

# CONFERENCE REPORTS



**STRENGTHENING DEMOCRACY IN UNCERTAIN TIMES**

**21<sup>ST</sup> FORUM 2000 CONFERENCE | 8–10 October 2017 | Prague and other cities**

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## SUNDAY

### Changing International Order and the Future of Our Planet

October 8, 2017, 11:00 – 12:35, Faculty of Law, Charles University

#### Moderator:

*Bedřich Moldan*, Director, Environment Center, Charles University, Czech Republic

#### Opening remarks:

*Prince Albert II of Monaco*, Head of State, Monaco

#### Remarks:

*Karel Schwarzenberg*, Chairman, Committee on Foreign Affairs, Chamber of Deputies, Parliament, Czech Republic

Bedřich Moldan introduced and summarized the discussion with a simple yet encompassing statement: *Changing International Order and the Future of Our Planet* focused on government in the contemporary world through the critical point of view of the environment. Such a panel concedes that the future is contingent on the state of our planet. Although the panel was more atypical in structure, in that it consisted of two speeches followed by a question and answer session, the main points, in the form of lessons and recommendations, were not difficult to grasp. Prince Albert II of Monaco and Karel Schwarzenberg took turns discussing what they respectively considered to be the most crucial elements of the connection between environmental protection and politics. Nevertheless, the discourses complimented each other to the extent that both speakers expressed that knowledge, awareness, and engagement in political bodies can mobilize nation-states to yield international action.

Prince Albert II candidly addressed the fact that in the face of alarming global issues such as inequalities, security threats, growing scarcity in financial resources, the increase in numbers and intensity of weather disasters, the growing problem of desertification, and the rise in migration, it is easy for “political tools [to] seem powerless.” Speaking not only as a politician, but also as an average citizen, he understands that the “complexity [of global issues such as climate change] and uncertainty seem to have the upper-hand,” a reality that can disillusion people from becoming agents of change. The constant existence of insecurities can frighten individuals to be apathetic or turn to other ideologies, which may challenge environmental progress. However, he stressed (and herein lies one of the lessons and proposed solutions of the panel), that *knowledge and awareness* are crucial in learning how to “combat climate change, sav[e] biodiversity, and conserv[e] resources.”

Prince Albert II particularly emphasized that we should not lose hope in the national component—that is, *the role of nation-states*—in the protection of the environment as they are capable of enacting policy reform. Thus, he proposed faith in the governmental bodies of nation-states that “can and must act” to confront environmental crises. He seemed to suggest that an informed constituency can influence its government, which is competent to act accordingly in the battle against environmental issues. It is important to engage in dialogue to increase one’s presence and pressure on nation-states to act. Prince Albert II also briefly mentioned the work of his NGO, which works locally and globally, and has had four hundred projects worldwide in the first ten years of operation. In discussing his Foundation, established in June 2006, His Highness revealed the importance of the nation-state insofar as his Foundation has worked alongside the government of Monaco to “combat pollution, restrict the use of plastic and create

green-protected areas.” He stated that “*international action and mobilized states*” are the solution to a new sustainable way forward because this powerful combination ensures the development of action at different levels. We all have to work together to care for our planet: average citizens, governments, national organizations, NGOs, and scientists.

The Prince admitted that he risked coming across as an optimist, but he is convinced that “progress is not impossible but already underway,” as he has witnessed the environmental work of aware and informed individuals who have tackled issues in the Mediterranean basin, the polar regions and underdeveloped countries. His lasting words of wisdom were quite simple but resounding. Prince Albert II claimed that the biggest danger this world faces is indifference, and that nothing is worse than despair and the loss of interest in the future of our world.

In a rather similar way, Karel Schwarzenberg, contended that while NGOs and activists can influence public thinking, states are the most important as decisions are made in political parties. His use of the term “state” seemed to represent both the populace and the government, to the extent that both need to work together in order to combat climate change. Schwarzenberg urged and recommended that people engage in different activities, such as entering political parties, to protect the planet: “we *have* to get into the mainstream of politics.” He concluded his speech by emphatically repeating “*engage*” to start the pressure on governmental bodies to enact policy reform because he firmly stated that we should not expect anybody to do the work we would do for ourselves. If we want to be agents of environmental change, we have to start with ourselves and our representative bodies.

## **The Challenges of the Transatlantic Relations and the Impact of Democracy**

*In cooperation with the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany and the Friedrich Naumann Foundation*

October 8, 2017, 16:00 – 17:30, Embassy of Germany

### **Moderator:**

*Pavel Fischer*, Director, STEM, Member, Program Council, Forum 2000 Foundation, Czech Republic

### **Welcome:**

*Guido Müntel*, Spokesperson, German Embassy in Prague, Germany

### **Panel discussion:**

*Claus Offe*, Political Sociologist, Hertie School of Governance, Germany

*Thomas Carothers*, Senior Vice President for Studies, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, USA

*Yascha Mounk*, Political Scientist, Harvard University, Germany

*Karl-Heinz Paqué*, Vice President, Friedrich Naumann Foundation, Germany

The discussion largely highlighted the rise of populist movements in Western democracies and its repercussions on the relationships between these societies. Globalization did not go the way many expected. Mounk and Offe highlighted the disenchantment of democracy in recent years. The decline of opportunities and perceived loss of control by the government has led to the rise of numerous rightwing populist movements. The results of the 2016 election in the United States and the Brexit decision have shaken transatlantic relations. Paqué noted that the relationship between the United States and the liberal democracies of Europe has been one of the most impactful in history and that the narrowing American agenda will result in far-reaching consequences. Several panelists noted that, in response to President's Trump platform, European states will have to increase their involvement in NATO and take a firm stance against American actions. Europe must continue to extend the hand of liberal policy but nonetheless remain firm in response to WTO (World Trade Organization) violations. Americans must realize they have industries that depend greatly on imports and exports.

Carothers further highlighted the Europeans' uncertainty of the Trump administration. Given his aggressive rhetoric and rejection of transnational policies, such as the Paris Accords and the Iran nuclear deal, President Trump's administration is a threat to transatlantic relations. Further, President Trump has yet to normalize as a politician, and Carothers noted that expecting him to do so is a denial of reality. Despite being surrounded by advisors who serve as a calming influence, Trump's rhetoric is still popular with his party's base. He has succeeded as a "political shark" and survives by constantly flapping and attacking. Carothers offered cautionary advice that Europeans should not expect the administration to normalize or change. President Trump has narrowed the United States' focus on the world with little attention left on a transatlantic agenda. Historically, the United States has served as the anchor of the liberal order in international politics. President Trump fundamentally changed this approach as he has shifted his foreign relation focus to hot-button issues rather than continuing to cultivate relations with democratic allies.

The panel noted that overall, populism is not a fad and it is not going away. It continues to exist in Europe and there could be more waves of populism to come. In order to counter it, several panelists argued that politicians must regain control of their governments. Populism is rooted in distrust of government institutions. Governments and politicians must find ways to integrate the

feelings of control and stability into mainstream politics. In addition, the liberal establishment must be self-critical so it is positioned to counter populism in the future.

## MONDAY

### Democracy and Institutional Failure in (Central) Europe

*In cooperation with Project Syndicate and the European Commission Representation in the Czech Republic*

October 9, 2017, 8:00 – 9:15, Žofín Palace, Conference Hall

#### Moderator:

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

#### Panel discussion:

*Sławomir Sierakowski*, Director, Krytyka Polityczna, Poland

*Zsuzsanna Szélényi*, Member of Parliament, Hungary

*João Espada*, Founder and Director, Institute for Political Studies, Catholic University, Portugal

*Hugo H. Drochon*, Research Fellow, University of Cambridge, United Kingdom

Sławomir Sierakowski, from Poland, began the discussion by characterizing Central Eastern Europe as “more disorganized than any other part of the EU.” According to him, there seem to be two schools of thought in reference to growing populist sentiments. The first school of thought is described as “shock therapy transition.” In other words, the transition following communism so strongly divided society into “winners” and “losers” that the population reacted with populism. The other school of thought Sierakowski mentioned was the “identity explanation,” meaning that one-third of the country are “tough nationalists regardless of what is happening.” According to polls, fifty-two percent of the population would reject refugees even if it would cost Poland losing Euro funds and 58 percent would reject refugees even if the cost meant leaving the European Union.

Hungary is facing a similar populist threat. Zsuzsanna Szelenyi described the country as “a laboratory for the populist state.” She noted that democratic institutions are not more resilient because of distrust of the communists who benefitted from the efficient privatization process in the 1990s. The speed of privatization was more important to the country to get an FDI from Western Europe rather than moral correctness, and people grew very distrustful of the political system. Szelenyi described it as an “incredible lack of social capital.” Hungary is now a divided country, with a split between the rural and urban elite as is also true in Poland. Szelenyi urges the rebuilding of social trust, as well as the cooperation of all institutions, in order to combat populism.

Joao Espada and Hugo Drochon both prefaced their talking points by providing a disclaimer explaining that they were not very familiar with Central European politics, but were able to speak to populism in Western countries. Espada spoke much about “unfortunate dichotomies,” and one of his main points revolved around the notion that Europeans should be able to be committed Europeanists, but at the same time be against supranational integration; otherwise there will be “more Europe, and fewer Europeans,” an undesirable result. Drochon echoed previous points made in discussion, but also mentioned that people are too used to thinking of “left versus right,” when they should be thinking “center versus extremist.” The rise in populism, he believes, is because certain groups feel “left out” by traditional left and right politics. However, the novelty does not necessarily have to be incarnated in populist leaders, but also in centrist liberals such as French President Macron. In general, the nations facing populism must be able to discern how to combine and utilize center right and center left forces.

## Venezuela: An Update

October 9, 2017, 8:00 – 9:15, Žofín Palace, Delegates' Lounge

### Moderator:

*Jorge Quiroga Ramírez*, Former President, Bolivia

### Panel discussion:

*Tamara Sujú*, Human Rights Lawyer, Venezuela

*Gabriela Montero*, Pianist, Composer, Amnesty International Honorary Consul, Venezuela

*Mitzy Capriles de Ledezma*, Activist, Wife of Venezuelan Opposition Leader Antonio Ledezma, Venezuela

*Lester Toledo*, Politician, Lawyer, Opposition Activist, Venezuela

*Roderick Navarro*, Student Leader, Venezuela

The country of Venezuela needs three things: First, it needs the continuity of sanctions from abroad, especially from the European Union. Second, the elections that are going to be held on Sunday, October 15, 2017 need to be legitimate, since the government has delegitimized its democratically-elected institutions. Third, the necessary processes need to be fulfilled.

Never in history has a country's economy contracted by 40 percent in four years. In Venezuela, 83 percent of people live in poverty. There are more than 500 political prisoners. There have been around 2,600 violations of free speech in the last six years. The situation in Venezuela can repeat in Bolivia, as its president, Evo Morales, is looking to the South American country as an example. It is because of Luis Almagro that the world knows about the situation in Venezuela.

Lester Toledo mentioned that such situations have given rise to civil disobedience in Venezuela. Opposition leaders such as Leopoldo López and Major of Caracas Antonio Ledezma have openly criticized the situation in Venezuela. Currently, the situation is worst. Both López and Ledezma are political prisoners. As Toledo put it, "We are having a *Chapo Guzman* holding power." Sanctions and negotiating his exit depends mostly on the EU condemning his regime even more.

Tamara Sujú asked for the help of the international community because "we cannot do it alone," since the citizenry does not have the same power as the regime. The word *respect* should describe every democrat. According to Sujú, one cannot negotiate with a tyrant. Gabriela Montero noted that she uses her music to give a voice to the voiceless and to spark interest in sectors that previously lacked interest.

Luis Almagro pointed out three factors that prevent the process of transaction: negotiation from the side of the government, drug trafficking, and corruption, which does not give politicians a way out of the regime. Two possible paths forward are accusing the government of crimes against humanity, or imposing sanctions that hurt the government instead of the people. Jorge Quiroga Ramírez later mentioned that the regime is a "*narco-tiranía*." He explained, "If you mix Pablo Escobar and Stalin you have what is in Venezuela. It is a *narco-soviet*". Don't give up Venezuelan brothers.



## **Trump and Brexit: Pathologies of Democracy?**

October 9, 2017, 8:00 – 9:15, Goethe-Institut, Foyer

### **Moderator:**

*Surendra Munshi*, Sociologist, Member, Program Council, Forum 2000 Foundation, India

### **Panel discussion:**

*Dan Schueftan*, Director of the National Security Studies Center at the University of Haifa, Israel/Germany

*Richard Youngs*, Senior Fellow, Carnegie Europe, United Kingdom

*Joshua Muravchik*, Distinguished Fellow, World Affairs Institute, USA

*David Clark*, Senior Fellow, The Institute for Statecraft, United Kingdom

Following the United States election of Donald Trump and the United Kingdom referendum to leave the European Union, the panel “Trump and Brexit: Pathologies of Democracy?” centered around three questions. First, what do these cases have in common? Second, are they representing an ongoing global trend in democratic societies? Third, can similar scenarios in other countries be expected? Moderator Surendra Munshi was joined by David Clark, Dan Scheuftan, Richard Youngs, and Joshua Muravchik to discuss these issues.

The speakers, diverse in academic and national backgrounds, presented differing interpretations and conclusions of Trump and Brexit. However, all four could agree on the following: the election of Trump and the Brexit referendum are defensive, rather than offensive, expressions of political views; the processes and circumstances of democracy have made these outcomes possible; and globalization and its increasing visibility are a driving force in both cases.

David Clark explained how the socioeconomic factors leading up to the Brexit referendum gave rise to a wide coalition of voters to voice their resentment. Prior to the referendum, numerous socioeconomic issues emerged in the post-industrial regions of the United Kingdom—low living standards, economic instability, and unemployment—all of which were largely ignored by the political elite on the right and the left. Given no other avenue to air their grievances, voters that felt left behind by globalization used the referendum to make their voices heard. Clark concluded that in response to Brexit, the government will need to re-engage with these socioeconomic issues and re-embrace social safety net programs as it previously did following World War II.

Dan Scheuftan offered a more comparative analysis of Trump and Brexit. To Scheuftan, both events should be viewed as an attempt to swing the political pendulum back in the opposite direction. In the United States, Trump’s rhetoric counterbalances policies under the Obama administration, which Scheuftan called “a policy of American weakness.” In the United Kingdom, Brexit provided voters with drastic means to address perceived foreign and domestic threats, which the previous government failed to act on. Since this pendulum is a pathology of democracy, Scheuftan views ideological purists as the greatest enemy because they may drive people to swing from one extreme to another. He stressed that “everything that should function and did function very well in democracy came from the middle of the political spectrum.”

Richard Youngs focused on the role of democratic processes in the Brexit referendum. Brexit shined a critical spotlight on referendums as a tool of direct democracy. Citizens have grown to feel powerless in the decision-making process of the European Union, but were then forced to make a crunch decision about their nation’s role in the institution. For Youngs, Brexit was a

question of increasing democratic accountability more than anything else. “People basically wanted to feel a greater sense of democratic control and accountability over decisions that affect their lives.” To avoid this in the future, Youngs suggested engaging citizens on an ongoing basis.

Joshua Muravchik similarly discussed the role of democratic processes, but in the context of Trump. The framers of the United States Constitution feared populist candidates like Trump, and created institutions like the Electoral College to prevent them from coming to power. While Trump lost by two percent of the popular vote, he performed well in unexpected areas of the country, which ultimately won him the election. For Muravchik, the election signaled “a shift of the center of gravity of American politics regarding culture, away from the working class... to the class of educated professionals.”

## **Democracy Challenged**

October 9, 2017, 9:30 – 11:00, Žofín Palace, Forum Hall

### **Moderator:**

*Ken Wollack*, President, National Democratic Institute, USA

### **Panel discussion:**

*Yascha Mounk*, Political Scientist, Harvard University, Germany

*Luis Almagro*, Secretary General, Organization of American States, Uruguay

*Amr Hamzawy*, Senior Research Scholar, the Center of Democracy, Development, and the Rule of Law, Stanford University, Egypt

*Vladimir Kara-Murza*, Vice Chair, Open Russia Movement, Russia

*Felipe González Márquez*, Former Prime Minister, Spain

“If you are here for uplifting stories, you have come to the wrong place,” said Ken Wollack, President of the National Democratic Institute and Moderator in the opening panel of this year’s annual Forum 2000 conference, “Strengthening Democracy in Uncertain Times.”

The panel of six men and one female translator marked the formal opening of the discussions, which explored the challenges present-day democracy faces, and possible solutions to the increasing public frustration, passivity and support of political extremes.

By studying how democracy is being challenged, experts hope to determine the extent of the threats facing the institution. Panelists repeatedly approached the topics of hyper-nationalism, economic and cultural globalization, individuals identifying as “citizens of nowhere;” authoritarianism hiding behind the façade of democracy and “the fight against terror,” social media as a catalyst for extremism and lastly, corruption. Despite these problems, they still cite democracy as the preferred system of governance in the global political sphere.

Speakers stressed that the study of democracy is important not only in regions where it is obviously challenged, such as in parts of the Middle East and Russia, but also in Western countries. The increasing number of high profile politicians in the Western world who are shunning the basic ideas of democracy, such as freedom of speech for opposition leaders and journalists, represents a symptom of a struggling system, not a cause. Many voters are no longer relating to institutions or political parties as they did in the past, perhaps due to the stagnation of living standards. Younger generations are no longer guaranteed a better life than that of their parents— a goal long connected with democratic principles.

Wollack gave the subsequent panels two points to further discuss. First, what should be done about the growth and consolidation of authoritarian leaders and their ‘playbook’, a shared plan for progressing their own initiatives? Second, what are the reasons for the failure and weakening of democratic institutions?

Yascha Mounk, a political scientist at Harvard University, expressed the frustration shared by the panelists at not being tasked with more than identifying issues. “We have been diagnosing the problems for a number of years – I think it is time to speak of solutions,” said Mounk.

## Is Democracy Too Old for Young People?

October 9, 2017, 11:15 – 12:45, Žofín Palace, Forum Hall

### Moderator:

*Tomáš Sedláček*, Chief Macroeconomic Strategist at ČSOB Bank, Lecturer at Charles University in Prague, Member, Corporate Council, Forum 2000 Foundation, Czech Republic

### Panel discussion:

*Joshua Wong*, Democracy Activist, Student Leader, Hong Kong

*Zuzana Vuová*, UN Youth Delegate, Czech Republic

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

*Mete Coban*, Politician, strategist and a charity worker, United Kingdom

*Daniel Ackerman Lañado*, Student Leader, Venezuela

*Nyaradzo Mashayamombe*, Executive Director, Tag A Life International Trust (Ta-LI), Zimbabwe

The panel began by asking participants what democracy means to them. Daniel Ackerman Lañado stated that he believes democracy is how people “participate in what’s going on in their country.” Professor Jahanbegloo urged that to truly answer this question, we must look no further than the heritage of democracy itself. He stated, “We confuse between the theory and practice of democracy... for young people the question is: is democracy still an ideal for young people today as it was after WWII?” This naturally transitioned the conversation to the youth question. Mete Coban spoke at length about the recent Brexit referendum and how he saw the youth’s distrust for the system, but also how it increased youth participation in politics, for better or for worse. To further this, he advocated for a decrease in the voting age to get young people involved earlier in life. Prompted by voter turnout, Zuzana Vuová voiced her disagreement with lowering the voting age: “With current political apathy, lowering the voting age will not change anything -- it must be coupled with civic outreach.” Coban did not necessarily disagree, but spoke about how it could not be a step in the wrong direction, and pivoted his major grief to the education of the youth. Brexit happened mainly because no one was educated about the UK’s relationship with the EU or on what exactly the EU does.

The second question Mr. Sedláček pulled from the Facebook page, asked by Alejandra Torres, was about the link between democracy and capitalism, and if the two are forever intertwined. If so, when youth become fed up with one, do they become fed up with both? Mr. Sedláček explained that voting business people into office, like Donald Trump, does inherently disconnect the two. Zuzana Vuová stated, “Young people want to see more redistribution and fairness,” which pure capitalism does not provide, but a form of it may. Perhaps the most noteworthy quote by the panel came from Professor Jahanbegloo when he said, “Democracy is about emancipation of human beings, and capitalism is about domination of human beings,” stating his belief that the two are not internally linked -- perhaps they are even at odds with each other.

The third question asked of the panel was from a question on Facebook asked by Kevin Hanley: If not democracy, what do young people want? Professor Jahanbegloo began by bringing up the idea of democratic fatigue by nations who have been democratic for an extended period of time. He said, “Young people want social justice, self-respect, they want change.” Nyaradzo Mashayamombe senses that young people are resorting more to protests than voting, signaling a shift from civic participation to civic disengagement. Young people are circumnavigating their institutions to have their voices heard. Later in the panel, Zuzana Vuová echoed this idea when she described young people as not necessarily disengaged, but “more creative with the ways they engage (boycotting, protesting, sharing things online, going vegan).”

Tomáš Sedláček concluded the panel by asking each member the three things they would change in democratic institutions around the world. Lañado responded: promote referendums around the world, lower the voting age, and promote laws in which the institutions include the people. Mashayamombe responded: engage young women in public life, lower political partisanship, and let locals decide where funding goes specifically in Zimbabwe. Coban responded: educate the citizenry, make democracy more accessible through online voting and other new methods, and create a national democracy week to celebrate democracy. Jahanbegloo responded: promote questioning and democratic passion. Vuová responded: create discussion based on civic education to increase engagement, implement democratic procedures in education, and create youth quotas in party politics.

The panel closed by directing the question towards Joshua Wong's empty seat. A moment of silence fell upon the crowd, followed by applause.

## **The Growing Authoritarian Threats to Democracy**

*In cooperation with the National Endowment for Democracy and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, Coalition for Democratic Renewal Panel*

October 9, 2017, 11:15 – 12:45, Žofín Palace, Conference Hall

### **Moderator:**

*Christopher Walker*, Vice President, Studies & Analysis, National Endowment for Democracy, Member, Program Council, Forum 2000 Foundation, USA

### **Panel discussion:**

*Juan Pablo Cardenal*, Journalist, Writer, Lecturer, Spain

*Suat Kınıklioğlu*, Executive Director, Center for Strategic Communication, STRATIM, Turkey

*Vladimir Kara-Murza*, Vice Chair, Open Russia Movement, Russia

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

*Tan-Sun Chen*, Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Taiwan

Christopher Walker began the panel by questioning why some countries are becoming more repressive instead of more democratic, and how we can protect our existing democracies. Vladimir Kara-Murza answered first by speaking about Russia. When Putin came to power, Russia, even with all its flaws, was still a functioning democracy. It took him four days to start raiding media groups. Within the first three years he placed all television channels under state control, and parliament was no longer a place for discussion. However, many Western democracies turned a blind eye to this takeover, and by attempting to negotiate with Putin are only making him more powerful and validated. Kara-Murza also spoke about the hypocrisy of these Russian elites. They constantly criticize the West, while investing in its banking systems and sending their children to Western schools. The most effective way to battle the elites is by passing a version of the Magnitsky laws, which punishes Russian officials who were presumed to be responsible for the death of Sergei Magnitsky by prohibiting their entrance to the United States; and by denying their use of the U.S. banking system. Hopefully, Canada will pass its own versions of these laws in the coming weeks.

Juan Pablo Cardenal discussed the global influence that China has acquired, through what is called “people to people diplomacy.” This type of diplomacy consists of inviting different diplomats, academics, journalists, etc., to China for a two to four week propaganda trip, during which they are only shown selective parts of China. Hence, when they return to their home state, these notable individuals are eager to share positive remarks about China. This is how the regime in China was able to legitimize itself in the eyes of elites worldwide.

Tan-Sun Chen discussed the growing global impact that Taiwan has and the fascinating story of its democratization. Taiwan was the first country in Asia to democratize and its people are highly committed to democratic ideals. It should not be taken for granted that Taiwan is constantly under tension with its authoritarian neighbors. This could be a serious threat to the Taiwanese democracy at any point in time. Regional integration is hindered due to the authoritarian regimes of other Asian countries. Taiwan proves that “Asian values and democracy can work together,” and is ready and willing to contribute to global democracy, global economy, and global aid.

Stephane Dion spoke about the extreme importance of “not giving national pride to populist leaders.” According to Dion, “It is impossible to impose democracy from the outside, it must come from the inside,” which is why the best way to promote democracy is to praise states that

are making conscious efforts to democratize, such as Georgia, and openly condemn states that have mistreated and oppressed their own citizens. As the West, if we really want to help the new democracies, then we must become much more exemplary than we currently are.

Suat Kiniklioglu made the interesting point that populist leaders and states have become very clever in exposing the weaknesses and flaws of Western societies and customs, which is one of the reasons that populism has been on the rise in recent years. If one observes Turkey and Russia, it is obvious that these are two countries that feel excluded from the West; they attempted to join the West and then took active steps against it due to their exclusion. The only space in Turkey where there is some meaningful debate left is on Twitter, as the current regime does not allow anymore debate in government. If that space were to be poisoned and blurred the picture enough, then it will become impossible to be able to tell what the truth is. Not knowing allows authoritarian structures to survive and maintain an alternative truth. In the wise words of Mr. Kiniklioglu, "We should not leave patriotism only in the hands of the authoritarians."

## **Media, New Media and Democracy**

*In cooperation with Project Syndicate and the Friedirch Naumann Foundation*

October 9, 2017, 11:15 – 12:45, Žofín Palace, Knights' Hall

### **Moderator:**

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

### **Panel discussion:**

*Thomas Kent*, President, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL), USA

*Jonathan Stein*, Managing Editor, Project Syndicate, USA

*Andrius Tapinas*, Founder and CEO, Liberty TV, Lithuania

Jeremy Druker introduced the audience to the talk by giving brief introductions of the panel participants and announcing the main points of the discussion: how the traditional media can contend the widespread cynicism it is facing, the importance of the independence of the media for democracy, and how engagement and trust in news sources can be restored.

Thomas Kent noted the spread of extremely opinionated websites. However, “history only goes forward” and he proposed a solution for the media. “Try not to panic” when something big happens, he said, as people generally go to the outlets they know for news, rather than radical websites. As for restoring trust, Kent, who considers himself part of the elite, emphasized the importance for everyday readers to see themselves in the news. Not being fond of the elite can lead to real authenticity between viewers/readers and the elite media.

Jonathan Stein spoke about Project Syndicate, his news organization and the diversity in opinions found within. One can go to the website and find columns that are agreeable and others that are not. Stein argues that media outlets should adopt this type of model: the presence of commentaries that go from left to right. Stein regards the term “fake news” as a symptom of the loss of faith in traditional media. “There seems to be a real appetite,” he said, “for news sources that can be trusted.” He went on to say that it is extremely important for stories to be correct and to learn from one’s mistakes.

As Andrius Tapinas spoke about Russian television news propaganda, he voiced his fear of Europe losing the information war. Unlike the other speakers, he argued that we should indeed panic because non-traditional news sources, such as propaganda websites, are very active. “We are walking on a very thin line,” he said. Tapinas also pointed out that the majority of the media is corporate-driven, which is why we expect too much of them.

When asked about reaching people who are inclined not to believe the traditional media, all three panelists spoke of the need to be both informative and entertaining in order to engage people. Suggestions included short, educational online videos and features that could present information in a compelling way; as well as coverage, referred to as “solutions journalism,” that is both informative and constructive. By the end of the talk, Kent could not resist but amend his statement of “try not to panic” to “panic a little.”



## **Globalization and Identity Crisis: Breeding Ground for Populism**

*In cooperation with the Friedrich Naumann Foundation*

October 9, 2017, 14:00 – 15:30, Žofín Palace, Forum Hall

### **Moderator:**

*Michael Žantovský*, Executive Director, Václav Havel Library, Member, Program Council, Forum 2000 Foundation, Czech Republic

### **Panel discussion:**

*Roberto Stefan Foa*, Lecturer in Political Science, University of Melbourne, Australia

*Jón Gnarr*, Actor, Comedian, Politician, Former Mayor of Reykjavík, Iceland

*Senad Šepić*, MP, Independent bloc, Bosnia and Herzegovina

*Liav Orgad*, Head of the Global Citizenship Law Research Group, WZB Berlin Social Science Center, Israel

To preface the discussion, Michael Zantovsky, the moderator for this panel, first characterized the causal chain of globalization, the national identity crisis, and the decreasing trust in democratic institutions as rather simplistic. Globalization should not be blamed for everything.

Roberto Foa does not believe that populism is a passing wave, but will rather affect us for at least a generation. Globalization, according to him, has created new economic divisions in society—cosmopolitan urban centers that are connected to a global society contrast rural areas like the American Midwest or Northern England. These more rural areas feel that their identity is not being accurately presented, and thus turn towards populism. To combat this political cleavage, he suggested either creating a sort of “populism of center” or to simply “place our faith in democratic learning.”

Jon Gnarr, former mayor of Reykjavik, believes globalization turned his country “upside down.” For instance, Iceland’s financial institutions completely collapsed in 2008 as a result of influence from other nations. At the same time, globalization saved his nation, as tourism became trendy in Iceland—“It’s amazing, everyone’s a guide now!” he says. Gnarr considered the political party he created to be a populist party, but this is not necessarily a bad thing. Most importantly, he believes people should be more active in their communities, regardless of whether they have political experience. He likened democracy to love—“love is not a thought and not a feeling, it is an action.”

Senad Sepic and Liav Orgad touched more on the subject of national identity. Most conflicts nowadays, Sepic believes, are connected to an identity crisis, and he finds that there is a lack of connect between political parties and people. As an MP in a country with a complicated history and complex identity, that is Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sepic believes that we should be able to fight for values, yet simultaneously have multiple identities. Orgad further discussed identity, noting that Western countries did not need to define their identity in the past, but now collective identity is very unclear, and once it is investigated, people find out that there are more sources of national division than collective identity. Based on this knowledge, he raised the question of whether it is legitimate to protect the very little that is left of national identity, that is, from a liberal perspective. If not protect, Orgad certainly believes that ignoring the fears of the right regarding identity, whether justified or unjustified, is “not only theoretically wrong, but politically unwise.”

## Quo Vadis Turkey?

October 9, 2017, 14:00 – 15:30, Žofín Palace, Conference Hall

### Moderator:

*Jacques Rupnik*, Political Scientist, Member, Program Council, Forum 2000 Foundation, France

### Panel discussion:

*Suat Kınıklioğlu*, Executive Director, Center for Strategic Communication, STRATIM, Turkey

*Štefan Füle*, Former European Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighborhood Policy, Member, Program Council, Forum 2000 Foundation, Czech Republic

*Tarek Osman*, Author, Broadcaster, Senior Political Counsellor for the Southern & Eastern Mediterranean, EBRD, Egypt

The panel—the title of which translates to “Whither goest thou, Turkey?”—can be characterized as an outside-in view, as only one of the panelists was of Turkish descent: Suat Kınıklioğlu. He is the director of Ankara-based Center for Strategic Communication and had compelling statements about his country. He professed that none of what happened in Turkey over the past five to six years has not happened at other times in the country’s history nor in other political landscapes. The regression into today’s “authoritarian regime” has not happened in a vacuum. Kınıklioğlu noted that both Turkey and Russia have felt excluded from the European project and, therefore, are acting in a defensive manner. He furthered this notion of being influenced by other countries’ struggles when he speculated that “we will never know” how Turkey would have progressed if, for example, Nicolas Sarkozy had not become president of France. “We thought the project would bring us closer, instead the opposite happened.” Different developments inside Europe had a contradictory effect. The urge to remain in power became more compelling than the preservation of democratic values. This is something that needs to be explained with a regional-plus-global context. Unfortunately, within Turkey itself, people are divided and all have their own narratives about what has been happening. Kınıklioğlu said, poignantly, “It’s extremely frustrating to [try to] find a common language in your own country.”

Tarek Osman had a different take on Turkish politics because he is coming from the perspective of Egypt. “We in the Arab world look to Turkey as a pioneer,” he offered—a sentiment that Kınıklioğlu did not accept. Most of Europe looks at Turkey in a “transactional way,” and Osman cited their taking advantage of Turkey’s willingness to harbor 3-4 million refugees and their counteroffer of some humanitarian aid. Religious and sectarian tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean affects the image of Turkey in the West, rightfully or not. Its geopolitical neighborhood often casts an unfavorable light on Turkey and being embroiled in regional issues outside of its borders pose more challenges. Osman called the era of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, considered by many to be the father of Turkish democracy, a “top-down secularization.” Today, the solution should be centered around the youth that is angry with the structures around them, namely Erdogan, and with the situation of the past several years. After learning from the Arab Spring, the real change will occur with a bottom-up movement.

As the former European Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy, Štefan Füle stated: “It’s always a pleasure to talk about Turkey...but it’s more and more difficult to defend the Turkish relationship with Europe.” Presumably referring to the countries that border Turkey, Füle called the location a “sensitive neighborhood,” which agrees with Rupnik’s label of “totalitarian environment.” He simplified what is needed in Turkish politics under Erdogan: separation of power, checks and balances. (Kınıklioğlu might add: disabling government control of the media.) As the E.U. pushes to stabilize the region, Füle urged that

“it’s only together that we [can] reinforce each other.” Any conversation about Turkey being a part of the E.U. needs to be linked to the future of the E.U. itself. He believes that currently, in the state that Turkey is in, the EU could not admit Turkey. Although he placed the burden of change on the E.U., he backtracked a bit by posing the questions: “Can we really imagine [Turkey’s] membership in the EU? Maybe a strategic coalition would be better?” The question of how to reformulate the relationship was not concretely answered, but Füle ended with saying: “We should not give up on the Turks.”

The absence of true leadership and a robust opposition is the defining flaw in activist forces in Turkey. Kınıklioğlu referred to the referendum, the presence of a YES campaign, and the lack of a NO campaign. However, dissident of Erdogan and possible future candidate, Meral Aksener, was a strong proponent of urging citizens to vote NO, so there is hope in moving Turkey back to a parliamentary system. Kınıklioğlu asked a few questions—“How many conservatives changed their vote once they realized that there was no European future for Turkey? How many people, who supported the ruling party, are still not happy? Is it possible to have a predominately Islamic country, with a functioning democracy, and a flourishing economy?”—and offered a solution: Move toward the middle, and away from militant secularism and absolute Islamization. Looking to the future, Kınıklioğlu encouraged everyone to have a long-term perspective and has optimism that there will be a rebuilding process. “If we can consolidate democracy in Turkey, it will become something that would be stronger than the one we had before,” he speculates, because it would have gone through trial by fire.

In conclusion, the moderator cited three key points. First, we see the bleak picture today, but looking at the long-term prospects for Turkey is crucial to its success and its democratic prospects in the future. Second, he reflected on whether there was a sufficient buffer in democratic commitment in the past fifteen years that could allow a Turkey to reenter serious talks with the E.U. “*Who has the leverage now?*” was a question asked by an audience member and discussed by Rupnik and Füle without a concrete agreement on the subject. The general consensus was that it is the same as it has always been, regarding helping with the refugee crisis and sending aid. Third, there is a strong need for the E.U. to retain positive engagement in the neighborhood of Turkey, in the hopes of stabilizing and transforming the region “without comprising EU values,” said Rupnik.

## **“Democracy Under Threat” Book Launch**

*In cooperation with Oxford University Press*

October 9, 2017, 14:00 – 15:30, Žofín Palace, Knights’ Hall

### **Moderator:**

*Pavel Fischer*, Director, STEM, Member, Program Council, Forum 2000 Foundation, Czech Republic

### **Panel discussion:**

*Surendra Munshi*, Sociologist, Member, Program Council, Forum 2000 Foundation, India

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

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

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

In October 2016, democracy enthusiasts from around the world met in Prague at Forum 2000’s 20<sup>th</sup> annual conference, “The Courage to Take Responsibility”.

One year and one book later, co-authors met to discuss the process that led them to publish “Democracy Under Threat,” a book featuring essays from twenty contributors and edited by Professor Surendra Munshi. Contributing authors hail from Costa Rica, the Czech Republic, Egypt, India, Iran, Israel, Poland, Slovakia, Spain, Taiwan, Turkey, UK and the United States.

The book attempts to explore whether democracy is failing as a form of governance and why. Is it the economic stagnation, public reaction to globalization and migration, religious and political radicalization or loss of trust in political leadership and institutions? Why are authoritarianism and populism becoming more popular?

One solution may be an overhaul and renewal of the democratic system, where politicians stop taunting voters with unfulfillable pledges. Munshi quotes a song from his youth: “I never promised you a rose garden.” Instead, politicians and their followers should be prepared for future struggles where they try to eradicate the lies and violence present in today’s political society.

Axel Kaiser Barents von Hohenhagen, the Co-founder and Executive Director of the Foundation for Progress in Chile, points out the disconnect that commonly exists between politicians and the public majority, who may feel outcast. Within populist movements, the majority finds a voice which they feel that they no longer have in traditional democratic institutions. Such movements have resulted in Brexit, the election of Trump, and the opposition towards refugees. There have, however, been times where such action was curtailed, such as the recent election in France.

“I don’t think that people are just mean or something...,” Hohenhagen explains. It is just that the other side is oftentimes too quick to attack the dissatisfied group and to label them as racist or inconsiderate.

Hohenhagen did, in fact, receive loud and strongly worded criticism only moments later for this statement from a number of his fellow contributors. Despite the differences of opinion, Munshi stressed the similarities between the discussants. “One unifying thread running among all of the articles is a genuine concern for democracy,” he says. The conversation in which the writers themselves partook, shows precisely how the misunderstood and overlooked majority can be

shunned by lawmakers. This pushes them to join un-democratic movements, in an effort to find a voice.

“Democrats must be critical of Democracy if they want it to survive”, says Munshi.

## Do Latin-Americans Trust Their Institutions?

*In cooperation with CASLA Institute Prague*

October 9, 2017, 14:00 – 15:30, Goethe-Institut

### **Moderator:**

*Tamara Sujú*, Human Rights Lawyer, Venezuela

### **Panel discussion:**

*Luis Almagro*, Secretary General, Organization of American States, Uruguay

*Jorge Quiroga Ramírez*, Former President, Bolivia

*Felipe González Márquez*, Former Prime Minister, Spain

Tamara Sujú sharply opened the discussion with facts from 2016's *Latinobarómetro* publications, in which the high levels of apathy and decreasing trust in democratic institutions were related to the high levels of corruption, lack of transparency and of opportunities in the region. In Latin America, democratic institutions are still weak in spite of the region-wide efforts to strengthen them.

Former President of Bolivia, Jorge Quiroga Ramírez, explained that such frailty in northern South America is tied to Venezuela's situation, since its *petroeconomy* still has a direct effect in neighboring countries. Latin America in times of economic crises, he emphasized, has supported less democratic governments if their agendas could solve such a situation; whereas in times of *bonanza*, Latin-Americans support and push forward more democratic agendas and stronger institutions to protect their liberties.

The following months for the region are key in order to understand the future of Latin America in terms of democratic consolidation, in particular the upcoming elections in Mexico, Colombia, Brazil and, of course, Venezuela. Mexico has an important responsibility when it comes to re-negotiate NAFTA, for the resulting treaty will be used as a standard for the rest of the region. Venezuela's situation must not be disregarded, given the extent of humanitarian catastrophe and the potential shattering of democratic values. Evo Morales' government must be kept in close sight as well.

Following the discussion, Secretary General of the OAS Luis Almagro, stated that the role of the youth should not be off the table. Politics must be closer to citizens, in particular to women and the younger sectors, for the consolidation of democracies in the region depend on the participation of them. Liberties and rights must be defended, institutions must be amended to be efficient and accessible, basic services should be for the whole population.

Felipe González Márquez, former Prime Minister of Spain, remarked the importance of defending democratic values in times of great questioning of its societal utility: to believe in democracy, the rule of law and its institutions. Democracy enables citizens not only to choose their representatives, but also the possibility of voting out those who do not govern as expected. Such procedures are long gone in Venezuela, where the regime has in such a short period of time extinguished democratic values and abysmally destroyed its economy, creating a nightmarish scenario of broad poverty (thus making it easier to take advantage of the population). Venezuela's opposition must not legitimate the *Asamblea Constituyente* and defend the democratic processes taken, such as the society-elected National Assembly. The *Grupo de Lima* and the EU should not keep its eyes away from the developing (or worsening) situation.

## Will Technology Destroy Democracy?

*In cooperation with the Avast Foundation*

October 9, 2017, 15:45 – 17:15, Žofín Palace, Forum Hall

### **Moderator:**

*Arun Maira*, Chancellor, Central University of Himachal Pradesh, India

### **Panel discussion:**

*Vincent Steckler*, CEO, Avast, USA/Czech Republic

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

*Andrew Keen*, Entrepreneur and Author, United Kingdom

Panel moderator, Arun Maira, expressed the context of the discussion by mentioning Rabindranath Tagore's poem, *Where the Mind is Without Fear*. The Noble Prize winner dreams in his poem of a world where stereotypes do not exist; and Maira fears social media is limiting our minds instead of opening them. Maira laid out the main discussion points: the influence of technology on our minds and the nature of our public discourse, and who owns and regulates technology.

Andrew Keen did not shy away from expressing his issue with the very title of the panel, "Will Technology Destroy Democracy?" He argued that "it's very easy to demonize technology," and that when we blame it, we are not really blaming anything. "It" does not have a voice. Only people speak on its behalf, and the idea that it is a negative force is troubling. In contrast to Maira, Keen does not believe that technology is dividing communities. It does carry disadvantages like fueling our inability to listen to each other, but "social media was created for us and it was a noble enterprise."

Xiao Qiang claims that perhaps activists like him see hope in technology and its ability to empower democracy, or at least they used to. He wonders if today, this optimism has turned into pessimism as people started realizing that technology also "polarizes our public sphere." Technology is not only used by activists but also by authoritarian regimes for surveillance. As a possible solution, Qiang concludes that one should not only look at the content spread on social media, but the way it is being shared which could enable a certain pattern of information that can be manipulated.

As for Vincent Steckler, technology is a tool and therefore it is about how it is used. Events like the Arab Spring first branded technology as a benefit to society. Now, with stories like that of Russian bots' influence on American elections, that impression has changed. Using a US-centered Pew study which found that only 4% of people trust news on social media, he claimed that, apart from the younger generation, people generally still rely on TV more than social media to get their news.

On the question of conversation regulations on social media, Keen noted that the irony with democracy is that unless controlled, it amplifies the voice of the single entity using it, not the voice of the people. Unlike Keen, Steckler does not believe in government regulation of the internet. Discussing the crackdown on hate speech laws on the internet in Germany, Steckler expressed his worry of government control of what people do with technology.

In light of what was discussed, moderator Arun Maira concluded the panel with yet another question: "Will democracy regulate technology?"

## **China Before the Communist Party Congress I: Tightening the Screws**

October 9, 2017, 15:45– 17:15, Žofín Palace, Conference Hall

### **Moderator:**

*Olga Lomová*, Chair of the Board, Institute for Study of Strategic Regions, Charles University , Czech Republic

### **Panel discussion:**

*Jianli Yang*, President, Initiatives for China, China

*Martin Hála*, Sinologist, Czech Republic

*Chang Ping*, Writer, Journalist, China

*Guo Wengui*, Entrepreneur, Political Activist, China

The panelists share their concerns that the 19th Party Congress would lead to Xi Jinping's re-election, and consequently, a cementation of Xi's power. However, despite the fact that there is no one who is able to replace him in a leadership position in the short run, the panelists insist that this power will not go unchallenged and that, like any other leader, Xi will face challenges from many directions from competing bureaucracies with different strategic goals for the country. Szu-Chien Hsu suggests that as a result of this concentrated power, Xi is assuming so many positions of leadership such that his attention to each of them will be worn thin, which is a challenge he will have to face.

The panelists continued on to discuss the state of civil society in China. Chang Ping credits censorship as a highly effective system of control and suggests that despite the changes throughout the years, the position of power held by the Communists has remained consistent. According to Yang Tianli, Chinese civil society has been subject to increased suppression to a "degree unseen in the past 20 years". Even under this oppression, however, Yang Tianli insists that civil society is still resilient, and he suggests some conditions for the development of a movement for real change in China, including a mounting general discontent from citizens, a "viable oppositional democratic movement," and the international support and recognition of a Chinese democratic movement.

As a response to the panelists' general pessimistic outlook on the outcome of the Party Congress, a member of the audience asked if there was any way the aftermath of the Party Congress could be used constructively as a way to promote human rights. Szu-chien responded, reiterating the deteriorating human rights conditions in China, giving the example of shunned political activists. He notes there is some value in regard to civil rights that can be taken from the Party Congress and that it lies in the deterioration of the state of human rights itself as a way to alert the world to the unfavorable situation. He remarks: "The whole world should be alarmed!" As China expands its economic and political influence, Szu-chien implores the world not to treat China's Communist regime as an ordinary trade partner because in doing so, we are "harming the interest of global solidarity for democracy and human rights."

Yang suggests that Xi Jinping has shown ambition to go beyond the two five-year terms and has been trying to lay the power structure and foundation to do so. However, in order to go beyond the ten years, Xi must face some obstacles. For one, after the Tiananmen Square protests, the Chinese Communist party adopted an effective policy of "buying stability" so the middle class would be defenders of the regime, which is how the Communist party managed to continue. But because of Xi's anti-corruption campaign, it will be difficult to find a social group that strongly supports him, and he could face the crisis of the middle class turning its back on



the regime. In fact, China's down turning economy could make more apparent China's social conflicts.

## Russia From Within

October 9, 2017, 15:45 – 17:15, Žofín Palace, Knights' Hall

### Moderator:

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

### Panel discussion:

*Alexander Solovyev*, Chairman, Open Russia Movement, Russia

*Mark Galeotti*, Research Fellow, Institute of International Relations Prague, United Kingdom

*Anna Elchyan*, Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO), Russia

In September of 2017, Russia held its regional elections for Parliament with little if any media coverage. With less than 10% voter turnout, the election hardly serves as a measure of public opinion but represents another pillar of obstruction. The election included thousands of candidates from many opposition parties. Alexander Solovyev highlighted the challenges candidates faced when they are not a part of the ruling United Russia party. He described the *Municipal Filter*, a law which requires regional candidates to collect signatures from regional officials, representatives who were often appointed to their position by the United Russia party. Most candidates successfully receive a few signatures, but the majority fail to receive the required signatures from the +100 districts of Russia. This is further complicated by the fact that these signatories are not required to sign-off on every candidate and are unlikely to do so given that their position was provided by the ruling United Russia party. Solovyov said these requirements violate the laws of Russia but serve as another example of the United Russia party skirting the constitution to maintain power.

Despite the opportunity for elections, President Putin and the United Russia party have maintained rule of the government through disruption and intimidation. Mark Galeotti underplayed the importance of the elections further, indicating that they are nothing more than a ceremonious event. However, increasing unrest in the authoritarian regime has begun to expose weaknesses. Galeotti described a number of structural challenges which makes Putin's regime fragile in the long run. He notes that authoritarian regimes are rarely toppled; they decay and erode until they collapse from within and Galeotti believes there are already signs of brittleness. The United Russia party is beginning to show an inability to generate 2<sup>nd</sup> generation representatives. Party leaders are grooming less and less candidates for future roles in government, with many of the elite's heirs choosing business over politics. This has created a vacuum of talented leaders, leaving high level positions, including governorships, to be filled by bodyguards and soldiers who are largely incapable of serving the role. The panel held a consensus that the party is only as powerful as Putin. He is the central figure to the United Russia party and he is coming under more pressure and scrutiny domestically from both upper and lower classes. Both Solovyev and Elchyan confirmed that the economic sanctions have been successful and the Russian people are suffering as a result, putting more domestic pressure on Putin. However, they both oppose continued sanctions against the Russian people as they are negatively affected for little involvement by the crimes of the elite. Both speakers support continued personal sanctions against the elite with the hope that their support for Putin will wane in time.

Overall, the mood of the panel was very hopeful at the end. Despite the continued grip of Putin and his cronies, the perception is that the United Russia Party cannot survive beyond Putin. Russia is facing tumultuous times, but the consensus is that the country can begin to improve once Putin is displaced.

## **Elections Landscape in Latin America**

*In cooperation with Fundación Para el Progreso*

October 9, 2017, 15:05 – 17:15, Goethe-Institut

### **Moderator:**

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

### **Panel discussion:**

*Mauricio Rojas*, Writer, Professor, Fellow Researcher, Fundación Para el Progreso, Chile

*Marco Antonio Fernández Martínez*, Research Professor, School of Government, Tecnológico de Monterrey, Mexico

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

*Ileana Álvarez*, Writer, Essayist, Director, Magazine *Alas Tensas*, Cuba

*José Manuel Ormachea Mendieta*, Student Leader, Bolivia

Axel Kaiser provided a quick introduction on the importance of the upcoming months for the whole region, given that most democratic processes are to be held in the next 15 months. Therefore, each country deserves a specific analysis of its political situation in order to understand the possible outcomes. Nonetheless, the most important aspect is that institutions must be defended and protected from any kind of manipulation from those in power.

The first panelist, Cuban writer and essayist Ileana Álvarez, described to the attendees the situation of Cuban democracy, explaining that nowadays, the National Assembly is not citizen-accessible. Instead, the National Candidacy Commission (CNC) is now the platform that approves the candidacy of a person, such that only those tied to the regime have the power to contest. Furthermore, women have an important path to follow in order to be better represented, create newer political agendas, and rule out the imperative "*Machismo Leninismo*". Opposition should be better articulated to be able to develop an agenda to facilitate future transitions. The international community must not follow different regimes' "left" rhetoric, in particular in Latin America.

Explaining the current and future panorama for Argentina and Chile, Chilean writer and professor Mauricio Rojas, defended the postures of center-right candidates and governments to correct social moral values (as in Argentina), and to restructure old economic agendas that have fostered growth and development in the past (as in Chile). Mauricio Macri's government might better carry its reforms should middle term elections be won by Macri's party. On the other hand, Chilean growing discontent due to Bachelet's structural reforms--in spite of the fact that her government has strengthened Chile-- makes possible for Sebastián Piñera's agenda to win in the upcoming elections.

Miriam Kornblith, US/Venezuelan analyst, remarked the importance of the advances in terms of positive democratic consolidation. Democratic mechanisms are broadly utilized and help the population elect governments. However, Bolivian political scientist José Manuel Ormachea explains that there is still democratic manipulation in the region, such as in the Bolivian case. Bolivian President Evo Morales has ignored and out-ruled democratic processes to perpetuate his rule in the country. It is imperative that the remaining democratic pillars, such as the Constitutional Court, defend the rule of law and the Constitution to prevent Morales' desire to remain in office against the general population's will. Bolivia's situation must be in sight to avoid another Maduro in the region.



## **Experiment: Is My Microwave Spying on Me?**

*In cooperation with the Avast Foundation*

October 9, 2017, 17:30– 18:30 Žofín Palace, Forum Hall

### **Participants:**

*Filip Chytrý*, Technical Product Manager Security & Privacy, Avast Software, Czech Republic

*Vladislav Iliushin*, QA Engineer, Avast, Russia/Czech Republic

Filip Chytrý stated that our privacy has been compromised. His talk had three main points: first, because there are more and more appliances that have Internet capabilities, “there are more devices connected to the Internet than people on the planet.” Second, these devices are increasingly connected to one another. Finally, the increase in Internet-connected devices is a threat to privacy, security and democracy as they can be hacked by governments and by individual hackers.

Mr. Chytrý proved his points throughout the lecture with several practical demonstrations. First, he showed how his laptop had information about every single device that was connected to the conference’s Wi-Fi. Although he only showed us the operating system of the phone, it would be possible to hack more personal data stored on mobile devices with a public Wi-Fi system. Additionally, he demonstrated how home appliances are vulnerable by using his laptop to hack a baby monitor to make coffee on a smart coffee brewer. This did not require any particular technological knowledge, just a program downloaded off of the Internet for \$150. Hacking a home can have much more sinister results than a pot of fresh coffee— a hacker could hack into a home network from a webcam or regular appliance and undo a user’s SmartLock. As Mr. Chytrý says, “Your home is only as secure as your weakest device.” Through Avast’s work in home protection, it estimates that “up to 70% of smart homes are hackable.”

However, all is not lost. Mr. Chytrý advised attendees that there were three ways to protect our data: research the vendor from which we get appliances and their history with data security, regularly update our devices, and protect data with antivirus and encryption.

## **China Before the Communist Party Congress II: Foreign Expansion**

October 9, 2017, 17:30– 19:00 Žofín Palace, Conference Hall

### **Moderator:**

*Kateřina Procházková*, Journalist, Sinopsis, Czech Republic

### **Panel discussion:**

*Jagannath Panda*, Head, East Asia Centre, Institute for Studies and Analyses, India

*Nguyen Quang A*, Democracy Activist, Vietnam

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

*Szu-chien Hsu*, President, Taiwan Foundation for Democracy, Taiwan

*Juan Pablo Cardenal*, Journalist, Writer, Lecturer, Spain

Does the expansion of Chinese foreign involvement represent the nation's success? Should it be viewed as a threat to democracy? These were the questions examined by Journalist and Moderator Kateřina Procházková and her panelists.

Since successfully securing sufficient natural resources, China has moved on to a new level of international political engagement. By funding infrastructure in developing countries, including many in Africa and Latin America, China is successfully expanding its sphere of influence; which also increases its legitimacy in the eyes of the international community.

Although the panelists all acknowledged cause for concern, they disagreed on the level of threat posed by the growth of Chinese soft power. On the one hand, the country provides vital aid to struggling countries by showing up with its 'deep pockets'. On the other hand, the territorial, political and economic expansion may not be without hidden motives.

Unlike those offered by the West, Chinese aid packages are advertised as 'no strings attached'. The Chinese government does not share the idea of collective responsibility, an ideology that prompts the West to add conditions to their donations, such as a promise of better humanitarian conditions by the receiving country. Instead, following China's donation, it slowly gains influence in the local media and uses new-found connections to expand its presence throughout the region.

Xiao Qiang, the Founder of the China Digital Times and a Professor at UC Berkeley says that "[China] is a success in many ways, but it's not a success in democracy. It's a threat to democracy." His analysis has led him to conclude that the Chinese government uses the internet to promote a highly manipulated appearance of nationalism, while simultaneously portraying an extreme level of anxiety and uncertainty illustrated by its choice in censorship.

"We need to get used to the idea that China is not going to become a democracy" says Juan Pablo Cardenal, a Spanish citizen and former Journalist in China. He explains that the Chinese leadership does not believe the Western system is the best for China. The international community missed their opportunity to influence Chinese policy before the 2008 economic crisis and have since lost legitimacy in the eyes of the Communist leaders.

Cardenal believes that when it comes to foreign expansion, the Chinese government is making one serious strategic mistake. The lack of transparency within the system results in very limited dissemination of information to the general public, which has no idea the extent of Chinese aid overseas.



## How to Protect Democratic Norms and Institutions

October 9, 2017, 17:30 – 19:00, Žofín Palace, Knights' Hall

### Moderator:

*Péter Krekó*, Director, Political Capital Institute, Hungary

### Panel discussion

*Ken Wollack*, President, National Democratic Institute, USA

*Barbara Haig*, Deputy to the President for Policy and Strategy, National Endowment for Democracy, USA

*Amichai Magen*, Head of Diplomacy & Conflict Studies, The Interdisciplinary Center (IDC), Herzliya, Israel

*Senad Šepić*, MP, Independent bloc, Bosnia and Herzegovina

As Barbara Haig put it, the biggest threats of democracy today stem from aggressive authoritarian assaults on democratic institutions and non-state actors. We are at a crossroads today, in which we must uplift enthusiasm among voters about many democratic norms considered to be standard. This is naturally a hard thing to do, people expect a certain continuity in democracy. We fought for civil rights once, why must we do it again? The same logic applies to democracy. We have a functioning democracy, why must we actively fight for it? Amichai Magen sums it up in what he calls the three types of complacency surrounding democracy today. First, historical determinism; or the idea that after the Cold War, communism and authoritarianism would never return. Second, our misjudgment of the depth and extent of popular commitment to democracy. We forgot that for people to be in favor of democracy, it must deliver just as any other form of government. If people feel as though they are not being taken care of, they will turn on their government regardless of its form. And third, we are complacent about the West's ability to successfully integrate anti-liberal regimes into the liberal world order. Institutions like the UN offer a means to discussion, but do a poor job at enforcing these regimes to change. Another problem identified by Amichai Magen was that of identity politics and how it leads to hyper-partisanship where everything in a discussion may be interpreted as an insult. Ken Wollack pointed to the fact that the world community of autocracies is a self-taught one. They have learned how to use legal means to achieve their objectives and teach each other these means.

Ken Wollack also spoke on the state of disinformation in our democracies. He looked at the difference between Russian propaganda during the Cold War and Russian propaganda now, where he saw a clear disconnect. The Cold War propaganda was focused on "pull factors," or reasons for people to move to Russia or at least think highly of it. The propaganda now is not about Russia at all, it is about Russia's adversaries and pointing out the flaws in their systems. An attempt to peg other countries down to Russia's level, so to speak. The reason this is so much more effective is because it enables confirmation bias in those already dissatisfied with their Western governments. It also shows something at the heart of the West's troubles today, which is "if the Russians disappeared tomorrow, the problems of today would still exist" (Ken Wollack).

When asked if terrorism was a threat to functioning democracies, the panel responded with a resounding "No." Amichai Magen said that terrorism has never brought down a functioning democracy, and urged those in the audience to follow his "bull and a mosquito in a china shop" metaphor. The china shop is democracy, the bull is the state, and the mosquito is terrorism. Now, there are three ways the mosquito may bring about the destruction of the china shop: 1) enrage the bull and let it destroy the shop (he pointed to Israel as an example of how hard it is



to make a state destroy itself) 2) weapons of mass destruction (very slim chance of any terrorist organization gaining these anytime soon) 3) evolving into a larger animal (again, low chance of this happening as ISIS is on its last legs).

During the last portion of the panel, Senad Šepić answered a question from a Ukrainian activist about how young democracies can defend their institutions from those attempting to undermine them. He stated that the most important thing activists can do is advocate for civic engagement, search for partners in their fight, and defend their values every day.

Péter Krekó summed the panel up in three takeaways: there is an agreement that democracy is in danger, even more today than 30 years ago; the Western world is still strong enough to defend its values; and institutions are crucial to holding democracy.

## TUESDAY

### **South Asia: Religion, Authoritarianism and the Future of Democracy**

October 10, 2017, 8:30 – 10:00, Žofín Palace, Delegates' Lounge

#### **Moderator:**

*Hrishabh Sandilya*, Political Analyst, India

#### **Panel discussion:**

*Jagannath Panda*, Head, East Asia Centre, Institute for Studies and Analyses, India

*Neelam Deo*, Director, Gateway House, India

*Nguyen Quang A*, Democracy Activist, Vietnam

Countries in South Asia are currently grappling with several questions in the context of democracy. Jagannath Panda, Neelam Deo, and Quang A Nguyen, together with moderator Hrishabh Sandilya, discussed these issues in the panel “South Asia: Religion, Authoritarianism, and the Future of Democracy.” In the discussion, the panelists agreed that South Asian nations are on a positive trajectory in terms of democracy, and democratization is a process that requires patience and time.

From the beginning, the panelists emphasized that South Asia should not be analyzed as a homogenous region, but rather a series of separate countries with distinct histories, religions and culture. Common to most, however, is a colonial past that continues to influence democratic institutions and civil societies today.

Regarding religion, countries like India and Nepal are highly religious, but have constitutions that define themselves as secular. Secular, in the case of South Asia, does not mean a separation of church and state as it does in Western democracies, but rather an equal respect to all existing religions. As Deo eloquently explained, “Religion has been around for as long as mankind has been around. Democracy is new.” For South Asian countries, the role of religion may seem more apparent in legal and social systems that it does in Europe, but European institutions still flow out of Christian values. For postcolonial South Asian countries, their institutions appear less seamless because for a large part of their history, they were governed by foreign laws that did not reflect their specific traditions.

In terms of authoritarianism, Deo pointed out that South Asia is simply another region of the world, along with Europe and North America, that is subject to the global trend toward right-wing authoritarianism. This is the same for other challenges seen in Europe and North America. Like the divide between urban and rural communities in the United States and the Catalonian independence movement in Spain, Nguyen explained that “there are two Thailands: one is Bangkok and the other is the rest of the country.”

More broadly, the panelists agreed that the future of democracy in South Asian countries is bright. Although South Asia is facing issues with authoritarianism and ethno-nationalism, this is simply a snapshot of an ongoing process in the region. Many countries in South Asia have active civil societies that signal a positive path toward democratization and secularization.

## Central Europe: 20 Years From Now

*In cooperation with the Czech-German Discussion Forum and the Czech-German Future Fund*  
October 10, 2017, 8:30 – 10:00, Goethe-Institut, Foyer

### Moderator:

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

### Panel discussion:

*Karel Schwarzenberg*, Chairman, Committee on Foreign Affairs, Chamber of Deputies, Parliament, Czech Republic

*Tamás Meszerics*, Member of the European Parliament, Hungary

*Agnieszka Romaszewska-Guzy*, Journalist, Poland

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

*Detmar Doering*, Philosopher, Publicist, Germany

**Libor Rouček** explained that Central European countries such as the ones represented by the panel (Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic) joined NATO (the North Atlantic Treaty Organization) and later the EU (European Union), for security, a sense of community; and to adopt the values of civil and human rights, and democracy, as these were critical values absent during the Communist regime. However, given the recent sociopolitical situation in Central Europe, individuals are wondering where these nations are headed, what remains of these basic values, and question the membership of their nations in NATO and the EU. Perhaps, according to Rouček, there should be a renewed focus on *political education*. The panel participants had approximately five minutes each to express their varied perspectives on the future of Central Europe; a discussion which then developed into a debate before a few audience questions were received.

**Agnieszka Romaszewska-Guzy**, a self-proclaimed optimist from Poland spoke first, and challenged the trending “apocalyptic vision” of Central Europe’s future. A historian by education and journalist by profession, she expressed that the “future is not [her] major,” and thus, she focuses on the present. Although she has a more hopeful opinion of Central Europe’s future, she recognized that there are indeed abstract problems that need to be addressed. Romaszewska-Guzy listed three major problems affecting not only Central Europe but the EU as a whole: *a lack of respect, hypocrisy, and the vision of Europe as worsening*, the latter of which “should be overcome and will be overcome.” She argued that not all member states of the European Union are treated as equals, and are often treated as objects as opposed to subjects. For example, if something akin to the Spanish police response to Catalonia had happened in Poland, Western media would have unabashedly criticized Poland. The values Central Europe gained after joining NATO and the EU were: *freedom, sobriety and human dignity*, values that are still present and strong enough to overcome the aforementioned issues plaguing Central European society today. To conclude her presentation, Romaszewska-Guzy asserted that populism arises out of “sentiments of betrayal.” Thus, she recommended that nations return to the concept of *compromise*, originally upheld by the European Union, to combat both “international and internal changes,” and to ensure a better future.

**Tamás Meszerics** of Hungary also considered himself a “cautious optimist,” and contended that *the worst, i.e., “the populist upsurge” of the last two years, has already passed*. Recalling the past, Meszerics stated that Central Europe had a major consensus to break away from the Soviet Union but did not have a broad societal agreement about what to do afterwards. Things

must be different now, a consensus of how to rearrange the EU must be reached in order to propose solutions. Distancing himself from abstractions, Meszerics was more practical and proposed an economic solution, arguing that what will be decisive in a more stable future will be the way in which *Germany reacts to the changes in the car industry* as a decrease in foreign investment could “potentially dislocate” nations. Meszerics concluded that a *transparent political structure* and better leadership could improve Central Europe’s future, a proposed solution with which Romaszewska-Guzy later agreed.

Unlike her colleagues, **Iveta Radičová**, Slovakia’s representative, was not as optimistic about Central Europe’s future, and perhaps more realistic. Also recalling the history of Central Europe’s integration into the EU, Radičová expressed that “our region wanted to be a part of Western civilization with all its institutions,” but true integration never happened as demonstrated through the Eurozone crisis only a few years later. *Pushing solutions does not mean integration*. The shock of the crisis increased the differences between the member states: “differences in justice, in level of corruption, in GDP, aims (e.g., Brexit),” etc.; to the extent that states forcefully rushed to find commonalities in order to keep up with the *façade of a “European identity” that upheld human rights, something Radičová emphatically claimed to be an empty concept*. Thus, in attempting to answer Libor Rouček’s question, Radičová sincerely stated that she *did not know*. Because politicians have produced a shift in values and narratives regarding refugees, migrants, the U.S., Moscow, etc., the political scene is unpredictable, thereby making it *difficult to predict anything*. In fact, the Central European region has always been characterized by fickleness: it was first under the control of Nazis Germany, followed by the United States and the Soviet Union, and then it underwent a process of democratization, so how is it feasible to predict where it will be in twenty years? Nevertheless, she did assert that if European nations return to the social values of *tolerance (the basis of citizenship and human rights)*, *trust (the basis of social cohesion)*, and *solidarity (the basis of social inclusion)*, *the institution of liberal democracy can potentially be reawakened*. Similarly, to Meszerics, Radičová also stated that a *deep change in the labor market* to react to industrialization and technological transformations could improve the future in terms of social justice and welfare reform. The Czech Republic’s representative, **Karel Schwarzenberg**, was also less optimistic than his colleagues. He began by proudly stating that “Central Europe is *our fate, we are Central Europe*,” hence, presumably, it is up to Central Europe to address its problems. He acknowledged that unlike Western Europe, Central Europe did not have revolutions that inspired democratization, such that Central Europe has developed *illiberal democracies*; a claim that Romaszewska-Guzy later refuted by expressing that Central Europe “is not genetically illiberal.” Radičová, on the other hand later agreed with Schwarzenberg, but furthered the argument in asserting that the problems with illiberal democracies are not just concentrated in Central Europe. Therefore, according to Schwarzenberg, Central European governments—and indeed all European governments—must first address their internal problems before being able to resolve larger issues like membership in intergovernmental institutions.

Offering an ‘outsider’s perspective, Germany’s Detmar Doering, stated that Germany also never experienced democratic revolutions. Like his colleagues, Doering also claimed that *post-Communist nations entered the Western world seeking a safe harbor, but to what extent has the Western world proved to be a safe harbor?* He also wondered if *history can determine the future*, allowing for the notion that perhaps time is not necessarily causal; and that Central Europe is capable of independently forging its own future. Indeed, he affirmed that Central Europe is not a coherent block (“Germany was once part of Central Europe”), and that intergovernmental institutions should *give more freedom to various cultural spaces*. Furthermore, ending on a more positive note, Doering stated that above all, *European problems should be solved in order to restore trust*.



## **“What Happened Last Night in Sweden?” Images of Sweden From Abroad**

*In cooperation with the Embassy of Sweden*

October 10, 2017, 8:30 – 10:00, Embassy of Sweden

### **Moderator:**

*Jan Šnidauf*, Head of Political Section and Economic Section, EU Delegation to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Member, Program Council, Forum 2000 Foundation, Czech Republic

### **Remarks:**

*Mauricio Rojas*, Writer, Professor, Fellow Researcher, Fundación Para el Progreso, Chile

*Jacob Stenberg*, Swedish Institute, Sweden

“You look at what’s happened last night in Sweden? Sweden? Can you believe this, Sweden? They took in large numbers and having problems like they never thought possible?” What was this incident that Trump sited? It was mostly unclear. The now famous quote serves mostly as another mark on President’s Trump war on mainstream media by means of a misinformation campaign popularized by pro right-wing outlets in 2016. In what was meant to be the golden age of democracy, information sharing has become overwhelming and has often resulted in misinformation eclipsing the truth. Mauricio Rojas noted that people are no longer seeking out the truth in news and social media, but rather, confirmation of their own narrow beliefs and views. People have begun to allow their perceptions to shape their realities.

The panel did not focus on Trump’s statement, but rather how it was another example of a disinformation campaign surrounding Sweden in recent years. Sweden became the target of alternative media groups who call the country “multicultural hell” within their circles. Sweden, who has a very open immigration policy and took in many refugees in the 2015 Syrian Migration crisis, has long been the target of these groups and depicted as a country wrought with crime and chaos because it provides refuge. This is largely untrue, as there have been no official reports indicating an increase in crime or negative economic impact resulting from Sweden opening its borders. In terms of employment opportunity, Sweden has many barriers that make it difficult for foreigners to succeed economically, while domestic workers are protected. The disinformation campaign is not meant to discredit Sweden or undermine its programs. The panel concurred that the campaign is mostly used to influence debate and agendas of a target nation. In 2016, populist movements like the Trump campaign and Brexit movement utilized these sources to further their own agenda, using Sweden as an “example” to promote their protectionist and isolationist policies. The stories these campaigns site come from questionable sources. One example, presented by Hynek Pallas, was a story of Muslim refugees burning down a Christian church in southern Sweden. To be clear, this story is not true. This story was manufactured by a media outlet based in Macedonia which did not have a primary source and linked many unrelated stories together to create a false narrative. The outlet crafts many stories like this to generate revenue through clicks and views. This story was circulated by other right-wing media outlets and gained popularity on social media, becoming a beacon of outcry against the “failed” Swedish immigration policies.

As information becomes more available, people are at greater risk of falling victim to fake news. The panel expressed concern at the future risks associated with disinformation, particularly in their own country of Sweden. Sweden has mostly combatted the consequences of alternative media. To be sure, Mr. Pallas indicated that 80% of Sweden’s population continues to trust mainstream media sources (compared to 35-40% in the United States). The panel agreed that the improvements in education, and awareness of fake news and intervention by social media companies, such as Facebook and Twitter, can ultimately help social media users negate the

consequences of unreliable news. The panel warns, however, that the longer people digest alternative media, the harder it is for people to break from it.

## Canada and Europe: Ever Closer Partners?

*In cooperation with the Embassy of Canada*

October 10, 2017, 8:30 – 10:00, Embassy of Canada

### **Moderator:**

*João Espada*, Founder and Director, Institute for Political Studies, Catholic University, Portugal

### **Remarks:**

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

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

There is a historically rich relationship between Canada and Europe, both politically and economically, but with emerging problems such as climate change, aggressiveness of Russia, radical Islam, and cyber threats, that relationship could be in jeopardy. In light of that, panel moderator Amichai Magen asked the panelists if we can still rely on Europe and North America to keep hold of the liberal international order, and what solutions are available to strengthen it. What impact have these problems had on Canada and Europe's relationship and do they share common views on the problems?

Ambassador Stéphane Dion believes Canada and Europe are indeed "ever close partners." After the Cold War, there was a hope of promoting liberal democracy globally but that hope, though still present, is degrading with the rise of populism and political Islam. An issue to consider is, "is it trade that we want or protectionism?" Dion believes that Canada makes for a good progressive trading partner, despite some Canadian politicians denouncing trade as poisonous. He encourages European countries to endorse the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) which allows for free-trade between Canada and the European Union.

Canada has had to deal with Russia, however. Although both countries are passionate about ice hockey, Canada supports the sanctions against Russia as its actions in Ukraine and Georgia are unacceptable. Both deterrence and discourse are important for finding solutions. Canada and Europe should team up in supporting developing countries as well and share expertise in order to complement each other.

Alexandr Vondra agreed that liberal democracy is not stable and thinks we should not take it for granted. He has greater hope in Canada being a replacement to the United States than Dion does. Vondra said that the United States is becoming isolated from Europe under the leadership of Trump and in order to determine if Canada can be the substitute, certain areas have to be considered. Vondra proclaimed that Canada is not as qualified to strategize against challenges like international terrorism because neither Canada nor Europe have sufficient global power projections or nuclear weapons. Canada could potentially replace the United States as a leader in the push for progressive agendas such as combatting climate change. Both panelists agree that when it comes to the climate, Canada and Europe share a consensus and the essential assets to tackle it; which is reason enough for supporting trade between them.

When sharing lessons from past experiences, Canada should not give off the impression that it is lecturing Europe on how to prevent strong nationalist ideologies in European countries from empowering populist leaders, stressed Dion.



The most vital countries with which to share experiences, especially on immigration, are those that have been out of totalitarianism only recently. Multiculturalism is not generally welcomed. Hence, Canada's approach of integrating and educating migrants instead of alienating them would help those countries.

## **Europe: Is the Populist Threat Over?**

*In cooperation with the Embassy of France*

October 10, 2017, 8:30 – 10:00, Embassy of France

### **Moderator:**

*Jacques Rupnik*, Political Scientist, Member, Program Council, Forum 2000 Foundation, France

### **Remarks:**

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

*Marc-Olivier Patis*, Head, Department of Studies, Terra Nova Think Tank, France

With the election of individuals such as Emmanuel Macron, a wave of relief has fallen over the general population, but it is clear that the populist threat is far from over.

Adam Michnik from Poland began the discussion by explaining that the Polish vision is rather pessimistic, and claimed that “we are now witnessing a historical regret of sorts because step by step we are ‘Putinizing’ governance in Poland and destroying the justice system.” As the public media becomes Kaczynski’s media, the country is invaded by national Catholic ideology (he goes so far as to call the pope a Trotskyist), and independent cultural institutions are attacked. He described the current state of affairs as “proto-fascism” as it was in the 1930s. He blamed the Polish people themselves: “It is our fault because we thought it was clear that these idiots could never govern Poland...We should have stopped them before the election.” This is not a uniquely Polish problem, however, as it is also occurring in other nations—Hungary, the UK, the US, and France as well. Though the result of the French election was “okay,” what occurred during the election process was very dangerous. Unfortunately, Michnik said he “cannot really find a unifying thought that would lead the government, a thought that says we need to find a compromise and that anti-European politics is suicidal politics.” Although he was not necessarily pessimistic, as he does see strong protests in Poland against these types of politics, he believes that anything is possible and fears dark scenarios.

Marc-Olivier Patis described populism as not only a criticism of the establishment, but also a monopolization of a representation of the people. Patis used Italy as a specific example of a rich breeding ground for populism and most notably highlighted the five-star movement, which questions the principles of representative democracy--a frightening situation. In terms of the Eurozone question, he finds that people put too much blame on Brussels; “we must be courageous enough to stand up to our promises. We must be accountable,” he says. Another key point that Patis mentioned is the concept of a territorial rupture. While there is not necessarily a gap in France, he sees a separation between the Northern National Front and the Southern National Front, where demagogues can be seen speaking to both cultural and social elements. There is a notable link between democracy and demography, he said. In countries that are rapidly losing their population such as in Hungary or Bulgaria, there is an existential fear that serves as food for populism. Coupled with the migration wave, this fear gives rise to social and cultural insecurity, and certainly makes it easier for these nations to fall into the hands of populism. In the end, however, populist plans are anachronistic plans. It is retrograde logic, but the question of populism is still a very open one.

## Religion in Defense of Democratic Governance?

October 10, 2017, 13:30 – 15:00, Žofín Palace, Forum Hall

### Moderator:

*Ivana Noble*, Professor in Ecumenical Theology, Protestant Theological Faculty of Charles University, Czech Republic

### Panel discussion:

*Paul Zulehner*, Theologian and Sociologist of Religion, Vienna University, Austria

*Suleiman Salim Nasser Al Husseini*, Academic, University of Nizwa, Oman

*Akeel Bilgrami*, Professor of Philosophy, Columbia University, India/USA

*Paul Cliteur*, Philosopher, Professor, Leiden University, Netherlands

*Nafísa al-Sabbáh*, Journalist, Editor-in-Chief, Masreiat, Egypt

The speakers of this intriguing panel addressed a critical issue still present in many countries today: religion's place in democracy. The main discussion points dealt with the beneficial contributions religion can bring to democratic societies, whether democracy and religion are compatible with each other, and the role of religion in politics.

Theologian Paul Zulehner believes that religion has not and will not always support democracy. Referring to the Catholic Church, Zulehner stated that religion can be opposed to freedom of expression and consciousness: "Religion obscures [the fact] that human beings have constructed society."

Apart from Professor Suleiman Salim Nasser Al-Husseini, the panel agreed that, generally, religion is incompatible with democracy and should not have a place in politics. Al-Husseini claimed that Islamic teachings have two sources: the Qur'an and the prophet's traditions. Interpretations can differ, but the teachings that come directly from either source do not conflict with democratic values. Muslim residents in the West can enjoy Western opportunities without challenging their faith.

Professor Akeel Bilgrami said that extremism is the concern with religion in politics. Extremists are minorities in all religions, and Bilgrami highlighted that we do not know how to talk about representatives in religions, but it is important to do so as that is a way to remove the fundamentalists. The problem is that a very small group tend to have the loudest voices.

According to Paul Cliteur, the issue in question can be tackled by two approaches. The first is historical and looks at countries with a state religion and observes religion's contributions. In this approach, religion has not done much for democracy because its premise lies in divine law superseding human law. The second approach is idealistic and philosophical, and Cliteur thinks it gives religion more hope of helping democracy. Religion is in the eye of the beholder and thus we define it as we want. Ultimately, he believes the solution to the problem is "strengthening democracy by democracy itself."

Egyptian journalist Nafisa Al-Sabagh highlighted that, in certain cases, religion is a way of getting people through their daily lives. The problem lies in state religion because religion should not be the basis of everything. "Having religion in the public sphere isn't fearful," she said, but when it is used as an instrument for political agenda, bloodshed transpires.

In response to the question of what religion can offer, the panel agreed that it provides a sense of belonging and solidarity. Akeel distinguished between Europe's secularized society and the

United State's more religious one, by explaining that Western Europe has adopted social democracy which implements a sense of solidarity, whereas the United States acquires solidarity from religion.

## Austria and Europe

October 10, 2017, 15:30 – 16:15, Žofín Palace, Forum Hall

### Moderator:

*Per Nyholm*, Writer, Commentator, Columnist, Jyllands-Posten, Denmark/Austria

### Remarks:

*Heinz Fischer*, Former President, Austria

Because this panel only lasted forty-five minutes, **Per Nyholm**, was brief in his introduction of **Heinz Fischer**, the former president of Austria. Mr. Fischer held the Office of the Austrian Federal President for two terms of office from July 8, 2004 to July 8, 2016. Nyholm was inspired by the moderation and wisdom with which Mr. Fischer spoke in difficult times, and was therefore a strong proponent of having Mr. Fischer be a speaker at a Forum 2000 panel. He introduced the former president of Austria as a politician, a philosopher, a statesman, a democrat and a socialist before giving him the floor.

The eleventh state president began his speech by drawing a historical comparison between the Prague Spring of 1968 and Austria's own 'spring-like' moment post-1945. In fact, Mr. Fischer asserted that he still very much remembered the Prague Spring since he himself lived through it. He reminded the audience that next year, 2018, marks the hundredth anniversary of the end of World War One, and the creation of the Czechoslovak nation and the Austrian nation.

Regarding the Austrian nation, the first lesson Mr. Fischer imparted on the audience was *that people can learn from history*. He then briefly delved into the history of Austria. Indeed, Austria's Second Republic learned from the mistakes of the First Republic (1918-1938). The First Republic was established after the destruction of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. The new nation-state was left in a state of shock after losing about six-sevenths of its population. Implying that the Republic did not handle this shock well, Mr. Fischer argued that Austria became susceptible to Hitler's grip in 1938. After 1945, Austria recognized that it needed a new European policy. However, the Austrian government was met with a series of obstacles: the Allied Powers forbade it from joining the United Nations, creating an army, etc. Ten years later, in May 1955, under a state treaty, Austria ensured neutrality and *opened its doors to international cooperation*. It developed active foreign policy and an interest in the European economic community; and joined the Council of Europe, the United Nations, NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization), and created an army. In 1988, Austria requested to be integrated into the European Union and after encountering several difficulties, in 1994, the Austrian government held a referendum to join the European Union. On January 1, 1995, after a two-thirds majority vote, Austria became a member of the European Union.

Mr. Heinz Fischer characterized the integration of Austria into the European Union as "*good, and correct, and useful*," particularly after Austria's antagonistic past. To the former president of Austria, the EU is an "instrument of peace, policy and many other elements." Nevertheless, Mr. Fischer admits that today, one-third of Austrian society is still skeptical about membership in the European Union. In fact, some people associate the economic crisis with the potential fall of the European Union. Mr. Fischer is very aware that nationalistic tendencies are growing in Europe, such that "the future of the EU is totally unclear." Naturally, the problem of the refugee crisis also does not help to alleviate the situation.

Expanding on the uncertainty of Europe, the former president of Austria explained that what is happening in Europe right now is not only a crisis of social democrats but a crisis of traditional

parties as well who have lost their roots. Thus, while the blame is collective, the solution can also be collective. To be sure, because of the recent phenomena of Brexit and the election of Trump, people do have a feeling of sticking together which may prove decisive in the current political climate. Indeed, Mr. Fischer expressed that in order to “find solutions, you need full consensus.” Substantial changes in the political system must be made, from the way in which movements are formed to the way in which elections are organized. *The former president of Austria candidly acknowledged that “we have a lot of work to do but all this cannot change [his] deep conviction that the model of a united Europe, of European cooperation and European solidarity” is an integral part to the solution of the current state of European politics.* His conviction is so strong that he is completely “against groups who think there is something better than European integration.” Thus, according to Mr. Heinz Fischer, the solution to a disintegrating European community that was once integrated and unified, is reintegration and reunification.

## **Defending Democracy**

*In cooperation with the National Endowment for Democracy and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. Coalition for Democratic Renewal Panel.*

October 10, 2017, 16:30 – 17:30, Žofín Palace, Fourm Hall

### **Moderator:**

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

### **Panel discussion:**

*Carl Gershman*, President, National Endowment for Democracy, USA

*Penda Mbow*, President, Mouvement Citoyen, Professor, Université Cheikh Anta Diop, Senegal

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

*Jorge Quiroga Ramírez*, Former President, Bolivia

*Leyla Yunusova*, Director, Institute for Peace and Democracy, Belarus

As Šimon Pánek puts it, “There is a need for active defense of liberal democracy.” Populism and a decline of democratic enthusiasm threaten the very structure of Western society today.

Carl Gershman identified two types of threats to democracy: external and internal threats. External threats come from countries, like Russia and China, along with non-state actors. Internal threats come from the formidable rise of populism and nationalism. Jorge Quiroga Ramírez added to this list the threat of scapegoats, or the threat of those in power shifting blame for all wrongdoing onto one group or ethnicity. Regarding internal threats, a confusion of a country's national identity may be a root cause of nationalism. The existential question facing democratic societies today is one of enthusiasm in relation to the democratic process.

In places like Africa, there is a strong need for democracy. Penda Mbow says that “we need to strengthen the organization of civil society and the organization of young people” in Africa. The way to do this is through institutions, therefore strong democratic institutions are needed. Once strong institutions are in place, Mbow says, other hurdles such as free and fair elections may be tackled. With this, education must also be strengthened if the youth are to begin getting involved in the democratic process.

Populism is a means to achieve power, but populists wind up as tyrants when power is achieved. This difference, Jorge Quiroga Ramírez says, is crucial to understand how populism can grasp an entire population. Ramírez advocates for international organization and moderation of countries through his idea of a “democratic scorecard.” He proposes that organizations like Forum 2000 release yearly ratings of democracies around the world. A need for youth participation is also echoed by Ramírez.

For many countries around the world, it is incredibly important to feel a part of an international effort to preserve democracy. Countries are not alone in the fight, and they must not be isolated to feel as if they are alone. Adam Michnik states that “the defenders of democracy are a minority, but a brave minority.” The fight must be vocal and ongoing.

The sentiments of this panel may be summed up in the Prague Appeal for Democratic Renewal, which is a first step towards an international organization advocating for democracy. This Appeal, signed by numerous dignitaries from across the globe, calls on democracies worldwide to step up to the plate and defend their ideals and their people from the threats facing them today. Post-truth politics can be defeated. The question is: when is it too late?





## **Austria and the Prague Spring**

October 10, 2017, 19:00 – 21:00, Austrian Residence

### **Moderator:**

*Alexander Grubmayr*, Ambassador to the Czech Republic, Austria

### **Remarks:**

*Heinz Fischer*, Former President, Austria

*Pavel Kohout*, Author, Czech Republic

**Heinz Fischer**, now a professor of Political Science at Universität Innsbruck, began his presentation poetically: “If there is to be a spring, we must assume there will be a winter,” said the German translator. To recap the timeline, he put forth:

In 1948-1953, there were many terrors and violations of the law, as concerns the government of those years. In 1953, Stalin died and fights broke out for his succession. Nikita Khrushchev started writing a new chapter in the brutal tome of Communism. There are always problems when there is an effort to liberalize a totalitarian regime—a “loosening of the screws,” if you will. “I was very impressed with the efforts to establish socialism with a human face and democratize the country,” Dr. Fischer said. He spoke of the expectations of the people, wanting more individual rights and freedoms than the ruling parties were willing to give.

According to Dr. Fischer, “The Communist party never played a role in Austrian history.” It never held a single seat in the Austrian parliament before 1945. Then, in 1945 it only had four seats out of 165—and years later, it was kicked out. The Prague Spring and the Hungarian Revolution created strong counter-positions against such events.

Pavel Kohout joined the Communist party in 1945 and, later, became a proponent of the Prague Spring. In 1969, he was excluded from the Communist party and was exiled to Austria. Most notably, he signed and was one of the authors of the infamous Charter 77—what he called “the petition of all petitions.”

Mr. Kohout spoke in his Czech native tongue. He had no notes and spoke from his memory and from his heart. “If you want to understand what happened in 1968,” his translator began, “you have to understand what happened 40 years before.” He spoke of the great economic crisis in the 20s and 30s that brought Czechoslovakia to its knees. The citizens considered it a failure of capitalism. He still remembers events from his childhood. When he was then years old, he experienced the 300,000-person protests with the slogan: “Give us the weapons! We own them!”

He recalled the intellectual failures of this generation – uneducated in the politics of the time and really affected by the suffering of WWII. They had “no time to take lessons from the past” and went from Hitler to Stalin. On the eve of the first development of the working class, there were 1.5M members of the Communist party in the Czechoslovakia. Most joined with the same feelings as Mr. Kohout did: there were only two possibilities.: either they could commit suicide or admit that everything had happened and that hardly anything could be changed. This was the mentality of those who decided to call the Soviet tanks for assistance. These were “the hardest years of the life of this generation” because they realized what they had participated in and that it had just helped “the decapitators.” They had thought it would be Communism with “Czech style” and a “Czech brand” because it was the only country where Communism was not “imported” by the Red Army. This misconception finally gave rise to a feeling in Czechoslovakia

that they must think in a very different way, but it was not an organized event – “so we can call it an attempt” to open the Communist party to the public from the inside. In conclusion, Mr. Kohout asserted that the Prague Spring began twelve years before 1968.