – 16:15, Žofín Palace, Forum Hall

Moderator:

Ralf Fücks, Managing Partner, Zentrum Liberale Moderne, Germany

Participants:

Maia Sandu, Economist, Politician, Moldova

Jan Zielonka, Professor of European Politics, St. Antony's College, Oxford University, Poland/United Kingdom

Dan Schueftan, Director, National Security Studies Center, University of Haifa, Israel

The panel examined the rise of populist and illiberal politics and how it is seen as one of the major threats to the current democratic order. Ralf Fücks started by asking if we are really sliding into a new anti-liberal era, and what went wrong with liberal democracies?

Jan Zielonka noted that “populism is not new—it has been with us since democracy was born; what is new is that populism is winning elections.” Today the situation has changed, as more voters turn their back towards liberalism and vote for people who openly claim they are anti-liberal. Maia Sandu explained that in Eastern European countries the situation is different: “By the definition here, the party that I represent is an anti-system party, but is not a populist one,” she stated. People in countries like Moldova have not had a single positive experience with a good government they could relate to. Dan Schueftan stated that we have a crisis that is not irreversible, but that democracy and liberalism can reinvent themselves and adjust to new realities.

Fücks claimed that liberalism and democracy are not quite the same as they were in the past and asked the panelists what they think contributed to these changes. Zielonka stated that liberal democracy is not just about human rights, but that there must be the division of powers and an independent judiciary and media. Democracy cannot function if minority parties are wiped out after losing elections—there must be something for them to support the winners. Schueftan posited that the question is whether people want a voice, or a vote. Most democrats, liberals, and liberal democrats seek to restore a balance that was shifting in the wrong direction. This happened because people lost confidence in democratic institutions. Maia Sandu said that there are high social costs making people lose hope for a better standard of living.

Fücks asked which events have been catalytic factors for this liberal term. Zielonka answered that liberal democracies have been the champions of globalization, and this was a policy in the liberal world. Schueftan commented that there is no universal solidarity, and maybe only a national one at best. Democracy has been built in group solidarity. Sandu argued that it is hard to believe that there is no solidarity beyond the borders and clarified that it is time to encourage technocrats to become politicians.

The panel answered questions from the public, including the following: Who has the authority to decide the content of democracy? Do we need to defend democracy, or rethink and rebuild it? Sandu responded that we need to find ways to encourage young people to become part of politics if we want better politicians. Zielonka stated that public interest must be negotiated—people are suspicious about informal networks within countries.

Fücks concluded the panel by stating that democracy must be defended within and without. We are confronted with fundamental challenges that are changing our world, but liberal democracies will win back their momentum.

Democracy Across Generations

October 8, 2018, 15:00 – 16:15, Žofín Palace, Knights' Hall
In cooperation with the European Commission

Moderator:

Iveta Radičová, Sociologist, Former Prime Minister, Member, Program Council, Forum 2000 Foundation, Slovakia

Participants:

Taťána Gregor Brzobohatá, President, Krása pomoci Foundation, Miss World 2006, Czech Republic

Vanessa D'Ambrosio, Former Captain Regent, Chairperson of San Marino National Delegation, the Council of Europe, San Marino

Martin Buchtík, Director, STEM, Czech Republic

Oleksandra Drik, Head of the Board, Civic Lustration Committee, Ukraine

Iveta Radičová asked the four participants about the meaning of living with different experiences in a modern world in relatively democratic states. She explained that only 19 countries worldwide are fully developed democracies, and the Czech Republic was described as a developing democracy due to corruption, poor healthcare and dissatisfied citizens. The discussion came in three parts: two leading questions, followed by a debate with the audience.

Oleksandra Drik discussed the state of democracy in Ukraine. She detailed how corruption and the war with Russia affect the Ukrainian government's activities and policies. She argued that addressing corruption and war, and establishing functioning institutions, would benefit the country.

Martin Buchtík claimed that "the public loves democracy." However, he highlighted three main problems in the Czech Republic: firstly, little comprehension of the system; secondly, that there is much debate over the definition and form of democracy; and, thirdly that there are several types of democratic models in the Czech Republic.

Taťána Gregor Brzobohatá encouraged the audience to act, saying that "if you are, you have a voice, and you want to use that voice to be heard." She explained how she works to connect the older generation with the younger one, and that she is trying to initiate an intergenerational dialogue. Although young people might not believe in the establishment, she expressed optimism that she was helping their voices be heard. Vanessa D'Ambrosio underlined that "recognizing and being part of institutions is the most important part of democracies."

Radičová then identified the crucial features of a democracy: the division of power, a participative society, and a dialogue within the public. Furthermore, she explained why she does not like to use the term "populism," explaining that "each person is a populist." In her opinion, extremism is much more dangerous, especially for young voters. Drik explained this idea in the following terms: "the old generations still remember the consequences of war." If people witness crises they vote less for extremist views.

Gregor Brzobohatá further elaborated on the point that extremism is also a present threat for younger voters, as they are actively trying to distance themselves from the older generations. However, D'Ambrosio saw one problem: that "young people have the tools, but don't know how to use them because they were born in the system." Radičová pointed out that socioeconomic

factors affect the younger generation's relationship with extremism as well, commenting that "it is the first time in history the younger generation has worse possibilities than the parents." Nevertheless, for Gregor Brzobohatá, "extremism is never an option." Drik added that "the problem with clever people is they understand their responsibility but they are afraid of taking it," which represents another potential pitfall for democracy.

The panel fielded questions from the audience. The first question was related to the education of young people in the Czech Republic: does the system and the media provide children with enough information to create an identity? Martin Buchtík was skeptical due to the sheer mass of information, which cannot all be understood and studied.

Iveta Radičová concluded by pointing out that "sometimes we are creating problems where there aren't any. Times change. The twenty-first century is different than the twentieth century."

Central Europe: Social and Economic Reasons of Democratic Decline

October 8, 2018, 15:00 – 16:15, Žofín Palace, Delegates' Lounge

Moderator:

Jan Komárek, Professor of Law, University of Copenhagen, Czech Republic/Denmark

Participants:

Oana Popescu, Director, GlobalFocus Center, Romania

Radek Špicar, Vice President, Confederation of Industry, Czech Republic

The participants examined the interplay between economics and states' democratic characteristics.

Oana Popescu began the discussion by pointing out that a GlobalFocus Center study found that across Europe, states confronted with economic distress have seen dramatic shifts in democratic behavior. She held that in Romania, "people see that there is progress around, but it has never reached them" and that they express their dissatisfaction with unfulfilled economic expectations by voting against liberal democratic initiatives. She also claimed that people's "disappointment with democracy ... reflects a political class that does not reflect their needs."

Radek Špicar detailed a similar situation occurring in the Czech Republic. Despite the country's rapid economic growth since the financial crisis of the last decade, many Czechs are still in a dire economic situation. Špicar said he expected that after 50 years under Communism, Czechs would be critical of politicians and the media, but has found that this is not the case. Populist politicians actively reach out in-person to voters who have not benefited from recent economic growth. Coupled with Euro-myths being spread through social media bubbles, a Eurosceptic sentiment is present in many segments of the country.

Jan Komárek summarized the first section of the panel, observing that "maybe [voters] trust people who want to displace politics because they are something other than politics." He then asked if there was a recent historical impetus for the current situation.

Popescu said there is no single moment that caused this situation, but that it was linked to the way "European Union membership was sold as a miraculous pill that would cure all the ills of society." In Romania and other new member states, this set many people up for inevitable disappointment when EU membership did not automatically fix issues they faced before membership. Migration, facilitated by EU membership, imposed direct social costs as well. Popescu claimed that this leads to a cyclical discourse in the EU, one in which western countries feel eastern states are holding them back, while eastern states feel they cannot advance further without assistance from the west in the first place. She added that in times of rapid economic change, "people who don't find themselves represented and don't benefit from this accelerated change will rebel against it."

Špicar explained how the characteristics of the Czech economy contribute to the current political climate. He argues that wage disparities between east and west play a role. He added that in heavily industrialized states like the Czech Republic, "the problem is not cheap labor, the problem is a cheap economy" based on manufacturing parts that gain slimmer returns than those in the west. Additionally, much of the Czech economy is owned by foreign firms. Špicar supposed that "without foreign capture we would not have survived the transformation ... but each year these companies send billions of crowns outside of the country." He asserted that

the economic situation, coupled with a history of foreign powers defined by conflict and invasions, feeds into populist sentiments.

Popescu affirmed that the situation was very similar in Romania, and that both countries need to update their educational systems to become more competitive. “We continue to teach people skills that compete with machines,” she said. All participants agreed that Central and Eastern European countries can prevent economic circumstances from contributing to further democratic decline by investing in education—particularly in STEM fields—and by providing more concrete proposals to the EU for addressing the issues their countries face.

Russia and China: A Partnership of Equals?

October 8, 2018, 15:00 – 16:15, Goethe-Institut, Conference Room

Moderator:

Rostislav Valvoda, Director, Prague Civil Society Centre, Czech Republic

Panel Discussion:

Bobo Lo, Author, Australia/United Kingdom

Juan Pablo Cardenal, Journalist, Writer, Lecturer, Spain

Konstantin von Eggert, Journalist, Political Commentator, Russia

Szu-chien Hsu, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Taiwan

Rostislav Valvoda began with a summary of his take on the current state of Russia and China's relationship. Valvoda then presented two possible outcome scenarios of Russia and China's relationship which he passed on to the speakers to discuss: Either Russia cooperates with China to undermine the West, or Russia cultivates the image of a strong relationship with China as a bargaining chip.

Konstantin von Eggert began by explaining that the outcome depends on "what kind of Russia we talk about," clarifying that currently Russia seems to feel as if it has over-embraced China. Eggert noted that this shift towards China can be seen as a post-Crimean sentiment in its foreign and security policy. He then cited two potential challenges to the sanctity of Russian borders; civil wars in neighboring countries with a flow of immigrants across the border (as in Ukraine), and certain designs on Russian territory which stem from long-standing disputes (as in China).

Bobo Lo spoke at length regarding the scenarios but concluded that he does not have the answer as the relevant factors to determine it are out of Russia's control. Lo speculated that Putin is seeking to position Russia as a "great balancer," but in order to portray Russia as a resurging great power he must strengthen ties with Beijing, essentially following a "success by association" policy. Lo remarked that China promotes and backs the Russian cause, because they understand Russia's insecurity. Eggert responded saying that the current transitional nature of Russia has exacerbated these insecurities; its transitions from totalitarianism to democracy, from empire to nation-state.

Szu-chien Hsu shed light on China's perspective, explaining that "if the alliance is not alliance by design, it is alliance by default." Hsu stressed that China is a resurging power not only in the Asia-Pacific region, but globally. He held that China's final goal is to overtake the US and that Russia can be instrumental in reaching that end. Furthermore, China's Belt and Road Initiative is set to span through much of Central Asia and having a strong relationship with Russia will only benefit China in this case.

Juan Pablo Cardenal highlighted the differences in Russia and China's approach to achieving their interests, citing his experiences in Latin America. Cardenal delved into the strategy at the heart of China's Latin America policy: using soft and sharp power to target the media, academia, and culture in particular. He then explained China's "elite-capture" mechanism, stating that it has been of great benefit to their cause. This mechanism revolves around forming strong person-to-person relationships with key individuals through various means, including organized trips to China, which serve to bolster China's image to the power brokers.

The panel responded to questions from the audience. Among the questions were: How can we compare Russia and China's interests in Africa? Is Russia too preoccupied with the Asia-Pacific region to be involved in the Indian Ocean? And, have we underestimated the conventional analysis of whether the Chinese and Russian regimes do in fact overlap in issue areas such as the UN, the UN Human Rights Council, and internet sovereignty?

Gallery

October 8, 2018, 16:30 – 17:45, Žofín Palace, Forum Hall

Introduction:

Tomáš Vrba, Chairman, Board of Directors, Forum 2000 Foundation, Czech Republic

Presenters:

Tania Bruguera, Artist, Activist, Cuba

Xiao Qiang, Founder of the China Digital Times, Professor, UC Berkeley School of Information, China/USA

Nada Dhaif, Activist, Oral and Dental Surgeon, Bahrain

Natalia Gryaznevich, Politician, Activist, Russia

Erkin Gadirli, Co-Founder, Member of the Board, Republican Alternative (ReAl), Azerbaijan

Tomáš Vrba remarked that while much of the conference focused on how “our democracy is in decline and how to improve our democracy, we forget somehow ... there [are] a lot of different countries where our imperfect democracy is a distant dream.” He introduced the gallery’s speakers, who shared their stories of activism and resolve.

Nada Dhaif commented that while she was referred to as “a fighter for democracy ... I would rather call myself a healer.” During Bahrain’s 2011 uprisings, Dhaif and other doctors set up a field hospital for injured protestors. The regime detained them in response. She detailed how after she “was arrested, kept in solitary confinement, tortured, [and] electrocuted” for nearly two months, a military tribunal sentenced her to a 15-year term. International pressure forced the government to transfer her to a civilian court, where she was acquitted. When Dhaif found that, upon her release, she could not receive professional help to aid her recovery from trauma, she founded Bahrain Rehabilitation and Anti-Violence Organization (BRAVO) to assist survivors of torture and traumatic imprisonment. She explained that BRAVO provides reassurance to activists, as “it is up to them to fight, but they need to be enabled first. They need to know that there is someone who supports them and cares.”

Tania Bruguera has created political art in Cuba for over two decades, and presented on her attempt to perform “Tatlin’s Whisper” at Revolution Square in December 2014. After the US and Cuba restored diplomatic relations, Bruguera addressed a letter to US President Barack Obama, First Secretary of the Cuban Communist Party Raul Castro, and Pope Francis, demanding the Cuba government give its people a chance to speak out. Within a week, over 20,000 people had engaged with the letter on social media. Bruguera suggested staging a performance of “Tatlin’s Whisper” in Revolution Square—putting a microphone in the square and allowing everyday Cubans to speak into it for a minute. In response, the government detained and interrogated her. She proclaimed that the event “demonstrated to the Cuban government clearly that the people can and will speak.” Bruguera encouraged attendees to take a stance against Decree 349, the Cuban government’s latest attempt to censor artists, and pleaded for them to “try to be in solidarity with the artists in Cuba, because we are the revolution that is coming.”

Xiao Qiang discussed his fight against the Chinese government’s human rights abuses. Qiang recalled seeing the Tiananmen Square protests on television while working towards a PhD in astrophysics, and deciding to board a plane home to display solidarity. Soon after, he said, “I became a full-time activist. I still have not finished my physics PhD.” He discussed his work with the China Digital Times, working to examine the political impact of China’s digitalization. He

warned that the “internet and digital technology is not only empowering the people ... it is empowering the ruling elite” but expressed optimism for positive change long-term.

Erkin Gadirli opened his presentation with a video from Ilgar Mammadov, ReAI’s former presidential candidate who could not attend the conference due to a travel ban placed on him by the regime. Mammadov detailed the current regime’s corruption at home and abroad and argued that “even worse repressions will happen if the clandestine policy of supporting a convenient dictator continues in a different edition.” Gadirli claimed Azerbaijan “is under-institutionalized and over-personalized,” and detailed how ReAI was founded in 2009 to promote republican values in the state. He commented that his organization’s key to success “is about remaining positive—it is not being optimistic, do not confuse those terms.”

Natalia Gryaznevich shared her experience working with Open Russia. Open Russia started in 2016 to assist activists across the country by expanding their networks and providing legal and educational support. Gryaznevich explained that Moscow’s security forces know activists in smaller cities feel isolated—interconnection breeds hope for them. She expressed optimism for increased democratic participation in the future, after candidates who were not supported by Putin won in various regional elections last September. “I hope that we will have the chance to change the power with elections, and we in Open Russia will work for that,” she concluded.

New Approaches to Democracy, New Approaches to Politics

October 8, 2018, 16:30 – 17:45, Žofín Palace, Knights' Hall

In cooperation with Zentrum Liberale Moderne and Czech-German Future Fund

Moderator:

Julius von Freytag-Loringhoven, Head of Moscow Office, Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom, Germany/Russia

Panel Discussion:

Giuseppe Mastruzzo, Politician, Five Star Movement, Italy

Dita Charanzová, Member, European Parliament, Czech Republic

Michal Šimečka, Vice President, Progressive Slovakia, Slovakia

Ivan Bartoš, Chairman, Czech Pirate Party, Czech Republic

Julius von Freytag-Loringhoven opened the discussion with an argument on the erosion of “traditional party systems” like the Conservatives and Social Democrats, whose dominance in the European parliament is gradually declining. As a result, new actors and parties are emerging and bringing new “non-traditional” ideas and solutions to crises and challenges in Europe. Freytag-Loringhoven asked the panelists to express their views on populism and the transformation of party systems.

Giuseppe Mastruzzo said he preferred not to call himself nor his party populist, and instead argued: “it is a huge political space, of which I am a part; it is a wide political spectrum: there are people who are progressive in terms of economic program and there are people who are conservative.” In his view, “the category of populism is helpful to understand what is happening in Europe.” Mastruzzo called for a rebirth of the European constitution project and urged for the need of creating a more “unifying vision of the continent.”

Ivan Bartoš addressed Freytag-Loringhoven’s inquires on the Czech Pirates Party’s views on “liquid democracy,” post-Europe, and “new feedback mechanisms” in the online world. He discussed his party’s goal of “getting politics back to its initial purpose,” the application of the “direct democracy principle in elections,” and using technology to “get people involved, which was missing badly in the traditional systems.” Bartoš denied any presence of populist visions in the Pirate Party’s interaction with the public: “in the moment when you cross the line from simplifying [politics] from certain level to obvious nonsense or to lie[s], it is a moment when you become populist in a way, and we have never done that in the Pirates.” Finally, Bartoš discussed technology’s role in democracy, portraying it “as a channel to achieve results” and suggested that it is a good sign if other parties adopt the Pirate Party’s digital agenda as well.

Dita Charanzová responded to raised questions about the European Parliament’s opinion on political parties’ transformation and the European Parliament’s views on the newcomers: “They have to get used to the fact that lots of new parties are emerging in different countries.” Charanzová echoed Bartoš’ argument about the importance of technology for new parties and added that it is not only the content that changed, but also communication styles: “[from] face-to-face communication with people and social media, everything is changing how the politics is conducted,” she explained. She emphasized a gradual shift to a post-ideological world, arguing that ideologies do not matter and that the traditional, left-and-right political spectrum “does not exist anymore.” Charanzová differentiated between the old parties and newcomers by concluding that “it is not too much about ideology, but about bringing pragmatic solutions.”

Michal Šimečka answered Freytag-Loringhoven's question on "whether Progressive Slovakia is an old or a new party, and where does it want to be," by claiming that "we are traditional, but new in the Slovak context, because [our] platform is pro-European, liberal, and advocating [for the] free market—that is something new in Slovak politics." Šimečka expressed his concerns about the end of party politics and party ideology. He emphasized that the position of Progressive Slovakia is rather centrist or liberal with a clear set of values and ideology.

The panel concluded by answering questions raised by members of the audience on a range of issues and concerns like digital freedom and security, nature of European elections, the post-ideological world, and the means and tools of communicating with voters.

Responding to the first question, Bartoš suggested that "we lost the fight to keep the privacy" and that there is no guarantee that the information we are giving up will not be used against us. In his answer to the second question, Šimečka expressed hopes for more pro-European trends in elections. Charanzová answered the question on the meaning of post-ideology by repeating that ideology does not matter anymore and that "we have to let this concept go." She also answered a question on communication tools by referring to earlier arguments on changing ways of engagement. Finally, Mastruzzo responded to the question on European elections by stating that the "next elections should be about which Europe and not whether Europe or not."

Viktor Orbán: Prime Minister for Life?

October 8, 2018, 16:30 – 17:45, Žofín Palace, Delegates' Lounge
In cooperation with the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom

Moderator:

Miriam Lexmann, EU Regional Program Director, Slovakia

Participants:

Daniel Berg, Executive Board Member, Momentum Mozgalom, Hungary

Martin Ehl, Chief Analyst, Hospodářské noviny, Czech Republic

Daniel Berg began the panel by asking whether Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán "is a threat to Hungarian democracy." To address this, he said we must know what "we mean by Hungarian democracy." He called it a gray area, being "less than a democracy, but not quite a dictatorship." He explained that because of independent institutions in the system it still remains democratic, but that "60 percent of the media is either government friendly or controlled," emphasizing the fact that the government has control over a vast majority of the print media, in a country where most rural areas only have access to one or two newspapers.

Miriam Lexmann questioned what it would take to "put things in order." Berg responded that "it's a Hungarian issue, and Hungarians must take ownership of their actions." Martin Ehl defined his role as a journalist as being an "observer who brings the facts" and that "Orbán is not an example to follow, but to study" in relation to the Prime Minister's success. To explain Orbán, Ehl continued, "you have to explain the development of Hungary in the past 20 years."

Lexmann then asked the panel "what helps Orbán actually be a good Prime Minister," to which Ehl responded that Orbán rode on the momentum Hungarians felt with the idea "that something new could be born." This comes from their disappointment in liberal democracy and its failure to meet their expectations after the revolution of 1989. Lexmann explained it as a case where "Orbán is working on issues that play to his advantage."

Berg brought up elites by saying they are "where populism starts; those who don't represent the common interests of the average citizen." Berg opined that Orbán "is the wizard of appealing to the darkest things of the Hungarian psyche," and that the "shock of multiculturalism being part of the equation." With the EU, Orbán "made an ideological theme out of anti-globalization" to gain populist support.

To better sell democracy to people, Ehl advised that "economic growth is not enough." In the Czech Republic, "we live in the best economic times ever," yet experience in greater inequality. He held that "there is no quick magical solution." Berg said that while fighting against Orbán, we need to counter his tool of "fear" with "traditional discussions that people can associate with."

The participants answered questions from the audience. Berg stressed that Hungary without Orbán would not change its plans, as "populism doesn't give answers" to begin with. While discussing the EU and making changes he commented, "you can't make change if you're not at the table." Ehl said that we have a common problem in "how [to] make the EU sexy again" so it will be better accepted. One question asked whether Orbán will continually be elected by current means or take further steps to erode democracy. Berg acknowledged that Orbán, with his power now firmly consolidated within the government, is currently working on "side projects" to fight liberalism, and is a real threat in furthering eroding democracy in Hungary.

Erosion of Truth and the Responsibility of Religion

October 8, 2018, 16:30 – 17:45, Goethe-Institut, Conference Room

Moderator:

Šarūnas Liekis, Dean of the Faculty of Political Science and Diplomacy, Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania

Panel Discussion:

Tomáš Halík, Philosopher, President, Czech Christian Academy, Member, Program Council, Forum 2000 Foundation, Czech Republic

Paul Cliteur, Philosopher, Professor, Leiden University, Netherlands

Cyril Hovorun, Director, Huffington Ecumenical Institute, USA

Kadri Veseli, Chairman, Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo, Kosovo

Šarūnas Liekis introduced the discussion by asking the panelists what role religion plays in a political sphere where doubt reigns, and where the written word does not guarantee or promise truth.

Tomáš Halík posited that when the credibility of truth is shaken among politicians, the door is potentially opened to many kinds of religions. He talked about the history and importance of the separation of church and state, saying it has evolved in the post-truth world. He detailed how the revelation of scripture is limited by our personal, cultural, and historical views. Halík also made a case for dialogue between scientific, religious, and artistic perspectives on truth. He argued that in today's political landscape, "the biggest enemy of religion is not atheism, but idolatry."

Kadri Veseli reflected on religion's role in Kosovo's history, one defined by largely harmonious coexistence between different religions. In light of this, he posed that religion only becomes dangerous when it manifests in fundamentalist forms. When discussing the government's efforts to prevent radicalization in recent years, he explained that "once people firmly believe and hope certain things, it is in a sense blockading the truth." Veseli argued that Kosovo's ability to mitigate religious tensions should make it a model for other countries.

Paul Cliteur outlined the difficulty of examining the relations between truth and religion, as the definitions of both terms are very broad. Additionally, he claimed that there is no intrinsic relation between truth in general and religion. He pointed out that many states provide distance between themselves and religion, seeking to be neutral arbiters. While discussing the place of truth in today's politics, he defined democracy as "organized mistrust."

Cyril Hovorun explained that churches are supposed to be guardians against post-truth, but instead have become propagators of it. He argued that churches have given post-truth legitimacy by disguising it under the guise of truth. Fundamentalism plays a large role in this, as it discourages doubt and questioning the status quo. Furthermore, Hovorun claimed that fundamentalism also represents a paradox: it seeks to give an alternative to modernity, yet it is a product of modernity, closely linked to it in many ways. Because of this, he concluded that the very premise of fundamentalism stands on thin ice.

Following their remarks, the panelists answered questions from the audience. The questions ranged from religious institutions' role in politics today to different ways to engage in productive debate with fundamentalists.

Do We Need to Update Our Democracy? How?

October 8, 2018, 18:00 – 19:00, Žofín Palace, Forum Hall

Moderator:

Carl Gershman, President, National Endowment for Democracy, USA

Participants:

Vesna Pusić, Politician, Croatia

Flavia Kleiner, Co-President and Co-Founder, Operation Libero, Switzerland

Adam Michnik, Editor-in-Chief, Gazeta Wyborcza, Poland

Carl Gershman commenced the panel, stating that in light of “the frustrations, the difficulties, the troubles that new and established democracies are going through,” liberal democracy needs to be updated. He posed two questions — “what you do,” and “how to do it?”

Flavia Kleiner detailed how Operation Libero’s (OL) organizers “were claiming a new vision for Switzerland” based on liberal values, despite the presence of a very strong populist movement. She explained how populists “hijacked” Switzerland’s direct democracy, in particular the referendum, to garner support. She attributed OL’s success in countering populist narratives to the fact that “[OL] didn’t step into the battleground they defined”—by controlling the framing of issues, OL could expose the populists’ initiatives as attacks on liberal democratic values.

Vesna Pusić stated: “I actually don’t see a crisis of democracy, but I see a huge crisis of liberal values.” She noted that as far back as the 1990s, governments with democratic institutions would enact illiberal policies and practices. Populist and illiberal forces are harder to confront in developing democracies, she reasons, as activists must confront people captured in a populist fervor— “speaking truth to the mob is way scarier than speaking truth to political power.” She argued that these trends show us that “democracy is not content. Democracy is a method to gain legitimacy for a government, but this is not the objective. The objective is to have good quality.”

Adam Michnik discussed how illiberal forces have come to the forefront in Poland. He recalled thinking in the early 1990s that “the biggest threat was not the return of Communism, but the return of national chauvinism.” The gradual return of nationalism is rooted in identity crises and changes to traditional political cleavages brought on by globalization, not the result of an unpredictable political wave. He said that he sees a “Putinization” of some governments in Europe and stated that authoritarian rulers “represent [a] democracy of man-eaters ... the winning party actually eats all the losers.” Anti-democratic forces are rewriting the discourse around Poland’s history, “Bolshevik-style,” he claimed. Combined with an adjustment period for Polish Catholicism, the country’s eroding democracy is in dire straits.

The panelists proposed potential ways to address these issues and took questions from the audience. Kleiner suggested that liberal democrats can reinvigorate their narrative “by putting our message in one picture and five words.” Simplifying the form of liberal democracy’s message to reach out to voters—without sacrificing its content—is not a bad thing, she argued. Liberal democrats must learn to adapt to the new political and media landscape, as “it’s on us to do the work, not them.” Pusić reiterated that “Facebook is extremely important, but it is not the best place for political confrontation,” which is best done through assembly and debate in the physical sphere. Michnik added that EU sanctions could serve as a deterrent against democratic backsliding. Gershman concluded the panel by stating the recent crisis of democracy will pass, and that “we have to keep perspective.”

TUESDAY

Mexico After Elections: Promising Future or Populist Threat?

October 9, 2018, 8:30 – 10:00, Goethe-Institut, Conference Room

Moderator:

Kateřina Březinová, Professor, Director, Ibero-American Centre of Metropolitan University Prague, Research Fellow, Complutense University in Madrid, Czech Republic.

Participants:

Fredo Arias-King, President, CASLA Institute, Founder, Demokratizatsiya Academic Journal, Mexico.

José Miguel Vivanco, Executive Director of Americas Division, Human Rights Watch, USA

Miriam Kornblith, Senior Director for Program, Latin America Region, National Endowment for Democracy, Former Vice President, Venezuelan National Electoral Council, Venezuela/USA.

After two decades on the campaign trail, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, famously known as AMLO, will be sworn in on December 1 as the new president of Mexico after emerging to power with a strong mandate derived from legitimate elections. The main issues discussed in this panel revolved around how AMLO would enact his policies, the existence and legitimization of checks and balances, and the implications the new presidency will have on regional and domestic politics. The repercussions of an AMLO presidency could send warning signals of potential risks for human rights and public security, not to mention a less stable Latin America. Indeed, the main question for the three panelists was: is AMLO's personality and trajectory in Mexican policies grounds for concern?

To better understand how Mexico got into this situation, Fredo Arias-King, explained that Mexico's democratic transition, one that he asserted could have transformed the country for good like the transitions in Estonia or the Czech Republic, was instead stalled by past leaders and their failure to reform. Arias-King argued that stagnant poverty rate and the remains of old monopolies of previous regimes left an opening for populist candidates, referencing AMLO's fiery ideology and personality that won him the presidency. As Mexico continues its struggle with organized crime and violence, the questionable administration AMLO has chosen as his team is proof of what Arias-King called "a project of power, not a project of a nation."

Citing AMLO as a classic Latin American populist leader, Miriam Kornblith highlighted the dangers posed by the constitutional majority he has obtained that would allow him to make future changes to the constitution, and his suspicions of civil society as a personal threat to his personalistic rule. Kornblith argued social constraints should be assessed to determine if there will be a counterweight to AMLO's mandate, highlighting the necessity for civil society to be constructive of what is good and also remain vigilant. As AMLO plans the "Fourth Transformation of Mexico," Kornblith warned of the "messianic view of power" stemming from the simplistic and vague promises of populist leaders.

The issues of policy standpoints on human rights and public security were discussed, calling attention to the lack of a clear foreign policy, in particular on the part of the US. José Miguel Vivanco further examined Mexico's poor human rights record and held that an AMLO presidency would derail the incremental improvements and commitments already made with the international community, as AMLO's government would choose to be selectively involved in treaties to avoid criticism. While crediting Mexico for developing their electoral institutional

control, the overall weakness of Mexico's judiciary and other checks and balances was reiterated. The panelists concluded by agreeing the true test to Mexico's democracy would be if the country decided to open a debate about allowing reelections. With control over congress and fewer institutional constraints, the fear and chance of the rule of law's disintegration in Mexico under AMLO should not be ruled out.

Democracy in Southern Europe: What Lies Ahead?

October 9, 2018, 8:30 – 10:00, Goethe-Institut, Foyer

Moderator:

Martin Mejstřík, Institute of International Studies, Charles University, Czech Republic

Panel Discussion:

Martín Ortega Carcelén, Senior Research Fellow, Real Instituto Elcano, Spain

Giuseppe Mastruzzo, Politician, Five Star Movement, Italy

Martin Mejstřík invited Martín Ortega Carcelén and Giuseppe Mastruzzo to discuss the issue of rising populism in Southern European countries. Mastruzzo highlighted three phenomena: the Spanish, Greek, and Italian movements. He claimed that “people are sick and tired of the current political system and of the people who represent them.” Carcelén added that the key to understanding the situation is to recognize the things which are not working. One has to understand the differences between what worked in the past and what will work in the present. He also argued that populists vary from region to region, commenting that “you have two anti-system parties in Greece and in Portugal and they use different methods.” In Carcelén’s opinion, we can go the Greek way or the Portuguese way; but who follows Italy? Giuseppe Mastruzzo suggested “there is a technology in handling political matters... ask yourself ... are you sure that you can make Italy like Greece?”

The main part of the breakfast focused on European identity and its meaning. Mastruzzo asked: “Can we really say that Europe is about money and economy?” Mejstřík answered by comparing Italy and Spain; both face similar struggles, like unemployment crises. So how is it possible that they developed so different politically? Carcelén proposed the reason might be the difference between the political system and narratives before the crisis and now, despite these shared European problems. He changed the focus towards huge public debts. He pointed out that the solution seems easy—borrowing money or raising taxes—but held that in reality, the market and tax base are suffering. Mastruzzo suggested that we need to “sweep away the idea that we can't do things as a European society. Of course we can.”

During the question and answer session, an audience member suggested: “We should go to a society of welfare, not a state of welfare,” explaining that people should be allowed to spend the money rather than having their income controlled. Mastruzzo commented by defining the malicious structures within society as a destructive, vicious, anti-democratic circle which influences many parts of society. He also held that the battle against the high unemployment rate might be a possible solution to address unrest among the population.

Carcelén saw the problem in the success of global capitalism. In his opinion, states are willing only to solve their people’s problems, not the problems of the whole world. Moreover, he accentuated that the political systems are built on old narratives, without any potential to face the new market situation, or use instruments to address it.

The panel closed by suggesting to carefully transform democratic structures. Democracy and human dignity will bring order back to the system.

Freedom and/or Security in Europe?

October 9, 2018, 8:30 – 10:00, Austrian Residence

Moderator:

Alexandr Vondra, Director, Prague Centre for Transatlantic Relations (PCTR), Member, Board of Directors, Forum 2000 Foundation, Czech Republic

Participants:

Flavia Kleiner, Founder, Operation Libero, Switzerland

Dan Schueftan, Director, National Security Studies Centre, University of Haifa, Israel

Rufin Zamfir, Programmes Director, GlobalFocus, Romania

The working breakfast moderated by Alexandr Vondra sought to address current issues threatening security and freedom in Europe. The main themes of the discussion included migration, the threat from the east, the current state of the European security apparatus, and ways to make a collective effort to address these issues. A wide range of perspectives were discussed, due in part to the different backgrounds and disciplines of the speakers.

Flavia Kleiner began her speech by bringing attention to the situation in Switzerland, explaining the mechanism of referendums and their role in ensuring a democratic process. Kleiner emphasized the importance of understanding and addressing the liberal order, adding that “we must accept the fact that freedom and responsibility are the same thing.” Dan Schueftan reminded the audience that freedom and security go hand in hand before addressing the question of how to balance the two. Before setting out an example of the Israeli case, Schueftan noted that a resilient, unpolarized society which understands its purpose and direction is paramount to dealing with this issue. Rufin Zamfir reasoned that an equilibrium between freedom and security is the optimal path. He also pondered who the security provider in Europe should be, and whether it should be addressed at a state or supranational level.

Vondra then redirected the discussion to address the nature of the European political order in the face of an ever-transforming security paradigm. Kleiner responded by questioning the efficacy of discarding two hundred years of liberal order because “security is at stake.” Zamfir explained that since the issues of migration and terrorism are cross-border threats, they must be dealt with accordingly—through joint cooperation at the international level. Schueftan disagreed, claiming issues must be dealt with at the state level to increase efficiency, avoid ambiguity, and allow for possible compromises when dealing with these issues.

Alexander Grubmayr, Ambassador of Austria to the Czech Republic, shared his experience in Austria, stressing that since the people had positive experiences with migrants, there is no perception that “behind every Muslim migrant there is a terrorist.”

The participants fielded questions. A Romanian delegate brought up the issue of cyberspace, adding that we should follow a more practical path of addressing the limitations of international cooperation while keeping a close eye on synthesizing both levels of approach. A South Korean delegate reminded the panel of the key leadership role that Europe plays in dealing with challenges and subsequently setting an example for the rest of the world.

Concluding statements were given by each speaker to recapitulate the discussion, and an inkling of a consensus was formed. Firstly, the participants agreed that international cooperation is important, but should not undermine the practices of the state, and vice-versa. Secondly, that the current state of the liberal order must be properly understood and upheld to progress and in turn address whatever issues may materialize in the future.

Armenia: What Next After the New “Velvet Revolution”?

October 9, 2018, 8:30 – 10:00, Embassy of Canada

Moderator:

Igor Blažević, Programme Director, Prague Civil Society Centre, Czech Republic

Participants:

Mikayel Zolyan, Specialist in Politics of Nationalism and Ethnicity, Armenia

Haykuhi Harutyunyan, Activist, Human Rights Lawyer, Armenia

A working breakfast focused on the main factors and actors of Armenia’s transfer of power that took place last April. The speakers shared their views on the possible outcomes and agreed that to achieve real success, Armenia has to undergo many changes in the near future.

Igor Blažević opened the panel by highlighting an unexpected characteristic of the revolution—the fact that it grew from dozens of people protesting in the capital. Haykuhi Harutyunyan agreed, explaining that it was not the first attempt at regime change in Armenia, but that it was successful due to the accumulation of human rights violations, corruption cases, economic insecurity, and the absence of a dialogue between civil society and the government. “There was a positive message the people received and they saw a person who took the responsibility to stand and say ‘we can change it,’ which brought people together and lead them to this positive change in the country,” said Harutyunyan.

Mikayel Zolyan took the floor, claiming that “revolutions happen when you never expect them.” Naming the main factors that played in favor of the April uprisings, he claimed that its peaceful character excluded any possibility of outside forces intervening, “while in Ukraine, violence was a basis for the claim that it was actually not a revolution, but a coup-d’état.” Zolyan also said that this revolution would have been impossible without involvement and collaboration of civil society, media, citizenry, and social networks, since people acted “as a collective mind.” He agreed with Harutyunyan that an essential element was a common idea of regime change that united the society.

The Ambassador of the Republic of Armenia to the Czech Republic and to the Slovak Republic, Tigran Seiranian also took part in the discussion, emphasizing the role of the Armenian diaspora living abroad in the support and success of the revolution.

The discussion continued with a question and answer session. Addressing the issue of the revolutionaries’ geopolitical agenda, Zolyan said that leaders learned from previous situations in Armenia, Georgia, and Ukraine—by largely avoiding geopolitics, they gained support from both the pro-Russian and pro-Western parts of society. Harutyunyan also highlighted the parallel between Armenian participation in the Eurasian Economic Union project and their partnership with the EU. Answering the question about the outcomes and the nearest prospects, Harutyunyan said: “We need to rebuild the institutions in the way that they reflect the reality, however we lack experience and capacity to act quickly We have enthusiasm, but not many people that are ready to take responsibilities for their mistakes,” Zolyan agreed on the necessity to realize reforms, but he warned that the parliament could organize “a legal coup-d’état” and appoint a more neutral figure than Nikol Pashinyan as prime minister. “Now his popularity is huge, but ... it will decrease, which is good for democracy,” Zolyan claimed. He also assumed that new political parties could emerge, since a wide range of forces now support the revolution’s leader, the incumbent prime minister.

Fear in Europe

October 9, 2018, 8:30 – 9:30, Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany

Welcome:

Christoph Israng, Ambassador to the Czech Republic, Germany

Moderator:

Detmar Doering, Head of Prague Office Central Europe and the Baltic States, Friedrich Naumann Foundation for the Freedom, Germany

Participants:

Zsuzsanna Szelényi, Former Member of Parliament, Hungary

Daniel Prokop, Sociologist, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University, Median, Czech Republic

Elisabeth von Hammerstein, Program Director, Körber Foundation, Germany

Martin Bútorá, Sociologist, Institute for Public Affairs, Member, Program Council, Forum 2000 Foundation, Slovakia

Moderator Detmar Doering led the panel in multiple rounds of discussion that addressed why people in Europe are afraid, how to combat this issue, and the main issues Europe will face in coming years.

Daniel Prokop began by discussing the connection between populism and economic inequality. He argued that people in poorer areas are less optimistic about the benefits of globalization and respond to the divisive rhetoric that populists use against elites. He proposed that politicians regain trust by focusing on policy instead of politics. He recommended combating the simple narratives of populists by directly confronting and acknowledging society's problems.

Elisabeth von Hammerstein focused on the issue of fear in Germany and commented that politicians use fear to simplify political conditions. According to von Hammerstein, negative emotions and images are effectively used by populists to create a perception of crisis. She gave a list of ways in which this rhetoric of fear can be addressed. The first step she emphasized was for politicians to listen to the fears of people and show compassion. Then, they must address those fears: "If there are negative images that we associate with political issues, it is important to have facts ready." She also recommended that politicians preemptively address political issues before populists can create negative images in the minds of the electorate.

Following von Hammerstein's suggestions, Martin Bútorá added that it is important to fight fear with facts, but also with emotions. After clarifying the difference between anxiety and fear, Bútorá argued that Europe is currently facing multidimensional fears that are capitalized on by anti-systemic actors. He proposed creating political alliances to fight the negative rhetoric of populists and cautioned against mainstream parties adopting populist tactics.

Zsuzsanna Szelényi referred to fear as something "human and natural" and suggested that "people are worried about losing their relevance and their culture." She agreed with the idea that there is a differentiation between fear and anxiety and stressed the importance of separating these concepts. She then spoke of how populist parties are exploiting fear and thus "increasing the crisis atmosphere." Szelényi proposed combating fears by identifying the major problems of the future and working together to preemptively solve them.

Several rounds of questions followed the discussion. There were multiple questions on the future of Europe and the role that fear will play in it. Panelists were hesitant to predict future trends but varied in their levels of optimism. Von Hammerstein predicted economic fears and Szelényi talked about impending demographic decline and its geopolitical consequences. Prokop commented that many of the cultural issues Europe is now facing will remain. Bútorá stressed that the future depends on several factors, and most of the panelists agreed.

Doering concluded by summarizing the key recommendations of the panel for politicians: be more compassionate, have a clear vision that is positive, do not embrace populist propaganda, and strengthen civil society.

The EU as a Global Actor: Getting Serious about Democracy in Foreign Policy

October 9, 2018, 08:30 – 10:00, European House

In cooperation with European Partnership for Democracy (EPD)

Moderator:

Šimon Pánek, Co-Founder and Director, People in Need, Member, International Advisory Board, Forum 2000 Foundation, Czech Republic

Remarks:

Ken Godfrey, Executive Director, European Partnership for Democracy, United Kingdom/Belgium

Šimon Pánek moderated a discussion organized in cooperation with the European Partnership for Democracy (EPD), an organization promoting democracy within the EU's framework.

Ken Godfrey began his speech by giving insight into the European democracy support network that includes 14 member organizations and is active in around 140 countries. He spoke about the different levels of society at which the EPD carries out its mission (political leadership, elected representatives, state officials, among others) and discussed a variety of recipients and areas of support, including political parties, local authorities, elections, political education, and facilitating the exchange of knowledge and experiences, among others.

Speaking about democracy support in the foreign policy of the EU, Ken Godfrey highlighted the “founding logic” and “accession logic” that hold democracy as a basic, fundamental value for European integration and is a prerequisite to access the European Union. He noted several turning points for the European foreign policy over the last decade, including the expansion of powers of the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the Arab Spring, and the Ukrainian and migration crises. These events made European countries negotiate in order to act in concert, and shifted their focus to security and migration policies.

Godfrey cited three points that reflect the activity of the EPD: the need to advocate for democracy within the EU, the need to cooperate and support democracy worldwide, and the need to recognize challenges facing representative democracy. He also underlined the importance of the general context of global and European affairs for advocating for democratic values, highlighting the current situation and forthcoming events. According to him, EU parliamentary elections in 2019, discussions about the new EU budget, and the anniversary of the European Agenda on democracy support represent a window of opportunity for the EPD. Godfrey suggested several possible reasons for problems with democracy support that the EU encounters nowadays: dispersion and abstractions of the current legal framework, the existence of competing priorities (values and interests), and institutional and political issues.

The speaker's presentation was followed by a wide-ranging discussion. In response to a question about correlation between natural resources and political regimes, Godfrey admitted that natural resources represent a source of income for public authorities that does not depend on citizens' taxes, making these governments potentially less accountable. When asked about civil society, he reaffirmed his belief that it represents an alternative source of power that makes the whole system more able to address abuses of power, which is particularly important in democratic transitions. Finishing the discussion, Godfrey emphasized the crucial role of public

discussion and awareness of democratic values and practices. He suggested that forthcoming European parliamentary elections are, in a sense, a “referendum” on EU’s future direction.

Youth Workshop

October 9, 2018, 10:30 – 12:00, Langhans, People in Need

Moderators:

Mete Coban, Chief Executive, My Life My Say, UK

Amy Longland, Chief Operating Officer, My Life My Say, UK

Mete Coban and Amy Longland of 'My Life My Say' set out "to make sure young people's voices are at the center of negotiation" in politics, and with a discussion of over 20 youths from around the world, expressed hope that their participants will use "this opportunity to voice their concerns." Three questions were posed about democratic participation with a focus on Brexit, with another group of non-British youth participants presenting fresh perspectives on the issue.

The conversation began on the topic of barriers in democracy today that "stop young people from getting involved in political action, institutions, or activism," and what we could do to "break down these barriers." After several minutes of discussion, different groups presented their ideas. One woman from Georgia noted the "intimidation" from ruling parties prevented the youth from feeling empowered in her country, while one man said that within Vietnam it is "hard for young people to participate ... because all are [forced to be] a part of the Communist Youth Delegation." Longland asked the group what the youth turnout from their respective countries was—the response was a resounding "no" in unison, indicating an extreme lack of participation.

The idea that younger people equate democracy with corruption, while older people did so with freedom, was pointed out as a possible reason for low youth turnout. One man from Spain said that democracy is seen as a "commodity." This, coupled with rising unemployment in Spain, causes youth to lose their "trust [in the] system." A participant from Zimbabwe stated that in her country, women do not participate due to gender norms, explaining that "young women have to take care of the home [and] don't have time to be seen as possible leaders."

The participants were then asked to discuss the rise of the far right, and whether it is "a genuine threat to democracy, or just part of a healthy democratic system," followed by a question about whether they felt like they could "rely on media to give [them] a blanked view of politics."

With the "rise of far-right political parties and populist radical movements among the youth," one table of participants agreed that this was a "fault of the current system." Another acknowledged that the far right is a "danger once established." When discussing the far right's role in the digital age, one participant said "[this] threat now leads us to rethink [our] political system, so we can come out with new ideas to make democracy more valuable." An attendee pointed out the polarization of Brexit, which contributes in a discourse where "whoever makes the most hype wins," claiming it further illustrated the need to redefine democracy in this era.

The last topic covered potential courses of action, and Longland asked the participants how "young people [could] be the driving force behind a new kind of democracy." "Civil society should be more involved in helping youth interaction" was one response. "Leaders need to talk to people and explain in understandable terms how to become more involved." Another comment was that the youth "should request that leaders present programs" and feel responsible "for engaging with the youth." "If [the youth] become a bigger electoral factor, maybe leaders will feel more responsible for them."

Coban concluded the workshop by reminding participants that "it is up to our generation to [make] change."