

Societies in Transition: Do We Have Universal Aspirations?

Changing Europe: Its Global Role in the 21st Century?

*Working Breakfast – In cooperation with the Embassy of France
By special invitations only.*

The Eurozone crisis is changing the institutional structure of the European Union. EU countries are looking for mechanisms that could tackle or prevent the emergence of similar financial crises in the future and are applying measures that aim to stabilize the current situation. These changes are likely to have significant implications for the EU's role in global affairs. While recent years have seen Europe shift attention inward, once the financial crisis is overcome, Europe may find itself and its new structure more suitable for pushing for its agenda.

- Will institutional changes in the EU result in a more unified voice?
- Will the EU play a more active role in global affairs after the Eurozone crisis?
- Should the EU attempt to become a more assertive global player?

Forum 2000 Democratic Transitions Workshop

*Closed Workshop, 2 Parts – In cooperation with the International Visegrad Fund
By special invitations only.*

Transitions in the recent past, despite optimistic expectations, have had mixed results. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989, and subsequent transformation of the communist dictatorships in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, produced several successful open democratic societies, but also other models, including family-dominated autocratic regimes. More recently, the so-called Arab Spring swept away, with astonishing speed, a series of authoritarian regimes in the MENA region. It is still unclear, however, how this change will eventually play out. This is also the case of another recently launched transition process in Burma. In all these cases, and others, the international community, both governmental and nongovernmental, has played a significant role, supporting, facilitating and financing democratic transitions.

Part I – Framing the Transitions

- How significant are the current changes? Are the forces behind these changes weak and temporary or deeper and persistent?
- In the recent cases, is a liberal democracy still the main goal? If not, what is the alternative system to which these societies aspire?
- What are the key differences between the transitions that took place after communism and the more recent developments emerging within the context of the Arab uprisings?
- How should observers define a successful transition outcome? What should be the expectation?

Part II – Democratic Transitions: The Way Forward and the Role of the Visegrad Countries

- What are the lessons for democracy assistance practitioners from the past two-plus decades of transitions?

- What are the recommendations for external actors to successfully support a transition – and what are the priorities? What should be done first? How should the process of assisting a transition to democracy be concluded? What should be avoided?
- Who are the partners on the ground – the most effective agents of positive change?
- How can the West contribute to the successful outcome of transitions around the world?
- What has been the role of the Visegrad countries (relatively young democracies with their own transitional experience) in this process? What are the lessons from the recent transitional efforts in the MENA region?
- How can the Visegrad countries most effectively contribute to the global transitional efforts?

Power of Powerless Revisited

Roundtable, Krakow – In cooperation with the Villa Decius Association and the International Visegrad Fund

There has been a dramatic expansion in the size, scope and capacity of civil society over the past two decades throughout the world. This has been aided by globalization, expansion of democratic governance, telecommunications, and economic integration. Civil society organizations (CSOs) became significant players in development assistance and delivery of social services. They entered fields in which public institutions did not perform, failed to perform, or didn't realize they should perform. CSOs filled the void and created spaces for intellectual and intercultural exchange, for cooperation and the development of local and international communities.

- Are CSOs satisfied with their achievements?
- Where do they go from here? Are there threats to further CSO development?
- Are there universal, shared values and fields for international cooperation? If so, what are they?

Risks of Transitions

Panel – In cooperation with the International Herald Tribune

Governments, business and citizens alike cherish stability. Large-scale social transitions are, however, unstable by definition and bring about serious risks of conflict, anarchy and economic chaos, which can in turn threaten the transition itself. The balancing of the opportunities of a transition against its risks determines its ultimate success.

- What is the relationship between the speed of a transition and its success? What are the advantages of a radical approach as opposed to a gradualist strategy?
- Should the transition strive for a universal support of the population at the risk of compromising its goals or should it aim to reach clearly defined practical results at the risk of antagonizing parts of its constituency?
- How important are external support mechanisms for maintaining the speed and the direction of a transition? When can external players be helpful and when do they become a nuisance?
- Is justice an essential part of a successful transition or should a line be drawn behind the past?

Societies in Transition: Do We Have Universal Aspirations?

Opening Panel

When popular movements forced out Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in Tunisia and later Hosni Mubarak in Egypt, the overwhelming assumption was that the uprisings were motivated by the desire for freedom and respect for human rights, and that the outcome would eventually be a set of new democracies across the Middle East. After all, young people, not dissimilar to Czechoslovak students in 1989, were at the forefront of the protests. The continued turmoil in the region, growing violence, and religious radicalization suggest that perhaps large groups in the societies in question had different expectations from the change. Similarly, transitions in countries like Ukraine or even Hungary, and perhaps other Central European countries, have seemingly lost a clear objective. There seem to be huge differences between countries, and social religious and ethnic groups, in both their aspirations and expectations.

- What motivates us to seek a dramatic change in a social and political system?
- Is a liberal democracy in the Western sense the desired outcome?
- What roles do culture and religion play in how a transition is approached?

The Values We Share

Closing Panel

“I traveled to dozens of countries, and I was always aware of one thing and that was that the religious foundations, the religious points of departure, the traditions of various civilizational spheres, include something which is common to all. The common denominator is an elementary set of moral imperatives that are modified in different ways and which, in their general form, are valid everywhere. I ask myself whether we shouldn’t search for those things that cultures have in common, something which I call the ‘moral minimum.’ Should this not be the thing from which the norms of coexistence among nations and supranational communities grow?”

So, the question which I would like to pose to this distinguished conference is whether there is a possibility of articulating such a minimum ...”

Václav Havel, Forum 2000, October 2006

Transitions of the Political System

The Burdens of History

Panel – In cooperation with Respekt

As the author William Faulkner once wrote: “The past isn’t dead. It isn’t even past.” History has a way of resurfacing over and over again. In societies in transition, various factions often seek to use (re)interpretations of history to aid their own causes. At the same time, history forms an essential part of a country’s political and social culture. Shedding history’s burdens while embracing its lessons remains a challenge in even the most consolidated democracies.

- How have various post-communist states dealt with their 20th century history during the transition period?

- How important is it for countries to have some kind common narrative or understanding of the past?
- In societies undergoing great upheaval, is it possible to look to the past for some positive foundation for the future?

Dealing with the Past

Panel – In cooperation with Political Prisoners.eu, Goethe-Institut, Europe for Citizens Programme of the European Union, and European Affairs Information Department of the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic

The transformation from an authoritarian to a democratic society inevitably forces a reckoning with the past. The traumas caused during a totalitarian or autocratic rule can reverberate for decades after the regime's end. Public memory is often divided, and history can be used as a political tool. In this complicated state of affairs, a serious tension between the common public interest and the right to privacy emerges.

- What solutions do we have for accessing sensitive information of national interest produced by totalitarian or autocratic regimes in the recent past?
- What lessons can we learn from how different formerly authoritarian states have dealt with these issues?
- What are the options for coping with contemporary political pressure and institutional instability, even as society comes to grips with past traumas?

Political Parties in Transitional Processes

Roundtable

Political parties play a significant role in democratic societies. Their role is particularly important in places undergoing a transition from authoritarianism to democracy. This role is adversely affected, however, when political parties give in to personal and factional interests, or when they are unable to establish themselves effectively in the public sphere.

- Are political parties playing a constructive role in building democratic societies?
- What factors are hindering or facilitating them playing such a role?
- Is there any alternative democratic model to the one based on political parties?

The Road to Good Governance

Panel

A truly democratic society is comprised of more than just regularly held elections. While elections are important, so too are democratic institutions that can deliver the promise of upholding the common good and maintaining dignity for all citizens. It is only with the building of stable, responsive institutions that the promise of democracy is fulfilled.

- What is meant by good governance? How is it measured?
- What are the key elements of good governance?
- What are the main risks on the road to good governance?
- Is it possible to have good governance without democracy and vice versa?

Tahrir, Taksim, Sao Paulo: A New Generation of Politics?

Panel – In cooperation with the Vodafone Czech Republic Foundation

Starting with the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi in Tunisia, through Tahrir Square and Gezi Park, to Sao Paulo, a new pattern of social and political protest has significantly influenced the global political landscape. These protest movements vary in many ways, but they also share a number of common features: they are mostly started and driven by tech-savvy youth; they begin with economic, social or environmental motivations, and acquire a set of political demands; they are usually highly critical of multiple aspects of the existing system, including corruption, nepotism and a lack of accountability; and they usually are – or at least seem to be – spontaneous, grass-roots driven, and lack a clear leader (such as a Havel or a Mandela).

- What is the true impact of technology on the development of these movements?
- Do such movements and their characteristics herald a new political system?
- Given that these movements seemingly demand a more direct role in governance, does this open the door to populism?

Society

The Asian Drama Today

Panel

Though Asia has taken an increasingly ascendant role in international affairs and it looks far different from when Gunnar Myrdal published the Asian Drama in 1968, a drama of epic proportions is playing out even today. Asians are contending with the need to reconcile equality with enterprise, stability with freedom, and sustainability with growth. As Asia struggles to deal with persisting poverty and growing inequalities, questions that influence varying domains of social life arise.

- What types of societies are emerging in Asia today?
- What are the issues of transition or transitions? How unique are they?
- Could some different Asian variation of democracy emerge from these processes?

Civil Society: Still a Force for Positive Change?

Panel

Civil society is a key building block of a healthy society. In times of social upheaval and political change, civil society groups often stand at the forefront of events, shaping and directing them. In the subsequent process of building something new, civil society can be an intermediary between citizens and the power: a watchdog, an expert voice providing important know-how to the newly established state institutions. Civil society actors, however, are also often criticized for being unelected, and exercising undue influence.

- What is the role of civil society today? What is the Central European experience?
- What role does civil society play in current transitions, such as in Burma or Egypt?
- Under what conditions should civil society partner with government, and when should it serve as a countervailing force?

Corruption as an Anti-Transformation Force

Panel

Corruption is a problem for all societies, but it can be a particularly acute challenge as a society seeks to move from a closed state-centric to an open market economy. Where corruption is deeply entrenched, it can also serve as a near-permanent firewall against change, with those benefitting from corruption doing all they can to protect their own interests. In the worst of transition scenarios, there is a risk that corrupt actors use the new openness that society is pursuing to gain power and assets, which they then use to reverse progress.

- Is there a universal definition of the word “corruption”? Does it mean different things in different cultures?
- How big a risk for countries now in transition is a so-called “Russian scenario,” where the reform process is hijacked by a small group of individuals?
- As reformists seek to gain power, what risks do they face when having to work within a corrupt system? Can they avoid becoming corrupted and still accomplish anything?

Do Environmental Causes Transform Civic Engagement?

Roundtable

Less than a week before the Prague student demonstration of November 17, 1989, which triggered the end of communism in Czechoslovakia, hundreds of people gathered to protest in North Bohemian city of Teplice. Their concerns? A critical environmental situation in the region, heavy smog, and a number of related illnesses. The protests gradually grew into political ones, with the regime becoming the main target. Similarly, protests against highway construction through the Chimki forest in Russia, or against the

demolition of Gezi Park in Istanbul with a shopping mall, have activated civil society and resulted in political demands.

- To what extent do environmental causes lead to civil engagement or even to political protests?
- Are some of these notable cases isolated incidents or something larger?
- Could such activism prove relevant in countries like China, or in Africa, Latin America, and poorer Asian countries?

Education and Democracy

Working Breakfast – In cooperation with the Embassy of Germany

By special invitations only.

Education plays a vital role in responsible decision-making by citizens. It enables them to better participate in the governing process and exercise control over the performance of the authorities. It can also be claimed that an educated citizen achieves better employment and higher pay, therefore strengthening the middle class so crucial to the development and functioning of liberal democracy. Schools have a role to play in helping create effective, engaged citizens.

- What are the main challenges for educational systems around the world?
- Can democracy be taught in places where there is no historical precedent?
- What comes first, a functioning democracy or an effective education about democracy?

How Has a Media in Transition Impacted the Transition of the Media in Post-Communist Countries?

Panel – In cooperation with Transitions Online

Over the past decade, traditional media in Central and Eastern Europe, and to a lesser extent in the former Soviet Union, have been hit hard by the same trends transforming the media around the world. Among them are the rapid explosion of alternative forms of entertainment, the growth of social media, decreased advertising revenues associated with the growth of the Internet, and general economic malaise. But in a post-communist environment, the effects of these changes could be much different.

- Have these general media trends helped or hindered the strength of powerful, independent media?
- In environments where there is less of a precedence of independent media, how do the effects of technological changes differ?

- How has the ownership and consolidation of post-communist media been affected? Are there more or fewer voices?

Philosophy Underground and Overground

Panel – In cooperation with the Václav Havel Library

The presentation will concern the recently published book *Philosophy Underground and Overground*. This collection is divided into two parts. The first is devoted to Czech philosophy in the so-called normalization period, with a particular emphasis on the Prague underground seminars. The second focuses on the 1990s, when many personalities from the underground appeared in academia to re-establish philosophy departments in universities. The event will be led by Roger Scruton, a visiting lecturer in the 1980s to the Prague (and Czechoslovak) clandestine study circles and one of the foremost organizers of foreign support for parallel education in Czechoslovakia; Czech historian Jiří Suk, from the Institute of Contemporary History, will also make a presentation on the subject.

Radio: Inspiring Democratic Change

Panel – In cooperation with Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and Radio Prague

Today's globalized world has in many ways simplified the spread of information, but access to free, reliable, factual media is still not the norm in much of the world. Censorship remains in countries as diverse as Cuba, China and Russia, for example. In the past, people in unfree societies relied on radio for information, and many still do.

- What is the role of international broadcasters today?
- In what ways do traditional broadcasters harness the power of 21st century technology to reach their audiences?
- In societies where online censorship is common, can radio offer benefits that new technologies do not?

Trust, the State, and the Rule of Law

Panel – In cooperation with the DOX Centre for Contemporary Art

Trust is a critical component of the rule of law. Law can rule only if citizens believe in its promise of justice. Trust is the hallmark of social solidarity that enables democratic institutions to function properly. A

breakdown in social trust – both among citizens, as well as between citizens and state institutions – is thus a breakdown in democratic life proper.

- How can state institutions work to foster trust in the rule of law and to reduce civic apathy?
- How have post-communist transitions, in particular, affected the ability of police, state prosecutors, and members of the judiciary to confront pervasive institutional corruption and to prevent “state capture”?
- What are the socioeconomic dimensions of trust in the rule of law, and how do state policies toward marginalized communities affect broader issues of public trust?

Volunteering as the Base of Civil Society

Panel – In cooperation with The Duke of Edinburgh’s International Award Czech Republic Foundation

Volunteers are the driving force of civil society. When giving one’s time for free to the community becomes a mainstream practice, it brings along with it a greater feeling of responsibility for the community. Citizens begin to take an active approach towards bringing about positive change. Volunteering is at the same time a source of learning among various generations and social groups and brings otherwise disparate interests together into a multi-faceted but common civil society.

- What is the role of volunteering in helping to construct civil society in places where it was previously absent?
- How or why is volunteering not widely recognized by schools, the general public or employers as central to their own goals?
- What are some examples of how volunteers have jump-started civil society in transitioning societies?

Economics

Democratic Capitalism: Still a Model to Follow?

Panel – In cooperation with the Center of Global Governance, Columbia University

For decades, the democratic capitalist model of the type practised in the United States and Western Europe was the system to which most other countries aspired. Modernizers pursued this goal nearly universally as a means of developing prosperous economies. It became conventional wisdom that successful democracies are based on prosperous capitalist economies and free market principles – and vice versa. That may no longer be the case, as the economic rise of China, the Gulf states, Singapore and others also seem to offer other viable paths to prosperity.

- How true is it to directly link democracy with free market capitalism?
- Is the Chinese model serving as an aspirational path for countries elsewhere in the world?
- How many different models for economic transition do we now see in the world? Where?

Economy, Culture and Free Enterprise: Case Study of the Visegrad Group

Panel – In cooperation with the Legatum Institute and the International Visegrad Fund

Following the collapse of communism, a wave of democratic transition swept through Europe in the 1990s. But along with opportunity came many challenges – and while some countries prospered, others faltered. All things considered, the Visegrad Group (the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia) can be counted among the success stories, though not without struggles.

- What role did economic reform and growth play in moving these countries forward to democratic success?
- What were some of the differences in the transition process between the Visegrad countries?
- What are some of the missteps during transition that we can pinpoint in hindsight?

Gift Economy: Are Traditional Economic Relations Changing?

Panel – In cooperation with Hearth.net

Rarely do we truly think about how our economies work. Much of the discussion on economic issues focuses on tinkering with existing practices, not rethinking economic relationships. This discussion will consider options for the transformation of society through changing the economic system and focusing on the impact of the “gift economy” on the behavior of individuals and society – and the resulting transformation of relations.

- What is the impact of an economic system on relations in society?
- What is the gift economy and what core values does it represent?
- How could social relations differ in market versus gift economies?

The Role of Multinational Companies in Transitional Societies

*Working Breakfast – In cooperation with the Business Leaders Forum
By special invitations only.*

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is becoming an integral part of core business strategies and everyday business. The new generation of consumers represents value-sensitive purchasing power. Companies that want to stay successful will have to keep in mind the demand for ethical, environmental and social consciousness. Among some employees the company itself can show the best practice for everyday functioning and inspire social responsibility on the level of the individual. Companies themselves can become the examples of responsible and honest approach and influence the behavior of all company stakeholders. Corporate leaders have a role to play in paving the way towards social change.

- How can CSR impact the behavior of individual stakeholders?
- What is the role of a leader in a multinational corporation in terms of communicating CSR?
- What is the impact of a leader’s ethical approach to sustainable community development?

Unemployment and Inequality: True Reasons for Middle East’s Revolutions?

*Working Breakfast – In cooperation with the U.S. Embassy
By special invitations only.*

While the demand for greater freedoms did play a role in the Arab Spring, the practical realities of high unemployment, growing inequality and rising food costs were even bigger motivations. The previous regimes failed to offer most people access to basic necessities, and so bred resentment as cronyism saw others living lives of plenty. These are not problems quickly and easily resolved by new governments

- To what degree were the Arab Spring uprisings a reaction to dire economic conditions?
- What role does economic development play in a successful transition?
- How can transitioning countries cope with persisting frustrations even as they move towards resolving the greatest injustices of the earlier regimes?

World in Transition: A Business for Business?

Panel – In cooperation with the UN Information Centre Prague and the Czech Business Council for Sustainable Development

The world is at a critical juncture economically, socially and environmentally. More than a billion people lack access to viable food sources, electricity and safe drinking water. The gap between rich and poor is widening, and the world's ecosystems are under threat. Climate change and population growth – especially in some of the poorest parts of the world – further exacerbate such situations. These realities are challenges not just for humanity at-large, but for the business community as well.

- What role can private enterprises play in dealing with the 21st century's biggest global challenges?
- What constitutes corporate responsibility in social, environmental and ethical terms?
- How can the private sector work in conjunction with governments and international organizations?

Religion and Ethics

Democracy, Human Rights and Religious Freedom in East Asia

*Roundtable – In cooperation with the Faculty of Arts, Charles University
By special invitations only.*

In recent decades most countries in East Asia have experienced increased demand for democracy and the respect of human rights. In some countries, especially in Burma, significant progress has been achieved. For countries like China and North Korea, however, gross violations of human rights and basic liberties are still an everyday reality. The strong repression of political and media freedoms are partnered with harsh restrictions on religious expression. The level of respect for religious freedoms is a universal measure of the level of development of a society, as free religious contemplation contributes to the creation of a sound moral and political culture.

- In which East Asian countries are the most serious human rights violations taking place and which rights are most repressed?
- Which countries are making the most progress in improving the human rights situation and can serve as an inspiration?
- What position does freedom of religious expression hold in a society's democratic transition?

The Role of Religion in Transitional Processes

Panel

Religion is a social phenomenon that rarely remains on the sidelines during social transitions. In many cases, religious institutions themselves play the role of progressive facilitators of social change; and religious leaders, or their ideals, make up the driving force of transformation processes moving from authoritarianism towards free societies. In other cases, however, conservative religious influences preserve the social status quo and contradict transformation tendencies. Religious institutions can even become an instrument of stability for authoritarian regimes.

- In which countries and religious societies do we currently see the examples of such tendencies?
- Which of these two tendencies is generally more characteristic of religion?
- When does religion's society stabilizing role serve as a positive contribution to society, and when does it act as an inhibitor of positive change?
- Are there any universal principles valid for all religions, or are individual religious traditions different?

External Influences

Building Democracy in Transitional Countries: Assistance of the Czech Republic

Panel – In cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic

Protecting and promoting human rights, along with promoting democracy, are among the key objectives of Czech foreign policy. Based on the country's recent experience with social transition, democracy building and non-violent resistance against a totalitarian regime, the Czech Republic shares its knowledge with other countries now beginning this process. Among them are countries like Georgia, Belarus, Burma, Kosovo, Moldova, and Cuba. The Czech Republic promotes transition to democracy by supporting various projects promoting the development of civil society, media independence and education for active citizenship.

- How can the Czech transition experience be mobilized to help improve the situations in targeted countries?
- How is the exchange of transition experiences perceived in the international context and by direct beneficiaries?
- What are the main challenges that transition countries and their partners face?

Burma's Transition: The Need for New Approaches by the International Community

Panel – In cooperation with Zaostřeno and People in Need

The international architecture for managing transitions and peacebuilding is not working well. Iraq and Afghanistan are the two most notable examples, but, according to some, the approaches being used in Burma further illustrate the problem. Instead of building integrated approaches to democratization, security, development and peacebuilding, donors are criticized for following their standard tactics while ignoring

many pledges by governments to improve their approaches to aiding transitions. Without a change of course, there is supposedly a risk of more wasted resources and lost opportunities.

- What are possible solutions to the issue of mismanaged national transitions?
- Are the mistakes the international community makes systemic, or are we not paying enough attention to country-specific issues?
- Are we making any progress in how we approach transition issues, or are we repeating our failures?

Democracy Assistance in the External Relations of Visegrad Countries

Working Breakfast – In cooperation with the International Visegrad Fund

By special invitations only.

The Visegrad (V4) countries are among the new democracies playing an active role in supporting the development of democracy, human rights and civil society internationally. Their recent transition histories lend these efforts a certain real-life know-how. This, along with their vibrant civil societies engaging with democratization efforts abroad, make the V4 countries natural, credible, wellpositioned actors in this field. Still, more remains to be done for greater cooperation, coordination and division of (specialized) labor.

- Are there niches where the V4 can do more to promote democracy than they do now?
- What are the main shortcomings of current V4 policies towards promoting democratization abroad?
- How should the V4 work in this field vis-a-vis their counterparts in the rest of the EU and in the United States?

European Relations with the Mediterranean

Working Lunch – In cooperation with the Embassy of France

By special invitations only.

The Mediterranean region has historically served as an important area of economic and cultural exchange between Europe, North Africa and the Middle East. The political changes brought forward by the Arab Spring present an important dynamic in the region's relations with the rest of Europe. A politically unstable North Africa will present problems for both sides of the Mediterranean. Energy security, trade and the issues of illegal immigration and refugees are among the more pressing issues in maintaining stability in the Mediterranean.

- How have Europe's relations with North Africa changed since the Arab Spring?
- Does the EU aim to strengthen its ties with the rest of the Mediterranean region?
- Does the EU have a unified stance on the issues in the Mediterranean?

The Role of External Actors in Transforming Countries

Panel

The transition of totalitarian regimes to freer societies often occurs with a varying degree of support (or interference, according to some) from external actors. In particular, the subsequent transitional periods are very fragile, and external funding plus the transfer of know-how can be a decisive influence on which

direction the transitioning country heads. In this processes, both governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can play a role.

- Who are currently the main players in the transitional support field, and has that changed over the past two decades?
- How can governments and NGOs support democratic transitions efficiently? What are some lessons of recent practice?
- Is there a risk that excessive support slows the natural development of a transitioning society's institutions?

The Role of Human Rights in Czech Foreign Policy

Panel – In cooperation with DEMAS – Association for Democracy Assistance and Human Rights

Since its establishment, the Czech Republic has made the defense of human rights an important aspect of its foreign policy. Consistent and outspoken support for democratic principles is among the most important issues making the country visible in the international arena. Nearly a quarter century after the Velvet Revolution, the Czech Republic still exports its transformation experience to countries where human rights are routinely violated or where the transition from an authoritarian regime is underway.

- How should democracy promotion and human rights support be reflected in Czech foreign policy?
- Can outspoken support for human rights harm the country's economic strength by alienating potential export markets?
- As the Czech Republic undergoes its own political turmoil, should it still play a role in exporting advice and experience on democratization?

Transitions in the Post-Soviet Space: The Russia Factor

Panel

Democratic transitions in the former Soviet republics, with the bright exceptions of the Baltic States and perhaps one or two others, are at best stalled, and at worst degenerating into various forms of autocratic regimes. Russia remains a key player in its "near abroad," influencing its neighbors through diplomatic, political, as well as economic and other means.

- What specific tactics does Russia use in these countries to pursue its interests?
- How will Russia's domestic politics influence its policies towards the "near abroad"?
- Where is the region going? Where will it be in 10 or 20 years?

Transition Processes

Azerbaijan: Forever Young... Democracy?

Panel – In cooperation with People in Need

Ever since the collapse of the Soviet Union, its former republics have been considered “emerging” or “young” democracies. These expressions were initially meant to underline the vision of their common future within the community of free nations. Some 22 years later, however, some are still using these terms. Azerbaijan’s so-called transition has by any measure skipped most of the processes associated with political democratization. With social tensions rising, Azerbaijani authorities are closing all the channels through which anger might flow. The real transition still lies ahead.

- How relevant is it today to think of Azerbaijan as a post-Soviet country?
- How strong are the Arab Spring parallels in this case, and has the EU learned any lessons?
- Is it possible to prepare for a democratic transition ahead of time?

China: Totalitarianism or Transformation?

Panel, Ostrava – In cooperation with Antiquarian Bookshop Fiducia

China aspires to be a world superpower. While living standards for many ordinary people have improved markedly in recent years, social tensions and conflict also appear to be rapidly escalating. International media focus on China’s economic growth, but have recently taken on Internet piracy and the suppression of human rights as well. Along with environmental problems, corruption and one-party rule, it is clear that significant challenges remain.

- Is China a totalitarian country or a country where democratic transition is underway?
- How evenly are the benefits of a growing economy distributed across Chinese society?
- Can China continue its economic transformation without transforming itself politically?

Civil Society in Middle Eastern Transitions

Roundtable

Civil society in the Western context is one of the pillars of tolerance and of open democratic societies. However, in some parts of the Middle East, where authoritarian Arab nationalist regimes were entrenched for decades, it was in the mosques and through Islamist movements that political opposition and discussion of alternatives was most widespread. The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt (and its offshoots elsewhere) is perhaps the clearest manifestation of this phenomenon. Civil society truly has many faces.

- How do civil society groups turn themselves into successful political movements and parties?
- Are Islamist groups the primary civil society actors in the Arab World, or were they merely the best organized for quickly pursuing political power?
- How does democracy look in societies where Islamist groups enjoy genuine widespread public support?

EaP Countries: Transition in Progress or Decay?

Panel – In cooperation with Freedom House

The Eastern Partnership initiative is an ambitious project encompassing a geographically, politically and culturally diverse region on the European Union’s periphery. The EU had high expectations that it would contribute to the rapid transformation of at least some of the EaP countries, but events have tempered the

optimism with which the initiative was launched. Any number of options are up for consideration, including a redoubling of efforts, a mere tweaking of strategy, or a wholesale change of course.

- How realistic was it to group countries as diverse as Belarus and Azerbaijan into the same program?
- Are transitions lessons learned in Central and Eastern Europe applicable in the EaP countries, or are the situations too different?
- What are reasonable short-, medium- and long-term goals for this program?

From Oppressors to Guardians? Role of the Security Apparatus in Countries Affected by the Arab Spring

Panel – In cooperation with the Prague Security Studies Institute

The role of the security apparatuses in countries affected by the Arab Spring has mostly escaped media attention. Prior to the revolutions, the police and armies were only rarely serving the people as guardians of a democratic system, constitutional order, or of human or political rights. Mistreatment of citizens and a heavy-handed approach in suppressing public discontent and political opposition were common traits. It remains unclear how much has changed.

- Has the role of the security apparatuses changed in countries seeking to transition from an authoritarian to a democratic system?
- Are the security apparatuses in Arab countries part of the problem or part of the solution when it comes to the transition to democracy?
- What can civil society, NGOs, and the West do to help make sure a country's security apparatus is a democratically controlled institution?

International Development Aid in the Context of Democracy Assistance

Panel – In cooperation with FoRS – Czech Forum for Development Cooperation

Democracy and development are two important concepts, but thus far rarely discussed together. Global deliberations are now focused on what should come after 2015, when the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) expire. Sustainable development with the economic, social and environmental pillars is the key focus, but one specific goal missing from the MDGs is an emphasis on democratic governance. Development is not merely an economic issue, but rather a means to empower people; it is not about accumulating wealth, but about changing societies and people's access to a better life.

- How does sustainable development cooperation intersect with good governance and democratic control?
- How can the understanding of good governance and democracy be extended to a (sustainable) development perspective and vice-versa?
- In what way should donors be active in supporting and promoting innovative and accountable relationships between citizens and their governments?

“Slovak Path”: Lessons for Democrats (and Autocrats)

Panel, Bratislava – In cooperation with the Institute for Public Affairs and the International Visegrad Fund

In the mid-1990s Slovakia remained outside the mainstream of social transformation in the post-communist countries of the Visegrad region. There was frequent speculation that the country's future development path would prove catastrophic. And yet the country succeeded in its struggle to implement democratic rules and in consolidating democracy. It is now among the biggest transition success stories.

- Why did the transition of Slovakia prove more complex and cumbersome than some of its neighbors?
- Which factors led to the country eventually catching up with the rest of the Visegrad group?
- Has Slovakia rid itself of nationalism and authoritarianism amid less favorable structural conditions useful for countries not immediately successful in their post-communist transformations?

Transition in a Multiethnic Society: A South African Experience

*Working Breakfast – In cooperation with the Embassy of South Africa
By special invitations only.*

Among the late 20th century's most successful transitions was, arguably, South Africa's move from apartheid to a democratic state. Given the stark, inhumane divide that had existed in society for many of the previous decades and the country's international isolation, the relative lack of violence that accompanied this transition is truly remarkable. Today South Africa is a thriving modern society and one of Africa's economic engines, but these developments were hardly guaranteed.

- Can the truth and reconciliation process followed in South Africa serve as a model for other transitioning societies?
- What role does a unifying political figure, like Nelson Mandela, play in a successful transition?
- Can we say that South Africa has completed its transition or is the transition still underway?

Travails of the Current Transitions in the Middle East

Panel

The "Arab Spring" rushed onto the scene in 2011, bringing hundreds of thousands to the streets with calls for freedom, dignity and prosperity. Two dictators fell within weeks; a third fought hard and lost it all. Two and a half years on, the picture is less rosy. Tunisia has seen opposition politicians murdered and is still mired in crisis. Lawlessness and political malaise are on the rise in Libya. Egypt's abusive though democratically elected President was deposed in what was no doubt a 21st century military coup; hundreds were killed plunging the country into widespread violence. And Syria remains an abhorrent slaughterhouse.

- Will a democratic political culture be able to develop in the Arab World?
- Could Syria's barbaric sectarian war spread and draw in other regional players?
- What are the prospects of the Muslim Brotherhood in the region in the near- and long-term?

Venezuela, Cuba: What Lies Ahead?

Roundtable – In cooperation with People in Need

Venezuela and Cuba are closely linked by the economic and security cooperation and mutual support of their leftist governments. Cuba is ruled by a totalitarian regime that exercises enormous control over all sectors of society, and a nationalized economy; Venezuela has a democratically elected government, which nonetheless regularly shows authoritarian tendencies. It is highly likely that both countries will undergo some kind of transition to a more open and liberal system in the foreseeable future.

- What are some of the likely transition scenarios in these countries?
- Where is the first place a reformist government should start in each country?
- How likely is it that these transitions take place gradually as opposed to suddenly?

Yugoslavia: How a Transition Can Go Terribly Wrong

Roundtable

The transition from communism in former Yugoslavia during the 1990s led to the bloodiest war Europe has witnessed since World War II. A series of ethnic and nationalist conflicts lasting nearly a decade led to the death of some 140,000 people, massive economic disruption and collapse before a group of newly independent democratic countries finally emerged.

- What was at the roots of the bloody Yugoslav wars of the 1990s?
- Are the factors that lead to these conflicts now truly a thing of the past?
- What are the lessons for other multi-ethnic societies facing transition?

Special Focus

Business and Water: New Channels for Breaking the Impasse in the Middle East?

Panel – In cooperation with The Coca-Cola Company

Turbulent events in the Middle East can lead to unexpected and sudden changes. At the same time, most countries in the region remain economically and politically stagnant and natural resources, water especially, remain scarce. Without the socio-political transition and related economic growth, which also depends on the access to water and other natural resources, the chance for a better future is slim. There may be other channels for breaking this continued deadlock."

- Can we see a new alignment of power or alliances emerging in the Middle East?
- Is there a role for the private sector to play in generating more regional cooperation?
- Can competition over limited resources, like access to water, serve as a roadblock to regional cooperation? Can such issues serve as a starting point for more productive relationships?

Challenges for Democracy in Latin America

Working Breakfast

By special invitations only.

Brutal autocratic regimes of the 1970s and 1980s are a thing of the past in Latin America. Most countries in the region are democracies, with freely elected governments, competing political parties, independent media and active civil societies. Despite the generally positive picture, there are worrying developments in some countries: authoritarian behavior of the government in Venezuela, ruled by the late Hugo Chavez's handpicked successor Nicolas Maduro; the questionable new media law in Ecuador; or perhaps Nicaragua, where President Daniel Ortega has solidified control through cronyism, giving economic perks to friends and allies.

- What are the current challenges for Latin American democracy?
- What is now the regional role of Cuba and Venezuela?
- With the PRI back in power in Mexico and the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, what are the implications for democracy?

The Perspectives of the Cross Straits Relations

*Working Breakfast – In cooperation with the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office
By special invitations only.*

The People's Republic of China and Taiwan share common cultural roots and a common Confucian heritage, yet tensions between the two countries are historically very high. The so-called rise of China is changing the political and economic landscape of East Asia and cross straits relations are gaining a new dynamic. Bilateral economic ties are strengthening; however, political disputes seem to persist.

- Are we likely to see a rapprochement between the People's Republic of China and Taiwan, or will tensions continue rising?
- Can common culture and Confucian ethics provide a key to the settlement of disputes?
- What influence can cross straits relations have in the context of South China Sea territorial disputes?

Transforming Cities: Towards Smart Forms of Governance?

Panel – In cooperation with the Aspen Institute Prague

Central European cities are very much a part of the global transformation of economies, the environment, and governance in urban areas. Creative and cultural industries now account for a growing share of cities' economic strength. This, in combination with modern technologies, has the potential to aid in the creation of "smart" (or at least smarter) cities. Most of these initiatives are bottom-up and enter the public sphere via modern communication technologies. Social networks can quickly and effectively spread such initiatives, but they are often limited in their influence and outreach in comparison to local governments. There must be ways to bring these two worlds together.

- How can technology harness citizen input to improve quality of life and city governance?
- How can an environment that favors dialogue between the various sectors participating in urban transformation be created?
- Will citizen initiatives become politicized and compete with traditional political parties in local elections?

Transnistria: From the Inside

Panel – In cooperation with People in Need

Transnistria is a disputed “breakaway” territory. It is an example of a frozen conflict, as well as a separatist and authoritarian regime. It is also home to a new generation born into the reality of so-called “independent” Transnistrian Moldovan Republic. As such, this generation does not feel any connection towards the Republic of Moldova, but nor do they necessarily support the present repressive Transnistrian authorities. Continued international isolation limits the impact of an emerging independent civil society.

- What effect does international isolation have on the development of civil society?
- Should disputes over political recognition or legal status of a territory be an impediment to cooperation with NGOs and other groups?
- How can the international community best promote democracy, human rights and pluralism without interceding in complicated territorial issues?

Under (Press)ure

Panel – In cooperation with the DOX Centre for Contemporary Art

In conjunction with a regular series of roundtable discussions at the DOX Centre for Contemporary Art, a distinguished group of foreign journalists will consider current political, economic and social issues. At this special Forum 2000 edition the panel will consider the loss of trust in the rule of law plaguing both long-established liberal democracies and newly emerged democracies.

- How similar are attitudes towards the rule of law in developed, developing and the transitioning countries?
- What are the causes of the current deficit in public trust (institutional corruption, organized crime, social marginalization, etc.)?
- How can public institutions help restore a sense of trust, especially in the post-Communist context?

Accompanying Events

Amazing Azerbaijan!

Film Screening – In cooperation with the One World International Human Rights Documentary Film Festival, People in Need and Pilsen – European Capital of Culture 2015

Azerbaijani state officials like to portray their country as a dynamic eagle, naturally linking the cultures of the West and East. Skyscrapers are going up in this oil-rich country, Azerbaijan is on the UN Security Council, and President Ilham Aliyev presses the flesh with some of the world’s most important statesmen. When an Azerbaijani duet wins the apolitical Eurovision song contest, the president declares the victory a national success. Amazing Azerbaijan! is the story of a country with two faces. International human rights groups say that behind the shiny facade is a repressive and corrupt regime that severely suppresses free speech. The state shows opponents no mercy. It arrests inconvenient journalists on trumped-up charges or has them killed. Violence is a tool for suppressing any dissent.

Compassion and Respect in Today's Society

Public Talk by His Holiness the Dalai Lama

For ticket holders only.

Love, compassion and respect are necessities of modern life, and yet all too often they are treated as luxuries. Amid the distractions of contemporary media, the rush of the working world and injustices so apparent across the globe, it is easy to look past these most basic of concepts. By taking just a few moments to pause and consider the most important things in one's life, the transience of much of what troubles us on a daily basis becomes apparent. In a public address at the Tipsport Arena, His Holiness the Dalai Lama will seek to return minds and souls to the timeless simplicities that present-day society nonetheless manages to complicate.

The Fortress

Film Screening – In cooperation with the One World International Human Rights Documentary Film Festival and Film Distribution Artcam, "Dělám kino" Project

More than 20 years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, there is still a state in Europe where a bronze statue of Lenin looks down from its column, where the good old Soviet times are nostalgically remembered, and where it is strictly forbidden to take photographs at railway stations. Welcome to the dark, open-air museum of communism, the unrecognized Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic. Told through several characters, this poetic documentary by young Czech filmmakers Klára Tasovská and Lukáš Kokeš details daily life in the picturesque Transnistria. Standing at the head of this unrecognized republic is Igor Smirnov, a tragicomic figure seemingly straight out of the 1980s. He has built a Moscow satellite out of the territory on the right bank of the Dniester River. Weapons, drugs and human organs flow through on their way to Europe. Everything is controlled by the secret police and managed by mafia power structures. Will a presidential election offer the chance for change?

The Power of Forgiveness – Presentation of Caroline Stoessinger's Book "A Century of Wisdom"

Book Presentation – In cooperation with Jota Publishing House, the Czech PEN Club and the Federation of Jewish Communities in the Czech Republic

Author Caroline Stoessinger will speak about the amazing life of the world's oldest living Holocaust survivor, Alice Herz-Sommer. Born in Prague in 1903, she lived through both World Wars and transcended the Holocaust to live a brilliant life free of bitterness and hatred. Alice, whose mind and thoughts remain clear, looks forward to celebrating her 110th birthday this November. She lives alone and regularly grants interviews about her universal message of forgiveness and her friendships with Franz Kafka, Max Brod, Leo Baeck, Sigmund Freud and Gustav Mahler. A former concert pianist who performed before the war with the Czech Philharmonic, Alice continues to practice Bach and Chopin three hours daily. Film clips of Alice and music will add to the program.

Tibet at the Crossroads

Exhibition – In cooperation with M.O.S.T. Civic Association

The exhibition reflects the cultural and political situation in Tibet as depicted through recent events there. The viewer is drawn into the life stories both of Tibetans at home and of those living in exile in India. Stories of child refugees and nomads shed light on key contemporary global issues, including human rights violations, migration, and military conflict. Information is also available on how foreign aid and humanitarian projects can help Tibetans both in Tibet and in India. The exhibition is part of the educational project "Tibet and Burma at a Crossroads."

Tibet Burns Us Up

Campaign – In cooperation with Amnesty International Czech Republic

China has occupied Tibet since 1959 and has systematically suppressed Tibetan culture and violated human rights ever since. Tibetans are not allowed to communicate freely with the outside world or practice their faith. Many have been arrested and harshly punished for acts of resistance. More than a hundred Tibetans have self-immolated in recent years to protest Chinese repression. These alarming events demand a response. By joining the "Tibet burns us up!" campaign, you can address Chinese authorities and urge them to respect human rights in Tibet. You can also send a photo-message expressing your concern and your support for His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan people.