No. 02 2017

ASPEN Review

ASPEN.REVIEW
CENTRAL EUROPE

9 771805 679005

Generation Lost & Found

The Internet Is Broken

A Dangerous Time of Chaos

ASPEN Review

Generation Lost & Found

No. 02
2017

ASPEN.REVIEW
CONTENTS

Dear Readers,

Each generation faces their own specific challenges. The youth is usually blamed by the elders for all vices in society. My generation viewed with deep suspicion how Communist ideologues formally pushed and praised the young generation while cementing a sclerotic system led by gerontocratic politburos. Twenty-eight years after liberation from that ideological yoke, the younger generation in Central Europe seems to be shaped more by the concerns of daily life than by the events of historic dimensions.

Youth Forward

Today's youth lives in times seemingly free of these challenges but under growing pressure of economic competitiveness. Although young people enjoy more freedom in all directions and higher mobility in real and virtual space, it looks as if they maintain only a shallow sense of purpose and goal. Yet, this impression could be false. As Malgorzata Fidelis boldly claims while referring to Václav Havel: "There are times when the massive assault on human values could become the source of strength for those who defend them." The spontaneous activities of Central European students reacting to a need to help refugees on the Balkan route could be a source of hope.

On the other hand, polls and surveys support the claim that young generation loses trust in politics, politicians, as well as institutions (including international organizations). Why are the young Czechs, Poles, Slovaks, and

Hungarians rediscovering national conservatism as a hideout from European integration and a refuge from globalization? Why are the other ones leaving their homeland to seek fortune abroad?

Moving to a global perspective there are more questions than answers. What will be the effects of Trump presidency and Brexit on Central Europe in general and on the relations between Germany and V4? Are we facing a return of geopolitics in Central Europe? In an interview, Ken Weinstein of the Hudson Institute reassures that Central Europeans should not be concerned about Trump's rapprochement with Putin over their heads. He said that weeks before the US retaliation to the chemical attack in Syria that came as a surprise to Moscow.

Forward or Backward?

The socio-economic interdependence between Germany and V4 remains one of the key topics to explore. In this issue, Hans Kundnani discovers a paradox that V4 is most efficient as an anti-German coalition while remaining deeply connected to German economy. At "Forum V4–Germany" (a joint project launched by the Aspen Institute Central Europe and Aspen Institute Germany) we will search for new ideas and explore how much is the dynamism of our relations inhibited by our inability to unleash the potential of cooperation among the young in Central Europe.

More in the next issue. Stay connected!

JIŘÍ SCHNEIDER
Executive Director

Don't Blow Your Nose on the Floor

In *The Good Soldier Švejk* Jaroslav Hašek mentions a certain Pole who "kept aristocratically aloof, ignored everyone and played with his own hand, blowing his nose on the floor using two fingers, spreading the snot with the butt of his rifle, and then he deftly rubbed the butt against his trousers and from time to time muttered under his breath: 'Holy Lady!'" If we didn't know that the most famous Czech novel of all time was written almost 100 years ago, we could have thought that the author was writing about some Polish diplomat or politician from the ruling party.

The persistence of stereotypes and patterns of behavior in our part of the world is truly unusual and should not be underestimated. For two years the Poles have been stubbornly proving that nothing has changed in their national character and that they can successfully compete for the title of the sick man of Europe. Nevertheless, neighborly *schadenfreude* is out of place. Like it or not, Poland is the largest country of Central Europe and its image influences the perception of the entire region, increasingly often called simply Eastern Europe.

Warsaw provides more than enough arguments to all those who wish to turn back time and divide Europe again into a better and a worse one. Only the elections in France and Germany separate us from the moment when belonging to the eurozone will become the criterion of division. The Citizens

of eurozone countries currently constitute 66.6% of EU inhabitants (what a satanic coincidence), and after Britain has left the EU they will enjoy an overwhelming majority of 79.3% (a qualified majority for taking decisions in the entire EU is 65% of the population and 55% of member states). And then the eight countries from outside the eurozone (with the exception of Denmark) will face a dramatic decision: namely whether to enter the zone regardless of the cost.

In democracies, such a decision has to be taken by the citizens. While you can easily imagine that the Romanians, Croats, or Bulgarians would accept the euro right away, it seems impossible that the Poles or Czechs would do it in the foreseeable future. Most of them are against it, and what is more, their real support for further European integration is negligible. The situation in Hungary is slightly different: most of the public and the government are willing to give up on the forint. Already in July 2016, the Hungarian finance minister announced in an interview for the *Magyar Hírlap* daily that his country would be ready to enter the eurozone by the end of the decade and expressed "great hope" that it would happen. Similar declaration of his Czech counterpart is unimaginable. As for the Polish finance minister, he said recently that Poland would start thinking about entering the eurozone in 10–20 years.

Nine years ago, when I asked Donald Tusk, then a newly-appointed prime minister, when would Poland join the eurozone, he suggested that it would take place during his term in office. Perhaps he meant the presidency—the elections of the head of state will take place in 2020 after all, and it is quite likely that the current president of the European Council will participate in them as the joint candidate of the opposition. Seriously speaking, Tusk did nothing as prime minister and he will not start a losing battle now. Making the eurozone membership an element of the election campaign in Poland would be a perfect gift for Jarosław Kaczyński.

Let us be realistic. The Poles and the Czechs will sooner leave the EU than enter the eurozone. In this situation, responsible policy in these countries should be to prevent our marginalization in the Union and strengthen European cooperation in every area where it is possible. Tusk will have a lot of things to do in Brussels, while politicians in Warsaw could, for a start, stop "keeping aristocratically aloof and blowing their noses on the floor."

ALEKSANDER KACZOROWSKI
Editor in Chief

ASPEN.REVIEW
JAKUB DYMEK

COVER STORY
YOUTH
POLAND
EU
POLISH EMIGRATION
EUROPEAN DREAM

Let Us Have Our Dreams

How long can you keep telling people that they should be grateful for open borders, if they do not remember the reality without freedom of movement? The propaganda of success pursued by the pro-Union establishment had something of the subtlety of 20th-century authoritarian regimes.

When Poland finalized the process of accession to the European Union, I was in middle school. Still, a few images from that period are deeply etched in my memory—after all, it is not often that they tell you in school that you are witnessing a historical event and may take part in something more significant than the end-of-year gala. So I remember a debate between local councilors or politicians where the most important topic was the practice of selling fish wrapped in a newspaper—will the Union allow it or ban it, and if the latter, would it be good? I also remember perhaps the only person in the district who actively protested against the accession: a sad member of the far right party National Rebirth of Poland (NOP) distributing stickers with contours of two male figures in a loving embrace captioned "no pedaling." [1] And yes, I also remember a boy, an ardent Catholic, who kept telling us—whether we wanted to hear it or not—that in China they made soup from fetuses. I did not know (and I still do not) what it had to do with the European Union, but it sounded ominous. I also remember the school referendum on Polish accession to the EU and its result: 90% of "yes" votes.

If an analogous referendum were held in Polish schools today, it is possible that in some places the result would be the opposite—that 90% of Polish teenagers would say "no" to the Union.

Opinion polls suggest that a right-wing/nationalist turn has taken place among the youngest generation—the young are rebelling not against the conservatism of older generations, but against the deficit of conservatism. The intuitions of a major part of sociologists and researchers are most clearly confirmed by the results of the last parliamentary elections. And although we should not treat elections as the most representative and in-depth survey of attitudes, the results of radical groupings—and the popularity of the conservative right in general—is impossible to ignore.

1) *Pedal* means both pedal and a homosexual in Polish (translator's note).

In 2015, two different exit polls showed that the right won well over 50% of the vote in the youngest group of voters. In the group of secondary school and university students, two radical parties (named after their leaders: Kukiz'15 and KORWiN) jointly got more than 40% of the votes, which means that they would have won over 200 deputies in the Polish Sejm with its 460 parliamentarians. And we are not speaking here about moderate right, but about two groupings which favor Poland's leaving the EU, are opposed to immigration, promote the right to bear arms, use a language which is hostile to national and ethnic minorities in Poland, and pursue an economic agenda based on libertarianism. The leader of the Korwin party, Janusz Korwin-Mikke, declares himself a monarchist and an opponent of voting rights for women, while Paweł Kukiz proposes a radical change of the constitution and making politics "party-free," whatever that means.

Opinion polls suggest that a right-wing/nationalist turn has taken place among the youngest generation—the young are rebelling not against the conservatism of older generations, but against the deficit of conservatism.

If citizens under 30 were the only ones to vote, these parties, together with the winning Law and Justice of Jarosław Kaczyński, would get an overwhelming majority allowing them to reject a presidential veto, to change the constitution, and to push any bill through Parliament. As for PiS itself—also a winner among the youngest group of voters—it moves further and further to the right from conventional European Christian Democracy. The rhetoric regarding immigrants and refugees, the condemnation of "political correctness," the attitude towards domestic and international institutions and cultural and historical policy—all these make the Polish ruling party compatible not with establishment conservatives in Europe, but with populist protest parties. In short: Polish youth, alongside with the Hungarian one, would choose the most radical government in Europe.

The Shift Towards Conservatism

These are not the only symptoms of the shift of the youngest generation (or at least its statistical "average") towards conservatism. The level of trust for the Church is high in this group and the acceptance of abortion lower than in older generations. Unwillingness to accept refugees from Africa and the Middle East is also the highest among the younger segments of society.

Statistical analysis and conclusions from sociological research may be supplemented by examples from day-to-day life, such as very low average age of leaders of nationalist and radical movements and their overrepresentation in the new circuits of information and culture, such as amateur Internet journalism, YouTube, and memes. A striking phenomenon is the so-called "patriotic clothing"—T-shirts with symbols of nationalist military groupings from World War II, images of knights, or the Polish White Eagle replaced Metallica shirts and uniforms of subcultures.

Why? I have often heard this question from Western journalists who wanted to talk to me about Poland. In fact, it is easy to speak about my country using youth as a metonymy—a young democracy, a young EU member state, a young civil society, and so on... In its full form the question was: "Why is a country/society that went so successfully from an undemocratic system to democracy and EU membership turning away from both?" And the young—a generation of my peers and slightly younger people—provide a very good illustration of this problem, even if the answers given by these people are sometimes both more trivial and brutal than their interlocutors would wish. The European Union in Poland—perhaps also in the generational experience of other Visegrad societies—forms a crucial part of this answer.

I remember that around 2004, when Poland finalized the process of accession, a great event for us teenagers was the day when we received CDs with the then fashionable indie rock ordered in London, bought at some Internet sales. Okay, Internet did exist and many people had a broadband (at least in a big city and a prestigious secondary school), but both the physical barrier and the difference in the buying power of pocket money between Poland and the West were still huge. The only owner of an iPod in our school was elevated by others to Olympic heights. The most familiar with foreign countries were those who had families there or went to participate in international sports events. In our teenage notions, the EU and the Polish belonging to its structures was synonymous with unlimited consumption, the fulfilled dream about it, an immediate advancement for us all, and the inclusion in a better world for which we did not have to pay nor make any sacrifices! You were able to say overnight: "I will go and study in London or Edinburgh"—as if this London or Edinburgh was just down the road. Low-cost airlines became very popular and indeed many of my peers did what they said they would do and one day after graduation started preparing to leave.

The Experience of Second-Category Citizens

The EU project was not perceived by most of us as political, but as prestigious. While supporting the EU and the pro-Western ambitions of Poland you could also express the demand for pride, your personal aspiration, the superior status of "new Europeans," and also snatch something from the pathos of the great moment. When the next elections in 2005 were won by Jarosław Kaczyński and Law and Justice—this was when they ruled for the first time—the greatest problem declared by young voters hostile to them was that they were "un-European"— they did not speak English, they dressed badly, and generally represented resentment towards the West, rather than the universally understood desire to be its proud member.

Of course, a quickly-fulfilled dream disappears from the horizon and is no longer tempting; indeed, it often takes revenge and returns as a nightmare. Work in English candy factory or even studying by no means proved a liberating and dignifying experience for everyone—for many it meant declassing, sweetened by a higher quality of life and financial stability. Money, as it soon turned out, does not sate the hunger for dignity and does not abolish the sense of humiliation coming from being a second-category citizen—this diagnosis fits both Polish immigrants and Poland as a member state. The experience of being downgraded or humiliated was by no means universal, as for many people emigration (and EU membership) was a success story, but the political right skillfully and relentlessly stirred up the emotions of the humiliated or anxious. Disappointment with consumption and the ruthless advanced capitalism of the West perfectly fitted the long-established cultural diagnosis promoted by the conservatives—the values, strong national identity, individual and collective dignity are more important than the GDP, flexibility on the open European market, and the experience of life in a multicultural society.

Disappointment with consumption and the ruthless advanced capitalism of the West perfectly fitted the long-established cultural diagnosis promoted by the conservatives—the values, strong national identity, individual and collective dignity are more important than the GDP.

Polish immigrants often discovered that they had in fact a lower social status than an Indian banker, a Pakistani physician, a Nigerian lawyer. Their white skin and the heroic national myths instilled in them since childhood

proved worthless when they emigrated to the "Old Union." The cultural shock connected with seeing veiled Muslim women and the exposure to the propaganda of "living on welfare" really meant an initiation into anti-immigrant attitudes which—what irony—the Polish people learned first-hand as immigrants. In their professional experience the Poles discovered not the advantages of living in a multicultural society, but the reality of the Darwinian struggle between particular groups of immigrants where a Pole was enemy of a Bulgarian, Pakistani, or Turk. Black legends about "Negro" and "Arab" mafias exploiting the newly-arrived Poles on European markets also played a role in strengthening anxieties and stereotypes. Polish immigrants living in poor or suburban districts often fell victim to petty crime, which they interpreted as an effect of the "immigrant invasion," and then this fear was and still is successfully exploited by politicians telling stories about "Islamic districts" in London, "Sharia zones" in Paris, and "loss of control over the country" in Sweden.

The cure for actual or imagined degradation was of course an escape into a fantasy about a strong and caring nation-state – a homeland which does not exist and never did. Yet in the imagination both of emigrants and those who stayed home in the country that also pursued the European path, Poland became a bastion of traditional values, a rampart protecting against Islamic invasion, a model country uncorrupted by the ideologies of post-modern West. Cultural anxieties of the already more mature (and partly disappointed) young people from before the EU accession were incorporated by the right into a policy of a more welfare-minded, pro-family, and statist government—this was the winning agenda of PiS from the 2015 elections. Paradoxically, in the context of some social solutions this platform brought Poland closer to the West, however, it must be strongly emphasized that its foundations are traditional values and national exclusivism. The slogan "Poland for the Poles," previously treated as extremely racist and invoking the legacy of 20th-century fascism, shifted towards the mainstream of public debate.

Another generation, a decade younger, was growing up in the conviction that the EU and its projects did not offer any promise to them. How long can you keep telling people that they should be grateful for open borders and common market, when they do not remember a reality without freedom of movement and online shopping? The propaganda of success pursued by the pro-Union, liberal-conservative establishment had something of the

subtlety of 20th-century authoritarian regimes, which tried to build their legitimacy on the fact that people had electricity and running water in their homes. And ironically, the Civic Platform party ruling in Poland for eight years indirectly admitted that it pursued something which gained the name of "hot tap water policy." This strategy, based on avoiding serious crises and administering the main functions of the state, was very successful as a way of maintaining power, but its anti-ideological and post-community nature proved disastrous. The Polish government completely renounced talking about the future, opening the way for those who spun even the most absurd and unrealistic visions of this future.

The Dreams on the European Periphery

The Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán hit the right note already in 2013, when he said that the European dream really had a chance to be fulfilled not in the heart of Europe—the ageing and austerity-minded England or Germany—but on its periphery: in Hungary, Poland, Czechia, and Slovakia. While liberal politicians suggested that the countries of the Visegrad group were already past young age and should be content with stability, non-liberal politicians said precisely the opposite: only now we have our chance, and against the background of the aging and sluggish Western Europe we may show vigor, dynamics, and courage. It is an easy guess which story better suits the sensibility of the young.

The experience with pro-European parties was an experience of normality at best, far removed from the grand promises and expectations symbolized by the EU in the early 21st century. There is nothing shocking in the fact that young people rebel against what they understand as "political correctness" and "Eurocracy," as for them these are synonyms of the language of the government, the only one they remember. The successes of the right in this area do not result from the fact that the young people have permanently turned towards conservatism, but from the fact that traditionally they turn towards the more radical, populist story, for they have greater courage to dream and they expect more from politics. Today—and let us hope it is not permanent—this is the story of the Islamic threat and the impotent EU.

We should not forget about more mundane reasons: in recent years it was the right which opened the channels of personal advancement and career development to young people. For a young person with great aspira-

tions, especially from a small town, the right became one of the best ways of social engagement—and today the ruling Law and Justice rewards them for that engagement by offering them highly-paid positions in the public sector and state-owned media.

The successes of the right in this area do not result from the fact that the young people have permanently turned towards conservatism, but from the fact that traditionally they turn towards the more radical, populist story, for they have greater courage to dream and they expect more from politics.

Still, we must remember that just five years ago young people ardently supported Janusz Palikot—another populist. He promised legalization of marijuana, LGBT marriages, small government, and moral freedom. Today a politician from his party, a homosexual Robert Biedroń, is an astonishingly popular and efficient mayor of the conservative city of Słupsk.

In a government report "The Young 2011" the authors noticed that young people were not especially interested in politics, they were disappointed in it or rejected it outright. The researchers did not interpret this soon enough as a signal that politicians who rejected politics and communicated in the same language of disappointment and anger would be the first to gain from it. And it is similar today: "the turn to the right" should be treated as a symptom and a warning signal, it need not be exclusively what it seems. For it is also a call for more politics, more efficient government, and a sense of agency in the public sphere—liberalism avoided all these things and the left was unable to deliver them in time on its electoral platform.

Some things need time and it also regards stories. On average, the views of young people in Poland turn by 180° in a period corresponding to two parliamentary terms.

JAKUB DYMEK
is an expert in cultural studies and a journalist. He is an editor of *Krytyka Polityczna* and a regular contributor to the New York magazine *Dissent*. He was nominated for the Grand Press Prize for his texts on the CIA prisons in Poland. His book about the roots of the revolutionary right in Poland, USA, and Europe will be published in 2017. | Photo: Kamila Rokicka

ASPEN.REVIEW
SZILÁRD TECZÁR

COVER STORY
YOUTH
HUNGARY
ORBÁN
ANTI-POLITICS
ACTIVISM

Young Hungarians: A Nascent Political Generation

In the last decade, young people in Hungary have turned away from traditional political parties and, as it seemed for a long time, also from politics itself. However, now they launched their own movement.

On February 17, an important event took place in domestic Hungarian politics, its long-term consequences still being difficult to estimate. The Momentum Movement [Momentum Mozgalom] collected over 266,000 signatures under a motion to hold a referendum on the Olympic Games. The signatories proposed that inhabitants of Budapest should decide if they wanted their city to host the Olympic Games in 2024. As a result, Victor Orbán's government—not wanting to risk a referendum campaign on such a problematic issue less than a year before parliamentary elections—withdrew the candidacy of Budapest.

The Momentum initiative will go down in political memory as one of the few successful political actions against Orbán's rule since its beginning in 2010. During these seven years the prime minister has found himself in such an uncomfortable situation only twice. The first time was in the winter of 2012, when students took to the streets in protest against a dramatic reduction of access to free university education. And then in the last months of 2014 in Budapest and other major cities, mass protests were organized against the proposed tax on the Internet.

What these initiatives had in common, besides being successful, is that their organizers were almost exclusively young people below 30, and also the participants (demonstrators and those collecting signatures) generally represented the young generation.

Anti-Politics

Young Hungarians regularly face two charges: that they are too politically-minded and that they are hardly interested in politics. The explanation of this apparent contradiction is to be found in the nature of Orbán's system created after 2010. The semi-autocratic rule invades not only the economy but also other areas of the citizens' life: having children has become a political question alongside with patriotism, but day-to-day political discussions now revolve also around such issues as the curriculum or textbooks. At the same time, Orbán tries to act as if governing did not mean making political decisions, representing instead the only correct truth—"the national interest." Hence the name he has given to what he is doing: the System of National Cooperation [Nemzeti Együttműködés Rendszere].

This ideology explains why Orbán's government qualifies social protests against his actions as "politically motivated." One example of that was the campaign against the Momentum Movement—the government media allegedly spotted participants of the left-liberal governments from before 2010 in the midst of this movement. A similar media offensive had been launched against the organizers of the student movements from 2012, and since 2010 the government propaganda accuses every "civil" movement of being manipulated by fallen left-wing politicians. Another recurring charge is that the activists are financed by György Soros, the American stock-market guru of Hungarian origin, or by foreign secret services in order to overthrow the democratically elected government of Hungary. "The opposition: bad politician—good civilian is very harmful, because it hampers the movement between these two spheres and supports the cynical communication used by the government," says Anett Bősz (30), spokeswoman of the Hungarian Liberal Party [Magyar Liberális Párt]. Young movements often acknowledge this opposition themselves and deny having any political aspirations. The reason is that a very negative image of politics and politicians lingers among the younger generation; according to the survey Hungarian Youth 2016 [Magyar Ifjúság 2016],

for the age-group 15–29 politicians are the least trusted group—and also the level of trust for the parliament and government is extremely low.

Wacky Politicians

Young people gained their political experiences mainly in the period when the condition of the Hungarian democracy demonstrated a downward trend. Viktor Gyetvai (19), who in 2012, while still a secondary school student, gained recognition as one of the organizers of student movements, says that his first political memories are connected with the street riots in the autumn of 2006. Richárd Barabás (30), a politician from Dialogue for Hungary [Párbeszéd Magyarországért], believes that young Hungarians are not interested in structural questions of party politics and that the traditional image of a politician has become "wacky." To reach young people, politicians have to function as a kind of social hubs. Members of the new generation do not like to hear commonplaces, because they can check everything on the Internet in two minutes, believes Barabás.

Dániel Mikecz, expert of the Republikon Institute [Republikon Intézet], believes that this slightly far-fetched self-definition as civilians may easily turn into a trap. If a movement initiated as a single-issue group also spoke about other areas, it would risk being labelled as "sham civilians" by the government.

To reach young people, politicians have to function as a kind of social hubs. Members of the new generation do not like to hear commonplaces, because they can check everything on the Internet in two minutes.

In this respect, the Momentum Movement differs from its predecessors, because it entered the scene with 145 members and professional organization. Momentum Movement declared from the start that it intended to turn into a political party at a later stage. On the one hand, they based their arguments against the Olympics on the threat of corruption, but they also said that the funds reserved for the Olympics should be spent on other areas, for example on the ailing education, healthcare, or infrastructure in the countryside. "Momentum can serve as a model in the future, it shows that a grassroots initiative does not have to fall into the anti-politics trap, that people can and even should take part in the political game. For many young activists of the movement the month of collecting signatures was also a kind of political socialization," says Mikecz.

Apathy...

The referendum on Brexit and the American presidential elections have clearly shown that particular groups of voters significantly differ from each other not only in terms of education or place of residence but also in terms of generational belonging. The millennial generation could have prevented Britain's leaving the EU or the election of Donald Trump, but too few of its members even went to the polls.

Similar tendencies can be observed in Hungary. The popularity of the Fidesz–KDNP government among the young is much lower than for the general population. The survey on the youth from 2016 showed an increase of young people defining themselves as liberal or moderately liberal. A growing number of young people positively assesses our membership in the EU, despite the "fight for freedom" against Brussels waged by the government for almost seven years. Nevertheless, the political activity of the young is low: according to opinion polls, 44% of them are not interested in politics at all and 20% show a very low level of interest.

According to Richárd Barabás, although these tendencies are similar in Hungary and Western Europe, different processes are behind them. "In the West young people got used to democracy, they take the democratic system for granted and they notice the threats to democracy to a lesser extent or later. In Hungary the problem seems to be that although 25 years have passed since the change of the political system, we have still not learned democracy," he says.

According to Dániel Róna, lecturer at the Corvinus University of Budapest [Budapesti Corvinus Egyetem], "politics" in Hungary has become a dirty word. When in the same survey young people were asked if they spoke with friends and families about public issues or social problems, most of them said that they did. The initial distancing themselves from politics also regarded the Momentum Movement. When in an interview for the *Magyar Narancs* weekly I asked about turning the movement into a party, András Győr–Fekete (27), the leader of Momentum, answered: "I have long remained cautious in my attitude towards political institutions and political parties, for I regarded them as outdated and unappealing. But the problem is not in the institutions themselves, it lies in their content."

Viktor Gyetvai believes that the aversion of young people to politics has two fundamental reasons. "One of them is that their parents, raised in the times of Kádár's socialism, transmitted an attitude of distrust towards

power and perceived every public activity as potentially dangerous. Another reason is that the Hungarian system of education does not prepare children for democratic participation. First, students' self-government in most schools is perceived at best as a necessary evil. And second, the curriculum does not really contain civic education and in history lessons there is often not enough time to discuss events from immediate past, which are crucial for understanding the present," he says.

The situation in the universities is similar. Political parties are banned on the campuses and students often encounter difficulties when trying to organize discussions on issues connected with current political questions. The competition in students' self-government is usually weak, the leaders often occupy the same positions for years, and the level of democratic participation is low. "Students themselves are astonished when a representative of students' self-government shows a willingness to listen to their problems and treat them seriously," recalls Anett Bősz, who used to be the leader of students' self-government in one of the departments of the Corvinus University.

...or the Extreme Right?

The survey the Active Young [Aktív Fiatalok] conducted among university students in 2015 shows that party preferences of the young are dramatically different from the preferences of the general population. A full 35% of young Hungarians would vote for the extreme right party Jobbik (which never reached 20% in the general population), while the LMP (Politics Can Be Different!) [Lehet Más a Politika!], which in the last elections barely crossed the 5% mark, enjoys a 25% support of the young. At the same time the support for the right-wing ruling parties and for the traditional left is low and steadily declining.

According to Dániel Róna, the author of a book on the Jobbik phenomenon, the remarkable success of the extreme right parties among the young can be noticed also in other European countries (Austria, Slovakia), but the general trend seems to be that young people vote for anti-elitist parties. This may explain the success of the LMP, which tries to stay away not only from Fidesz–KDNP, but also from traditional left-wing parties, and during the 2014 elections it did not participate in the liberal-left coalition. In other countries it can be seen that anti-establishment parties are capable of reaching young people even from the left, Podemos in Spain being one example.

The Momentum Movement took its position in the center, but outside the traditional political elite. "What is needed is a change of political culture, and the political elite should be send to the tropics," said András Fekete–Győr in the interview I already quoted.

The good news for the new initiatives is that a significant part of young people joined Jobbik not for ideological reasons (opposition to the EU, and earlier anti-Semitism and hostility to the Roma), more important was a rebellion against the economic and political elites and the sense of community offered by the extreme right subculture. "These young people could be won over also by someone else, not only by Jobbik. Jobbik simply existed and offered answers to questions they were haunted with," says Róna. The presence of Jobbik may be taken in a quite literal sense, for there are places, mainly in the eastern Hungary, where only Fidesz and Jobbik have institutional structures. So these young people from the countryside may express their opposition to the current government only through supporting Jobbik.

Dániel Mikecz believes that the countryside will play a crucial role when it comes to the future of Momentum. So far, this organization is centered on Budapest and its members are educated and mobile people, most of them with some experience in European educational institutions. This new initiative announced that during the 45 days of counting anti-Olympics signatures it would visit all regional centers. They want to create local groups and with the emergence of new problems they plan to launch other local referendum initiatives. It could be the right direction—according to Viktor Gyetvai, young people can be drawn into politics mainly through issues which directly involve them. The government's plans to limit access to higher education from 2012 would affect both older siblings of Gyetvai and himself. "It was not that I entered public life, public life came to me," he says.

SZILÁRD TECZÁR
is a journalist of the Hungarian political-cultural weekly *Magyar Narancs*. He mainly works in the field of domestic politics, with a special interest in education and youth policy and human rights issues. He covered the european refugee crisis extensively and was awarded with a second prize in the National Society of Student and Youth Journalists' competition (2012) and with a Tamás Szegő medallion for journalists under 30 (2016).
Photo: Aspen Review Archive

ASPEN.REVIEW
ROBERT SCHUSTER

INTERVIEW
COVER STORY
YOUTH
RESEARCH
VALUES

Martin Buchtík: *Generation What* Lacks the Shared Experience of Tackling Some Society-Wide Challenge.

Research on the opinions of young people between the ages of 18 and 34 shows that thanks to modern communications this generation has no problems moving out of the environment into which they were born and have lived in—says Martin Buchtík in an interview with Robert Schuster.

What is the background to the "Generation What" research project?

This multimedia project was successfully launched in France two years ago. Its aim was to gauge the views and attitudes of the younger generation, people between the ages of 18 to 34, which is a rather broad age span. Since it was based on an Internet questionnaire, it wasn't strictly speaking representative. Anyone could take part and compare his or her own views with those of other participants.
We decided to supplement the questionnaire with more representative data, as we found that people who took part in the survey were quite different from the rest of the population. They were much more liberal, pro-European, and open towards the wider world. The Czech Republic was the only former Eastern bloc country, apart from the former GDR, that officially participated in the project. Some 60,000 people responded to the survey, out of nearly a million across Europe. Our parallel representative research was based on a sample of 800 respondents.

What was your hypothesis at the outset?

Our initial expectation was that there were three main factors shaping the young generation in the Czech Republic and in Europe: first, the new technologies, second, knowledge of foreign languages and opportunities for travel, and third, education in a democratic society. We discovered that technologies play a much greater role in their lives than expected and that they were crucial in forming this generation. Technologies determine the way young people communicate with each other and discover information about each other. Knowledge of languages, opportunities for travel, and democratic education, on the other hand, were only characteristic of a particular section of this age group, those with higher education. This is also reflected in their image in the media where they are presented as successful businessmen or businesswomen, or people subscribing to an alternative lifestyle, as young celebrities. A typical example are the "digital nomads," people who travel with a notebook and can connect to their workplace from anywhere in the world. However, the lifestyle of the majority of young Czechs is, in fact, very similar to that of their parents. Because they enjoy many more opportunities and don't feel society's pressure to "get a degree-start a family-raise children," they have a range of choices that are not so easy to describe or capture, and are all unique in some way.

Where did most of the younger respondents to the survey live?

The respondents came from the length and breadth of the Czech Republic and in terms of local affiliation, age, or education level their composition was more or less in line with that of the population as a whole. The main difference was in the attitudes they expressed, which was partly linked to the way the questionnaire was distributed. The main channels were the public media, Czech state radio and TV, which are followed by a particular section of the population. The survey was also promoted by various organizations and associations, such as Junák (the Czech Scouts).

Knowledge of languages, opportunities for travel, and democratic education were only characteristic of a particular section of this age group, those with higher education.

If you were to sum up the survey's findings, what picture of "Generation What" would emerge? Is it really as bad as the older generations tend to claim?

When you talk to young people and examine their attitudes you find that they are guided by a kind of moral compass. So it would be wrong to say that they don't have any values, but as a generation they don't seem to acknowledge any single obvious one. This is linked to the fact that the generation under discussion

has never faced any society-wide challenge that might have shaped the attitudes of the generation as a whole. The generation of 40- and 50-year-olds experienced the Velvet Revolution and the subsequent transition; the generations before them experienced 1968 and the "normalization" era. These events forced people to take a position, it gave them a shared experience. The young generation, by contrast, has had no such seminal experience.

The generation of 40- and 50-year-olds experienced the Velvet Revolution and the subsequent transition; the generations before them experienced 1968 and the "normalization" era. These events forced people to take a position, it gave them a shared experience. The young generation, by contrast, has had no such seminal experience.

Where does their "moral compass" come from? Is it based on the way they are raised at home or on their school education, which is rarely seen in a very positive light?

Not many young people would be able to list, off the cuff, the principles they follow since their compass is often hidden in the recesses of their minds; they may not even be aware of its existence. They create it themselves by constantly being forced to make choices, to take decisions from a very early age. They take these decisions themselves rather than relying on their parents or school to do it on their behalf. These decisions involve a vast number of things: what school to choose, which peer group or subculture to join, what kind of music to listen to. This is also linked to an early orientation in political affairs with the result that young people often give up on politics straight away. However, the final decision is up to each individual. If they want to change the world around them, thanks to social media and increased mobility, this can be achieved at less cost than in the past. Something like this would have been inconceivable in the nineteenth century: people were born into a specific geographical locality from which it was very difficult to move away.

To what extent is our young generation aware that this high degree of social mobility shouldn't be taken for granted?

Young people are aware that their future will be better than the lives their parents have had. This is very different from Western Europe where the young people no longer see it that way and are much more skeptical. I have recently come across some data[1] suggesting that whereas their parents' generation had an 80% chance of earning more in real terms than their own parents, the chances of this for today's younger generation have gone down to 50%. These rough figures indicate that it is

not just a feeling but something real. Furthermore, the current younger generation all over Europe grew up in unusually calm times: not only have they known nothing but peace but they never questioned the system of liberal democracy either. The outbreak of the crisis in Ukraine, the war in Syria, the Arab Spring—these events have shown that the world has begun to change in fundamental ways, that there are growing threats and our generation hasn't yet come to terms with this. The perception that young people in the Czech Republic will be better-off than their parents also derives from the fact that our parents grew up under communism, and as a result the generation of their parents wasn't all that well-off in the 1990s, at the time of newly-found freedoms.

The perception that young people in the Czech Republic will be better-off than their parents also derives from the fact that our parents grew up under communism, and as a result the generation of their parents wasn't all that well-off in the 1990s, at the time of newly-found freedoms.

What surprised me about the responses to the questionnaire was that young people in Central Europe have a positive attitude to foreigners, refugees, and so forth, as opposed to the attitude of politicians in these countries, which has been rather reserved, to put it mildly. Could this lead to tensions?

This is precisely the critical juncture that shows up the difference between the questionnaire and a more representative research. The latter has shown that the younger generation of Czechs is not that different from the rest of the population with regard to migration and similar issues. Twenty percent of those who participated in our research were open to migration as compared to just over fifty percent of those who filled in the questionnaire, which is a substantial difference.

How well prepared are young people to participate in public life?

People in the Czech Republic continue to feel that being involved in issues that affect society as a whole will lead either to political involvement, which is regarded as something dirty, or that it requires a public show of their feelings, similar to the forced participation in May Day parades under communism, which is also viewed negatively. We are basically not used to seeing a tradition of protest as something positive unlike, for example, in France. The situation in Poland and Hungary is similar, although young people in these countries have recently started going out into the streets, for instance as part of the "black protest" in Poland against the total ban on abortions or against the Internet tax in Hungary.

Young people have nothing against the liberal democratic system, but from their perspective it's a battle previous generations have fought and won and they see no need to give much thought to how this came about and what needs to be done to maintain it, because they believe it's working, somehow.

How do young people feel about nationalism?

Interestingly, sociological research in this country shows that since the 1990s, economic issues have dominated political life to a much greater extent than elsewhere in Central Europe. In Poland, for example, there have been many debates about cultural issues, of how society is to be run, of the role of church in public life. In Hungary the national issue has always played a key role. In Slovakia all these issues seem to intersect. Maybe that is why the younger generation of Czechs, who have inherited the economic discourse of their parents' generation, has been taken aback by what is happening, as traditional economic topics seem to have been exhausted and the discussion increasingly focuses on cultural issues, with people being pigeonholed as "conservative" or "liberal." This is something we aren't used to, a debate that has taken us by surprise and we find it hard to engage in it.

If the public is not prepared for this discussion, does it render it vulnerable to manipulation?

Most of these changes are not loaded positively or negatively; we can't tell if they are definitely for the better or the worse. The main problem is the taking of mental shortcuts. The migration issue is a case in point, as one side welcomes the arrival of millions of refugees while the other side calls for all migrants to be shot dead. No compromise is possible between these two extremes, they usually clash on social media in cyberspace.

How do young people view liberal democracy? Are they clamoring for a strong leader?

I would say they are not clamoring for anything at all. Young people typically renounce politics, don't participate in elections as much as the older generations; they are basically not interested in politics. They have nothing against the liberal democratic system, but from their perspective it's a battle previous generations have fought and won and they see no need to give much thought to how this came about and what needs to be done to maintain it, because they believe it's working, somehow. To some degree, this attitude is also reflected in the way they see 1989, which the generation of twenty-to-thirty-year-olds regards almost as a historical event. They were taught about it at school and they don't have as emotional a response to the

footage of the protests in November 1989 on television as their parents.

Are these attitudes similar to those in Western Europe?

I think that this lack of interest is shared by young people across Europe. They feel that they have no way of influencing the world in all its complexity. In this country young people are more used to being critical, to defining themselves in opposition to something rather than holding firm views and being prepared to defend them. This doesn't necessarily apply only to politics. For example, when deciding what to study at university many young people opt for a negative choice: they eliminate a priori the subjects that, for various reasons, are out of the question for them.

Lately there has been a lot of discussion about the need for schools to inculcate values in their students, for example as part of civic or political education. Is this a possible solution to the problem?

The Czech education system, including higher education, is wary of openly advocating specific views. People have become disillusioned with the grand narrative. The Czechs lack a powerful national narrative, something the Americans, Russians, or Hungarians still have. The Czech education system would benefit from civic education in the sense of educating people to be good citizens, but it wouldn't be a universal panacea for all the problems.

The Netherlands is often cited as an example of a country where this kind of education was introduced decades ago. However, the campaign leading up to last year's referendum on the EU's association agreement with Ukraine has been openly described as having been manipulated by Russian trolls. And this happened in spite of the fact that the tradition of civic education should have made Dutch society immune to that sort of thing.

Lately there has been much talk of false information and fake news spreading on social media. Is today's younger generation, which spends much of its time online, more vulnerable to being manipulated by fake news?

I see this as a major threat. It is the blurring of the lines between what is truth and what isn't, between what is verified and what is unsubstantiated, that makes people give up on staying informed. Many find it difficult to wrap their heads around what is right and what is wrong and prefer to deal

The idea that we can keep having referendums where people decide on things such as taxation is illusory. Suffice it to look at the voter turnouts in past referendums: you will see that they rarely exceed the minimum required turnout, except in small towns and villages where local issues are being decided.

only with things they understand. That makes them increasingly reliant on their own social group, and this is further exacerbated by the fact that the Internet and social media provide you with the kind of content that most closely resembles your own views. We will soon see something similar in news reporting, with the result that tailor-made content based on your past clicks and preferences will completely destroy the notion of what is real.

In recent years a large section of the political spectrum—not just in the Czech Republic—has tried to distance itself from classic politics, calling themselves "non-politicians" or "anti-elitists," something that has provided them with a very effective narrative and enabled them to bypass established principles and mechanisms.

Most populists combine their critique of the current political and social elites with calls for more direct democracy. Isn't more direct democracy quite dangerous at a time when it is increasingly difficult to grasp the essence of an issue?

I think we have to insist on the principle of representative democracy precisely because of the danger of manipulation. The idea that we can keep having referendums where people decide on things such as taxation is illusory. Suffice it to look at the voter turnouts in past referendums: you will see that they rarely exceed the minimum required turnout, except in small towns and villages where local issues are being decided.

The most common examples of direct democracy in action in our country are the meetings of housing cooperatives, which are often not quorate because people are not prepared to attend them for a variety of reasons, even though what is at stake are key issues, such as their future housing. I would not therefore expect young people in the Czech Republic to show much support for other forms of participation.

In recent years a large section of the political spectrum—not just in the Czech Republic—has tried to distance itself from classic politics, calling themselves "non-politicians" or "anti-elitists," something that has provided them with a very effective narrative and enabled them to bypass established principles and mechanisms. It all starts with a new party identifying some ad hoc issue that will appeal to a specific section of the electorate. It used to be the other way round—people would follow political parties that were clearly defined and tangible. A good example is Andrej Babiš, chairman of the ANO movement, who suddenly started to support pension adjustments just before regional elections, which traditionally have a lower turnout of mostly older citizens.

How does cross-generational solidarity work? Is a gap opening up between "Generation What" and older people?

Cross-generational solidarity works on two levels. On the one hand there is solidarity with people we know in person—relatives, friends, neighbors, people who live in my street—which tends to be very strong. Then there is abstract solidarity, which is quite weak in the Czech Republic, even compared with the rest of the world. However, it is not easy to pinpoint the reasons for this. At the same time, the weakness of cross-generational solidarity is manifested on both sides—the young vis-à-vis the old, and vice versa. Interestingly, when asked how they feel about elderly people, young Czechs usually say they need looking after, one could almost call it compassion, even though the older generation might not want to be treated with compassion! They want to be respected for their achievements.

There is also a difference between what different generations regard as important. Whereas 20 years ago active, left-leaning people would rail against social injustice, nowadays left-wing discourse is dominated by gender and cultural equality issues—in other words issues that the older generation regards as marginal. On the other hand, young people don't pay much heed to social inequality despite the fact that in the Czech Republic it has increased quite considerably over the past 12 years. And inequality continues to be reproduced. Where both parents have higher education, the chances of their child going to university are seven times higher. This is also to do with the fact that your background also provides you with contacts on which you can build.

1) Casselman, Ben. 2016. "Inequality Is Killing The American Dream" fivethirtyeight.com. 8th December 2016 (https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/inequality-is-killing-the-american-dream/)

MARTIN BUCHTÍK

is a sociologist and analyst working for MEDIAN market research company, he directs sociology and lifestyle research. After teaching and gaining doctorate at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University, he worked as the director of Public Opinion Research Center (CVVM) at Czech Academy of Sciences. Recently, he has been working on research methodology and non-standard research methods, on lifestyle (focusing on underage drinking, in cooperation with Czech TV and Radio, mapping the quality of life and millennial lifestyle in Generation What? project). He has been studying opinion makers and authoritarians, cohesion and inequality in society, and how public opinion forms. The topics of his work and study help him obtain a broader frame of reference regarding the processes of a dynamically changing society. In his opinion, a sociologist's role should lie in the meticulous processing of data and the ability to communicate the resulting interpretation not only to fellow professionals but also to the general public. | Photo: Aspen Review Archive

COVER STORY
YOUTH
SLOVAKIA
RADICALISM
FAR-RIGHT

The Rise of Radicalism Among Young People in Slovakia: Causes and Consequences

Oľga Gyárfášová

The results of the 2016 general election delivered quite a shock to Slovakia's democrats. The most chilling of the many surprises was the fact that a far-right People's Party—Our Slovakia (ĽSNS) made it into the country's parliament. A party whose relevance had, until then, been solely regional (its leader is the governor of one of Slovakia's eight regions) suddenly garnered 8%of the vote nationwide, which translated into 14 seats in the 150-strong parliament. By comparison, the party received only 1.6% of the popular vote in the previous general election. What gives further cause for concern is the fact that with 23% (!) of first-time voters (aged 18–22) opting for the extremists, it was the young who have largely contributed to People's Party's electoral success. It should also be noted that this is a generation that grew up in democracy, without direct experience of the totalitarian regime or its legacy, and has lived in the best possible times in terms of the country's economic performance, enjoying open borders and the opportunities to study, work, and settle anywhere in the European Union.

What did we do wrong? Or, to put it less personally: what has gone wrong? This is the question the generation of democratically-minded parents have been asking, people who had to defeat Husák's communism and later Vladimír Mečiar's rule to ensure Slovakia would become a part of the Western world. What did we neglect to do? This is the question on the lips of their grandparents who, as young adults, had not been allowed to travel to the West, had to keep their mouths shut, and toe the line to avoid persecution.

Understanding the Causes

The causes of the rising political radicalism among young people are not that easy to find. There are the widely-known ones-young people's general propensity to rebel, to define themselves in opposition to the system and the

established order, and their proclivity to radical views. However, the edge of rebellion tends to get blunted with age. What we seem to be witnessing now is a more persistent and comprehensive phenomenon, and it thus poses a greater threat to democracy.

Sociologists are puzzled by the research data and search in vain for some valid and reliable correlations and identifiable patterns of behavior that used to apply in the past. The social and economic deprivation factor no longer applies, as radicalization does not affect only the socially more vulnerable or regions with high levels of unemployment. Neither does the education factor apply: whereas higher education in the past guaranteed a certain immunity from illiberal tendencies, nowadays the extremist electorate also includes university graduates. The attitude towards minorities used to be a key factor contributing to the growth of extremism in Slovakia, with the Roma minority in particular serving as a trigger of racism and the grist to the mill of extreme parties. However, an analysis of the 2016 election results failed to confirm that the presence of a Roma minority in a voter's place of residence was a factor in voting for ĽSNS. Voting preferences were a reflection of hostility to the system rather than to this particular minority. In other words, many of the explanations that used to delineate clear correlations no longer apply. What does undoubtedly apply is a whole range of social and psychological factors, compounded by anxiety and sense of insecurity deriving from sources that are very diverse and thus do not lend themselves to generalization.

Whereas higher education in the past guaranteed a certain immunity from illiberal tendencies, nowadays the extremist electorate also includes university graduates.

Nevertheless, there is a number of context-related factors that have to be spelled out, and in the absence of any change in society's general outlook it is not realistic to expect a change in political attitudes. Any discussion of the youth, its radicalization, and its electoral preferences for the extreme right must begin with education. The poor and steadily deteriorating standard of Slovak education has been regularly documented by the comparative PISA surveys. In addition to the parameters of the OECD, the Slovak students have demonstrated extremely poor knowledge of national history, with especially poor knowledge of the history of the wartime Slovak Republic, a Nazi Germany vassal state that deported tens of thousands of its Jewish citizens to extermination camps.

Moreover, present-day high school students know very little about the 40 years of communism and are not taught very much about the Velvet Revolution of 1989 either. Weak historical awareness provides fertile soil for extremism, with young people falling for the appealing lure of extremist, fascist-leaning ideologies and populist ideas proposing simplistic solutions to society's most complex problems. From this it is only a short step to creating the image of an enemy.

Last year's election results have prompted a discussion about the place of politics in schools. For in this respect, Slovakia has thrown out the baby with the bathwater.

The Absence of Education in Human Rights

Furthermore, present-day education is still based more on memorizing facts than on the ability to think critically and in context.

Last year's election results have prompted a discussion about the place of politics in schools. For in this respect, Slovakia has thrown out the baby with the bathwater, as a strict rejection of the political in the party-affiliation sense has also resulted in banishing the political in the civic or public sense. There are exceptions, of course, but generally-speaking, schools do not provide education in human rights, tolerance, and non-discrimination. I speak from my own experience as a university teacher: first year students include huge numbers of high school graduates who do not even realize that making racist comments is unacceptable. This is because they often come from an environment where contempt or, indeed, hostility to any kind of otherness is the norm.

Of course, education is not an isolated system. The wider social and political environment also needs to be examined. Sixty percent of people in Slovakia believe that many or all politicians are corrupt. Political corruption, scandals involving politicians, the interconnectedness of political and economic power, and the "oligarchization" of democracy have dominated the headlines over the past few years. Many suspicions have been raised, but the number of prosecutions and convictions has been close to zero. Quite naturally, in this kind of atmosphere the public confidence in established institutions and mainstream political parties has declined and a radical party that opposes the system and promises to "stop robbing the state" and "crack down on thieves in suits" is seen as an alternative. It is no coincidence that the second most frequent reason people gave for voting ĽSNS in 2016 was its "anti-corruption program."

A recent poll conducted by the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) in Slovakia also points to a clear connection between attitudes to corruption and growing tolerance of radical views. Those who believe that politicians are corrupt are more tolerant of radical activities. Eight to ten years ago this connection did not exist. Slova to be a country with an above-average resistance to radical views and activities; nowadays it is a country where tolerance of such views and activities is above average.[1]

Pervasive corruption is not, however, the only failing of the establishment. A key issue in 2015 was migration, the arrival of tens of thousands of refugees in Europe. In Slovakia the discourse shifted far beyond the limits of what, until then, had been regarded as acceptable in polite society. The Slovak government in general and Prime Minister Robert Fico in particular were among the greatest advocates of securitizing the refugee issue and of wholesale identification of refugees and Muslims with terrorists. All this at a time when all migration routes avoided Slovakia and the country was willing to accept virtually no one. Nevertheless, statements by government officials and other political players (with the notable exception of President Andrej Kiska) created a sense of imminent threat. Constantly dehumanizing the refugees and presenting them as a security risk brought about a considerable radicalization of the general discourse. It is well known that once an atmosphere of fear is created, everyone makes use of this "privilege." In the specific case of Slovakia the extreme right was a major beneficiary of this atmosphere.

In What Respect Is This Situation New?

The extent to which political attitudes of a large part of the public have been affected by the Internet and the social media is now beyond question, this is particularly true of young people. A study[2] by the Slovak Institute for Public Affairs conducted towards the end of 2016 showed that only 5 percent of young people between the ages 18–39 do not follow news of social and political activities on the Internet at all. Although young people frequently encounter hate speech on the Internet, as many as three-quarters admitted that they do not actively respond to haters. Radical content of this nature is

A recent poll conducted by the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) in Slovakia also points to a clear connection between attitudes to corruption and growing tolerance of radical views.

1) Bahna, Miloslav and Zagrapan, Jozef. 2017. „Tolerancia radikálnych názorov narástla a súvisí s vnímaním skorumpovanosti politikov". sociologia.sav.sk. 3rd February 2017 (http://www.sociologia.sav.sk/cms/uploaded/2543_attach_Bahna_Zagrapan_radikali.pdf)

2) Velšic, Marián. 2016. *„Mladí ľudia v kyberpriestore: šance a riziká pre demokraciu"*. Bratislava: Inštitút pre verejne otázky (http://www.ivo.sk/buxus/docs//publikacie/subory/Mladi_v_kyberpriestore.pdf)

clearly spreading without being countered at all (or minimally at best), indeed many young people assume it is part and parcel of the freedom of speech.

It is a widely known fact that Internet polarizes opinion and does not provide opportunities for consensus-seeking; on the contrary, it often drives parties in conflict to extreme positions. In addition, while in the past people were not able to validate their extremist views in the media, nowadays they can say, not just face-to-face to their friends but also in response to what they read on social media: "Yes, this is exactly what I've been thinking."

These trends are further exacerbated by the dumbing down and tabloidization of political discourse, which revolves around issues everyone can relate to: instead of discussing what needs to be done to improve the quality of education or environmental protection, the focus is on corruption scandals and trivial squabbling among politicians. Incidentally, the mainstream media that have increasingly adopted a tabloid approach in the commercial battle for readers also deserve to be censured.

ĽSNS is one of the parties that have employed social media as a powerful vehicle. The only other party with a comparable reach on Facebook is Richard Sulík's liberal Freedom and Solidarity party (SaS), a long-term leader on social media. ĽSNS's official Facebook profile currently has over 80,000 fans, a year-on-year increase of 12,000. But that is not all: the personal Facebook page of ĽSNS chairman Marian Kotleba boasts 77,000 fans, "Marian Kotleba for Slovakia's Prime Minister" has 36,800 fans, and the extremists' reach is further boosted by other pages, for example regional profiles as well as various fan groups or pages promoting "Slexit" (i.e. Slovakia leaving the EU). Facebook is of key importance to Kotleba's party. A video of their press conference in response to one party-member's prosecution for making xenophobic statements on the Internet has had over 133,000 views. In addition, according to data collected by the marketing agency AKO in February 2017, if an election were to be held now and only people active on social media were casting their votes, ĽSNS would garner as much as 16 percent of the vote (i.e. twice the number of the current voting intentions among general public).

While in the past people were not able to validate their extremist views in the media, nowadays they can say, not just face-to-face to their friends but also in response to what they read on social media.

To sum up, political communication by means of new technologies with all its consequences and side effects has greatly exacerbated radicalism, in Slovakia as well as in other countries, by creating a sense of authenticity and dialogue.

What Is to Be Done?

In addition to introducing a new entity to the configuration of Slovakia's political parties, the entry of ĽSNS into parliament has expanded public debate by raising the issue of right-wing extremism and the question of how to deal with it in public life, and what means to defend itself, if any, a liberal democracy has. Some say the answer lies in creating an unequivocal *cordon sanitaire* not just in terms of political cooperation but also public debate. Others insist on engaging young radicals in a conversation, showing them the broader context and providing them with facts and a different outlook. This should not be done from a position of moral superiority and without claiming to "own" the truth, and certainly not by refusing to engage in dialogue and pushing young supporters of radicalism away by such statements as "one mustn't talk to fascists." A number of projects along these lines has been initiated in Slovakia, organizing discussions in the regions with interesting speakers and also, where possible, with holocaust survivors, patiently explaining to young people the error of their ways.

Equally crucial is the adoption of a consistent approach to law violations and sending a clear message in judicial practice that the promotion of totalitarian ideologies and extremism is a criminal offence. There have been few instances of law enforcement officials taking action and demonstrating that the laws are valid not only on paper. In February 2017 the Slovak government even set up a special elite police unit to combat terrorism and extremism. However, how committed the government really is to tackling extremism remains to be seen.

The young generation of today, already politically visible and relevant, lacks the experience of the ethos of 1989, of the election of 1998 which saw the defeat of the authoritarian Prime Minister Vladimír Mečiar, or of the EU accession. What present-day Slovakia has to offer largely amounts to pragmatic and rather passive strategies of public involvement, unconvincing visions, and precious little idealism. This is another arena where defenders of democracy are losing their fight for the hearts and minds of young people.

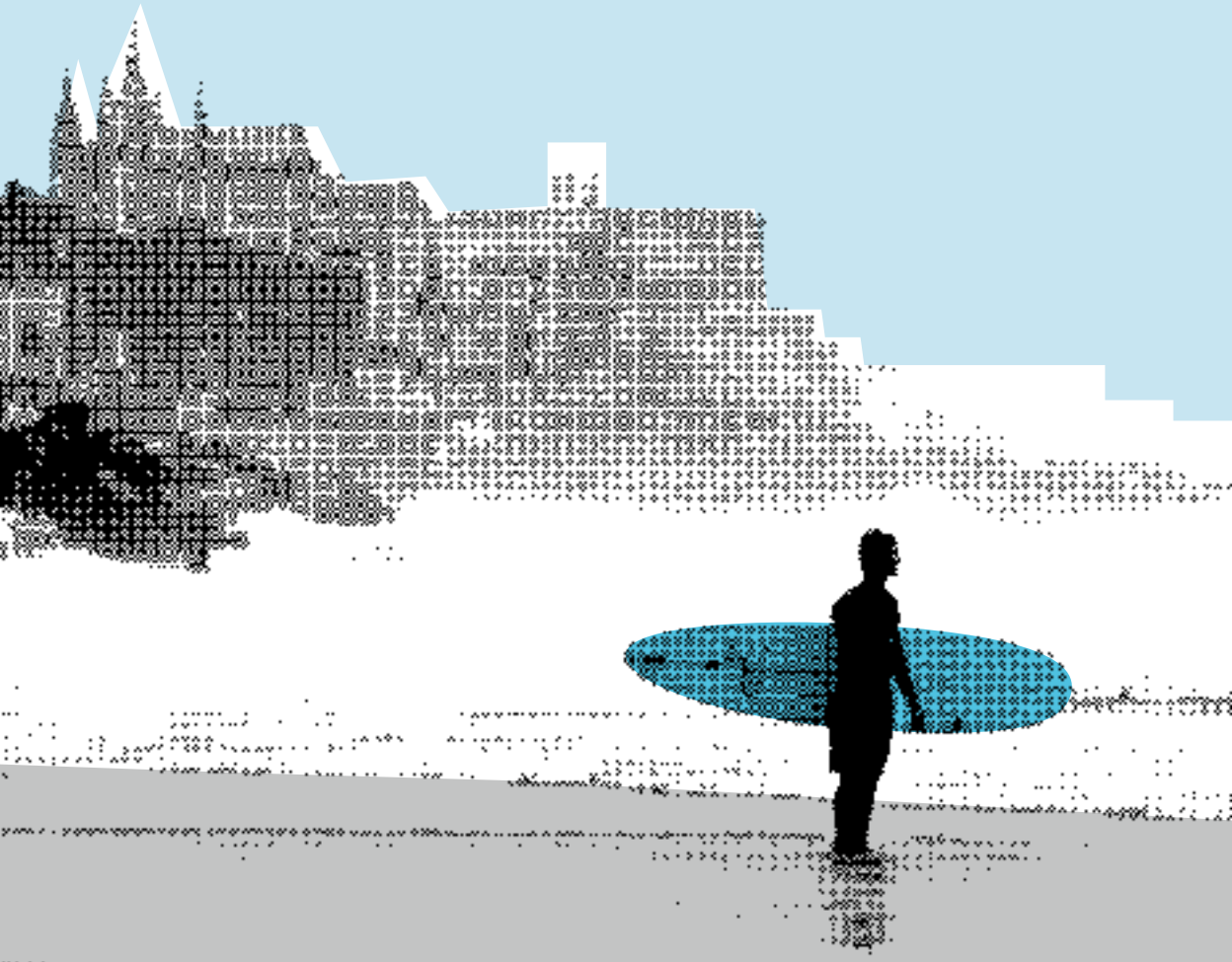
OĽGA GYÁRFÁŠOVÁ
is a sociologist, an assistant professor at the Comenius University in Bratislava, and an analyst at the Institute for Public Affairs, independent public policy research think-tank. She holds a PhD in comparative political science. In her work she focuses on public opinion, electoral studies, and political culture in Slovakia and Central Europe. She has written extensively on social climate during the transition period. Photo: Aspen Review Archive

ASPEN.REVIEW
PAVEL FISCHER

COVER STORY
YOUTH
CZECH REPUBLIC
SURVEY
EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

Is It Possible to Turn the Tide?

European integration as seen by young people in the Czech Republic



Over the past few years the attitudes to integration processes in Europe have undergone a dynamic evolution. In examining this dynamic, can any differences be discerned between the older and the younger generation? If so, in what ways might the younger generation differ?

A Significant Decline in Satisfaction with EU Membership

The Czech Republic joined the European Union in 2004 following a referendum in July 2003, in which 77% of those voting were in favor of accession. The referendum was preceded by a campaign, and after a long period of accession talks, expectations were relatively high. Since then quite a few of the expectations have been met and some unrealistic notions have been cleared up, but there have also been some disappointments.

Satisfaction with EU Membership Among the Czech Public has Generally Shown a Downward Trend. What is the Breakdown by Age?

In 2005, a clear majority of young people was satisfied with EU membership (74%, compared with 54% among those over the age of 60). However, this majority view has gradually been declining, particularly since 2012, i.e. over the same period where our data also shows a growing general dissatisfaction with the political situation in the Czech Republic.

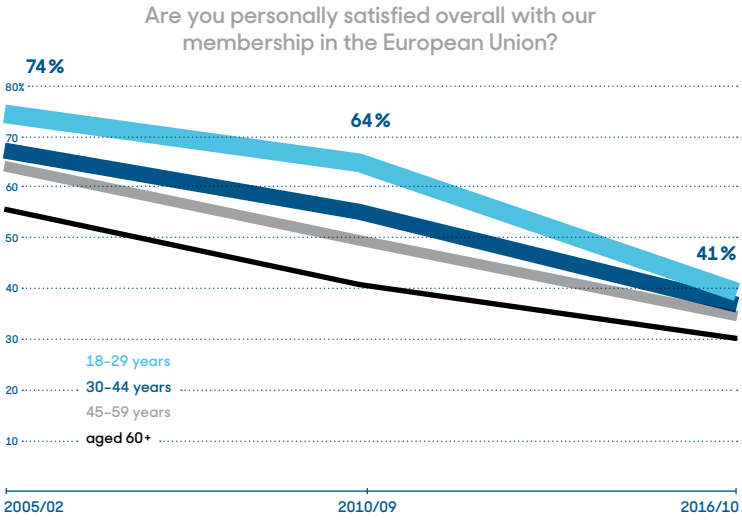


CHART 1: Public respond to the question above by age. Source: STEM, Trends 2005–2016

Ironically, this decline happened just before a government proclaiming itself pro-European came to power, and on the eve of the election of a president who also described himself as pro-European. Although these victories briefly reversed the trend, they did not arrest the tendency overall. On the contrary, this has continued to the present day and, if anything, has accelerated. Our research shows that only a minority of young people (41%) is satisfied with the EU membership. Nevertheless, this proportion is still higher than in other age groups.

On the whole, Czech public opinion regarding developments in the EU has been quite reserved. When asked whether the EU is evolving in the right direction, the positive response has almost halved compared with the original.

Is the EU Evolving in the Right Direction?

On the whole, Czech public opinion regarding developments in the EU has been quite reserved. When asked whether the EU is evolving in the right direction, the positive response has almost halved compared with the original. This includes the younger generation, which in the past responded much more positively than the rest of the population.

The highest ratings among young people (defined here as those under 29) were recorded in 2009 and 2010 (in the region of 69%). Most recent polls (since October 2016) show that only one quarter (28%) of respondents in this age range believes the EU is "evolving in the right direction."

What made positive attitudes peak specifically in 2009 and 2010? The European Council Presidency, held by the Czech Republic in 2009, must have played a role, with Europe and European integration a frequent topic of discussion and many young people having an opportunity to participate in the debate in one form or another. Many factual arguments were presented in political debates and the importance of European integrity was stressed by authoritative figures. The Czech Republic was riding high, and people had literally embraced the EU integration.

The oldest generation scores at the opposite end of the opinion spectrum. Their initial response to the same question was in the region of 47%, culminating in the same period as among young people, i.e. in 2009 (55%) and 2010 (53%). Since then we have seen a slow decline, which has accelerated recently, until it dropped to the present paltry 14%.

For the first time since the beginning of our research the ratings fell below 20 percentage points. Why is this happening now and why specifically among senior citizens? What aspect of EU development have they failed to find convincing? Is it possible that current developments have rekindled some historical resentments? Or has the present-day European Union failed to respond sufficiently to their concerns and political priorities? This issue is worthy of a more detailed analysis, in terms of the attitudes to NATO and the EU among not only the older generation but also among other groups.

The overall picture is summed up by the graphic, which shows how the public responded to the question below.

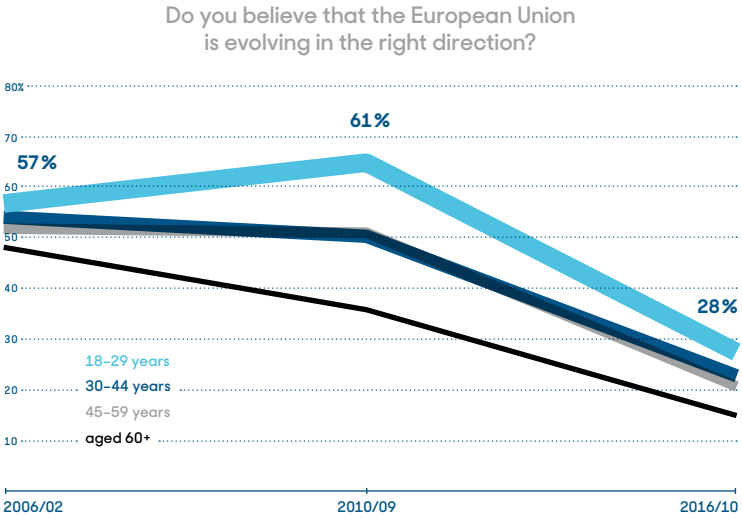


CHART 2: Public respond to the question above by age. Source: STEM, Trends 2006-2016

Trust in the EU has Declined in All Age Groups

Over the past fifteen years, the support for EU membership has developed in a way which, without a shadow of a doubt, points in the same direction. Support for EU membership among the Czech public has waned considerably.

This development has affected all age groups without exception, but the decline has been most striking among the young: trust in the EU has gone down from the original 71 percent to a mere 30 percent of respondents. By comparison, trust has also declined among the oldest age group, i.e. senior citizens, only less drastically: by 10 percentage points in the course of the period studied.

Another striking feature of this development is a strong convergence between the attitudes of various age groups. Does this mean that a cross-generation consensus is emerging on the issue?

The Czech public is willing to support their country in playing a more active role within the European Union.

A more detailed examination of the issue that takes into account other data shows that whereas in terms of age a consensus has indeed emerged, responses to the question regarding trust in the EU continue to differ depending on educational levels. This shows that differences in terms of educational levels have not been affected: while the number of EU supporters has declined among people with all levels of educational attainment, the decline has followed a similar pattern in all these groups.

The Young are Still Willing to Vote in Favor of EU Membership

A differently phrased question—how would the public respond were a referendum on the Czech Republic's membership in the European Union to be held now—reveals a downward tendency across all age groups. The highest level of support among senior citizens was recorded in the autumn of 2005: 55 percentage points. Since then the support has been declining and currently stands at 33 percent. The youngest generation started out with a high level of support (74% in 2004), falling below 50 percent by September 2015.

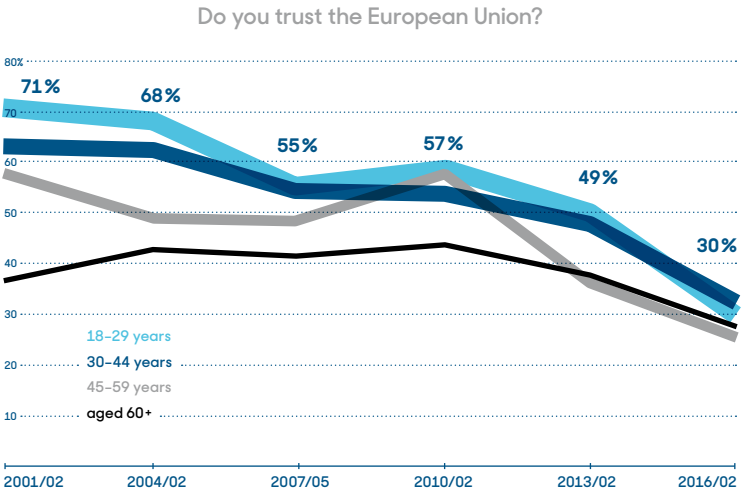


CHART 3: Development of responses to the question above. Source: STEM, Trends 2001-2016

Factors that helped accelerate the downward trend include the long-term refugee crisis and anticipation of the outcome of the Brexit referendum, which the Czech public followed with great interest. Nevertheless, if a referendum on EU membership were to be held now, young people would still be more likely to vote in favor—46 percent according to the survey conducted in May 2016, as shown in the graphic (chart 3).

How Do We Rate the Czech Republic's Active Role in the EU?

In any public debate on the European Union the argument "us" versus "them" tends to crop up quite early on. The view that the European Union is "the others" seems to be quite popular among the Czech public, as if the country could exercise no influence on events and as if, as a member state, it did not have a place at the table where it can champion our interests. Another similar argument is the cliché of "decisions affecting us taken without us" sometimes used in public debates to emphasize a kind of helplessness or powerlessness concerning what we perceive as decisions taken by more powerful countries or institutions.

However, the same issue can also be approached in a positive way, for our research shows that the public expects its elected representatives to play a more proactive role, and that it appreciates it when they insist on exercising this right. The Czech public is willing to support their country in playing a more active role within the European Union.

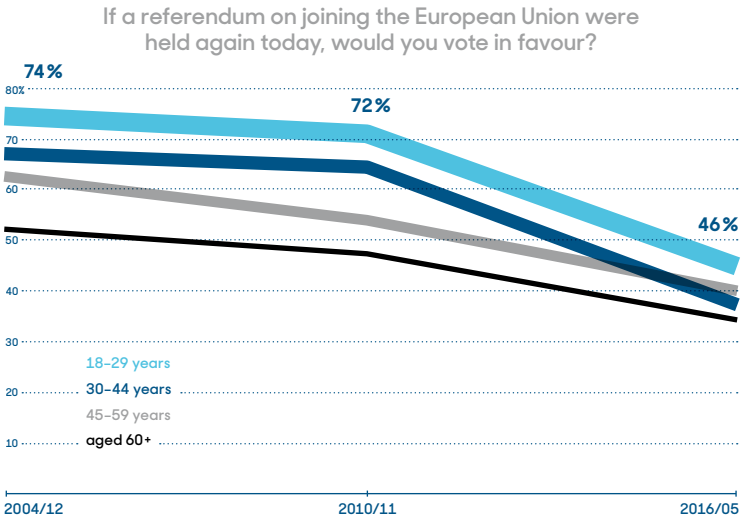


CHART 4: Source: STEM, Trends 2004–2016

The curve shows highest ratings among the youngest generation: in February 2009 a full 60 percent were of the opinion that the Czech Republic was capable of playing an active role within the EU and champion its positions in EU decision making.

The generation of senior citizens is at the opposite end of the spectrum, the responses dropping to their lowest level in April 2012 (23%). The following graphic illustrates this development over time:

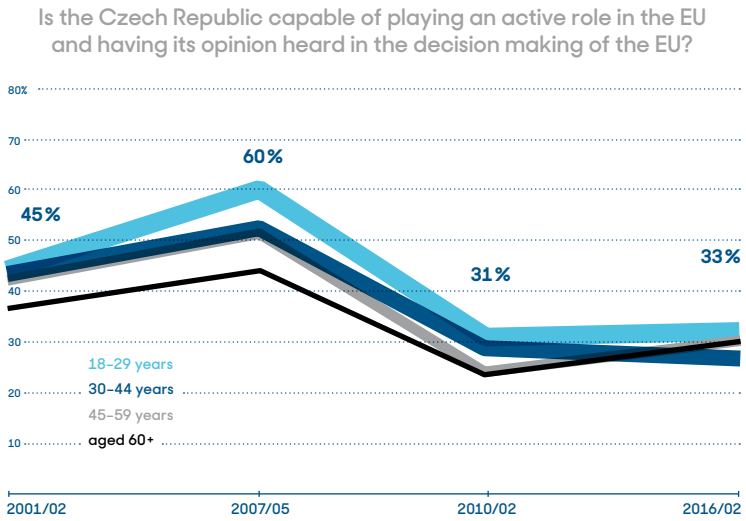


CHART 5: Source: STEM, Trends 2006–2016

We Expect a Higher Quality of Education

In terms of specific issues in respect of which our country benefits from EU membership, the research has not revealed any statistically significant differences between age groups. Only in terms of expectations of a higher quality of education for the younger generation are the young less optimistic (as are people aged between 45 and 59).

It is also worth noting that when young people consider issues affecting senior citizens (the pension system) they are inclined to view them in a more positive light than the senior citizens themselves. And vice versa: senior citizens tend to have a more positive view of the chances of higher quality education for the younger generation.

Otherwise the results reveal relatively similar attitudes across all age groups. The graphic shows how the public rated selected areas in February 2016.

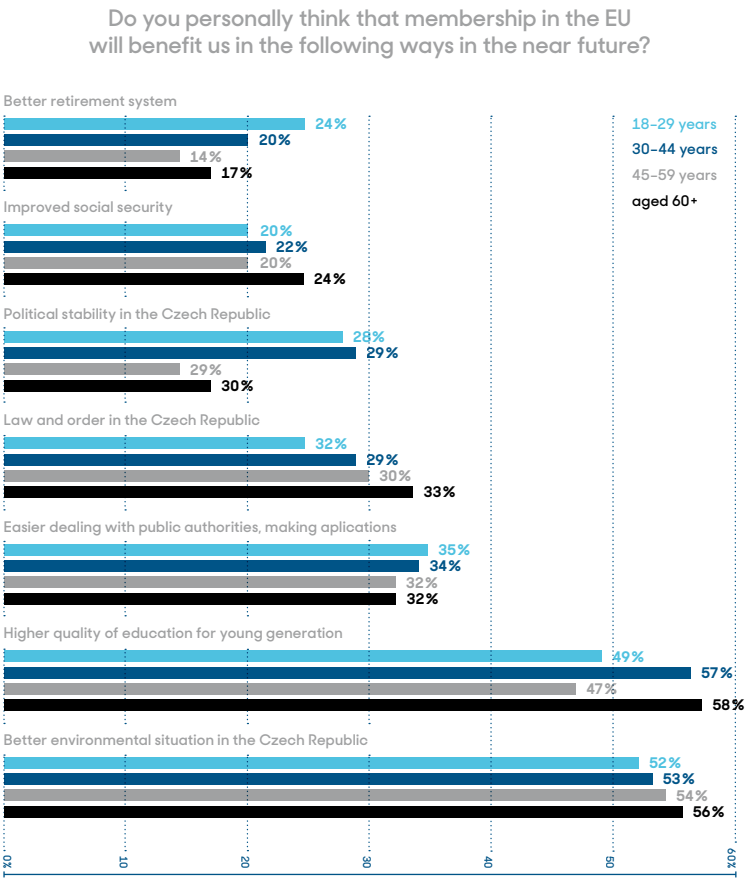


CHART 6: Total "definitelly yes" and "somewhat yes". Answers in %, by age. Source: STEM, Trends 2016/2

Trust in Institutions

In terms of the degree of public trust in institutions, the data collected in February 2016 examined elected bodies as well as international institutions.

The most trusted institutions are, undoubtedly, the municipal authorities. This is hardly surprising since this finding has been regularly confirmed in consecutive surveys. The degree of trust shown by all age groups in municipal authorities and at town halls level is truly exceptional. The Czech public shows an extremely high level of trust at the level closest to its everyday life.

In this respect the European Parliament is at the opposite end of the spectrum, although it is worth noting that this has not always been the case. The public used to have very high expectations of European integration in general and of the European Parliament in particular. In fact, it had expected

European institutions to help improve the country's administration and used to trust them more than its own government. The dramatic decline in trust occurred later, with the 2016 results showing a record low.

In terms of age the most significant differences regarding the public's trust in institutions can be observed with regard to three of them. The older age groups tend to show trust in the president and in the individual cabinet members in particular, the youngest generation spontaneously leans towards trusting international institutions such as the EU, the European Parliament, and, particularly, the NATO.

The older age groups tend to show trust in the president and in the individual cabinet members in particular, the youngest generation spontaneously leans towards trusting international institutions such as the EU.

In the case of NATO, the degree of trust among the young is very high (55%). This might be related, among other things, to the fact that people associate NATO with close cooperation with the United States.

In fact, the US as a country is quite unique as far as the Czech public is concerned. When examining attitudes to other countries, the generational effect is much more pronounced in case of the US compared to all other countries. The youngest generation is most open towards the US, as illustrated by the following graphic in which respondents were asked to rank individual countries on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being the best grade. The data was collected in June 2016.

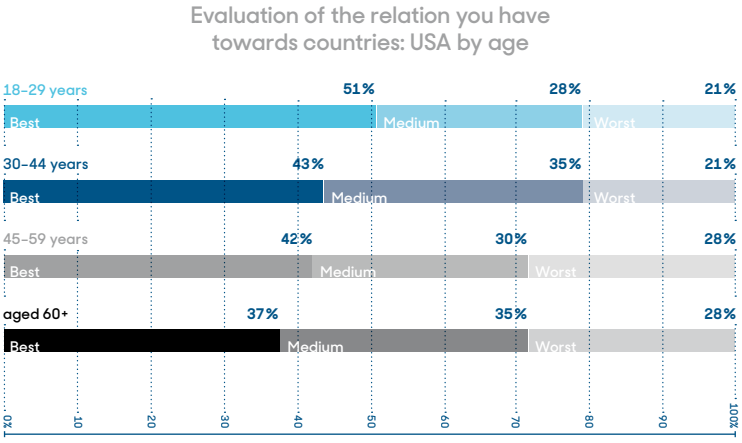


CHART 7: Best (scale 1 & 2), medium (3), worst (4 & 5). Source: STEM, Trends 2016/6, 1057 respondents.

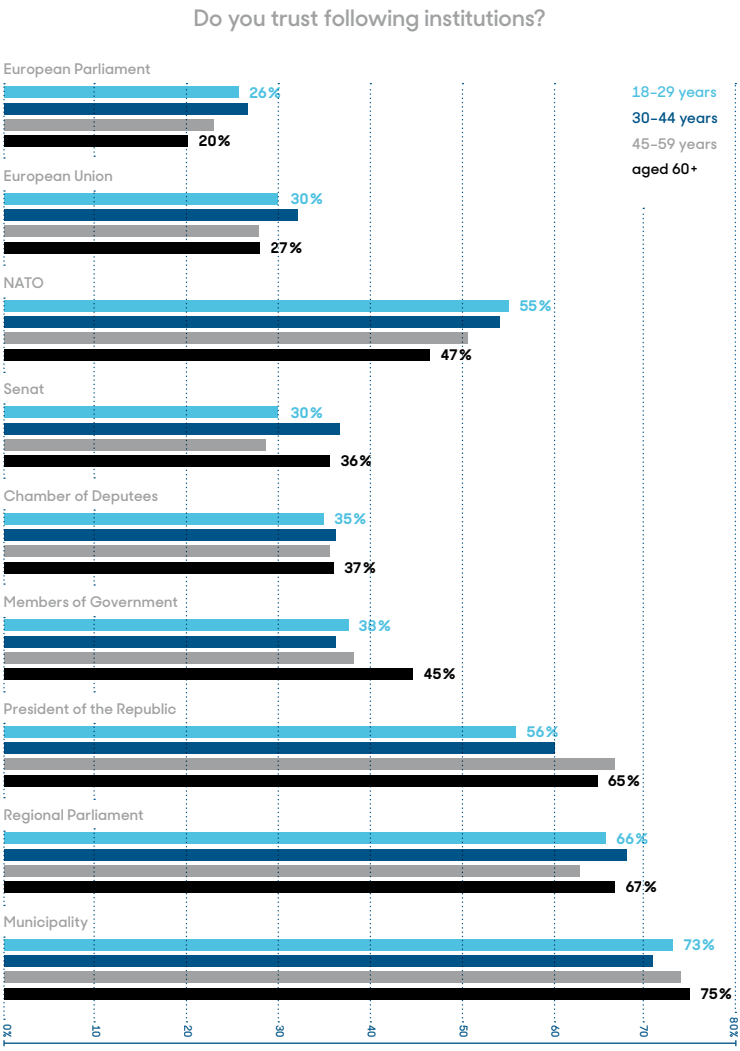


CHART 8: Source: STEM, Trends 2016/2

Finally, the last graphic shows the degree of trust in various institutions. Since we are particularly interested in generational differences, the chart deliberately lists both national and international institutions, regardless of whether or not they are elected bodies. The data was collected in 2016.

A Seismograph for Europe?

The long-term data series generated by the STEM Institute and based on regular empirical research represent a unique example of empirical methods

applied to the study of society. Our data, collected using the traditional face-to-face method from a representative population sample, goes back to 1990, continuously covering the entire period of political transition as well as the process of integration into European structures.

The selected data presented here demonstrates that following the EU accession, attitudes in Czech society have become somewhat differentiated by age. However, the differences are not significant enough to lose sight of other, more significant, differences. Much greater differences are manifested depending on place of residence, electoral preferences, and especially education level, with university graduates being the most ardent supporters of European integration. In searching for an effective European strategy the Czech Republic might want to consider how to appeal to the less-educated sections of the population.

These seven findings show that the overall support for European integration has been on the slide. This trend is sufficiently pronounced to deserve additional attention not only in analytical terms but first and foremost in terms of concerted political action.

The public is not blind. The people have seen what kind of arguments were instrumental in bringing about the Brexit vote and before being asked to make a similar historic decision they ought to be provided with all of the arguments, be given sufficient time, and be presented with clear priorities in order to reverse this trend. The question is whether there will be time to do so.

Any reversal of the current trend calls not just for enough room for explanations but also for authentic political and opinion leaders capable of making a down-to-earth case for closer European integration in vital areas. What is needed are leaders capable of regaining the trust of all those who are wavering and have doubts. Europe has lived through major upheavals that have shaped our continent. We believe that Czech society, formed by these turning points in history, can play the role of a seismograph.

In this respect, a very clear conclusion is at hand. We have to act because we are faced with major challenges within the wider European context. And when the moment comes to seek calm support and understanding from the public, there might not be a lot of time left to spare.

PAVEL FISCHER
Director of STEM Institute for public opinion survey and analysis. He served as a political advisor to President Václav Havel. In 2003, he was appointed as Ambassador to France. In 2010, he worked as Director General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Member of board of Jacques Delors Institute (Paris), of SIRIRI (Prague), and of Forum 2000 (Prague). | Photo: Tomáš Novák

Between Two Extremes

Martin Ehl One rainy October afternoon I sat down with Veronika Pistyur in the state-of-the-art, fun, and colorful headquarters of the Hungarian start-up Prezi. The smiley and boundlessly cheerful blonde runs Bridge Budapest, an NGO aiming to raise public awareness specifically of start-ups, and generally of the idea that being an entrepreneur pays off both in financial and human terms. The organization was founded jointly by several successful Hungarian IT companies (including Prezi) as a kind of recruitment tool that would help them reach out to younger people and forge links with big players on the market.

Veronika and I discussed whether or not Central Europe was in the grip of an exodus of young people and how difficult it was for companies to attract talent from elsewhere—be it from the east or the west of the continent. One of her organization's early conclusions is of particular interest: when abroad, young people are very much aware of the political side of things or, as she puts it, the "political PR." "Once they've come here and see the companies from the inside, they often lose interest," Veronika claimed.

Central Europe Remains Attractive

What makes her point of view unique is that whereas most young people in Central Europe are trying to figure out whether and how they could, should, or indeed might want to leave, the individuals she sees are, by contrast, drawn to this region from other parts of the world because of the opportunities they see here. This is by no means limited to the field of IT, an industry that finds it relatively easy to gain publicity abroad and which, over the past three years, has been able to capitalize on the New Europe 100 ranking, which promotes the most dynamic—especially young—people and companies in the region from Tallinn to Sofia.

Despite all the moaning about the kinds of regimes that have emerged in Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia, Central Europe remains attractive to those unable to pursue their dream career in their home countries

Despite all the moaning about the kinds of regimes that have emerged in Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia, and despite some doubts over the quality of democracy elsewhere in post-communist EU member states, Central Europe remains attractive to those unable to pursue their dream career in their home countries, for example because they may get drafted to do long military service in an army that is engaged in a real war. "If I can't turn my fatherland into a decent country, I will have to make a decent country my fatherland," a Russian car mechanic told the daily *Hospodářské noviny*. This was the reasoning he gave when applying for a refugee status in the Czech Republic, as in Russia he faced imprisonment for sharing an article online on the 1939 Molotov–Ribbentrop pact.

Recently the changing political landscape across Europe has caused additional problems. This is particularly striking in the less-mature democracies of Central Europe.

Young Eastern Europeans Do Not Seek Only a Better Paid Job Abroad

However, this does not mean that the Central European countries are falling over backwards to stop young people wondering if life might be better elsewhere. I am not referring to social policies or access to cheap accommodation, which have become much less of an issue in the Czech and Slovak Republics due to economic growth and low interest rates. Lack of job opportunities no longer forces young people from the traditionally poorer regions of eastern Slovakia and Poland to seek work abroad. What has gradually dawned on the inhabitants of Central Europe is that it is not a question of finding a job of any kind, but rather that other conditions which the state and public services ought to provide are equally important. For instance, the attitude of civil servants in state agencies. It is no accident that several Polish surveys of the approximately two million economic migrants in Western Europe have shown that they have been driven not solely by a search for better paid jobs but also for decent treatment, something that they found was thin on the ground at home.

Recently the changing political landscape across Europe has caused additional problems. This is particularly striking in the less-mature democracies of Central Europe, where institutions such as courts, schools, or public media have proved too weak and unable to withstand the often quite brutal pressure of populist nationalists. While in Poland the ruling PiS (Rights and Justice) Party won the election by being able to mobilize young voters and make more effective use of social media, their policy of restricting public space and embarking on a Hungarian-style cultural revolution after coming to power has put many young people off any involvement in public affairs, starting businesses, working for the state, launching their own activities, and living in a country run along these lines.

Hungary and Poland Want to Reduce the Emigration by Special Programs

It was this kind of policy that has caused tens of thousands of mainly young people to leave Hungary, in spite of the fact that the Hungarians, like the

Czechs, tend to be homebodies, reluctant to move even within their own country in pursuit of a better job. The Hungarian government tried but failed to reduce the high rate of emigration among doctors by promising to substantially raise their low salaries on condition that they committed to stop taking the bribes that are endemic in Hungarian healthcare, and that they pledged not to leave the country for the next ten years.

The politicians' approach oscillates between lionizing manual labor and calling for more vocational schools on the one hand, and a communist-style dream of creating an army of scientists on the other.

However, not all young people have university degrees and are fluent in one or several world languages. Those who do not mind the current political situation can benefit from programs such as 500+ in Poland, or the flat rate of 16 percent income tax for private individuals in Hungary. Young Poles are entitled to an extra 500 zlotys a month for their second and every subsequent child, which, the government claims, will help young families and increase domestic demand. Another recent flagship program is the building of cheap flats for the young.

Meanwhile, the Czech and Slovak young people are being enticed by thousands of new jobs in car assembly shops run by foreign corporations. However, nobody has warned them that in a few years' time they may be made redundant by robots or artificial intelligence. Czech media abound in reports of the car manufacturer Škoda trying to lure young people from across the country to their new factory in Kvasiny in northern Bohemia. Many young people have taken out loans and mortgages (so easily available!), sliding into debt. Not only do they work in an industry vulnerable to fluctuations in global supply and demand, but the latest US trends demonstrate that an increasing dependency on manual labor is detrimental to the economy.

Young Central Europeans Lack a Vision

All this is closely linked to the fact that not a single Central European country boasts a top-ranking education system: these suffer from constant reforms and are starved of funds. Meanwhile the politicians' approach oscillates between lionizing manual labor and calling for more vocational schools

on the one hand, and a communist-style dream of creating an army of scientists on the other. In the case of the Czech Republic, dozens of research centers have been built using European money but many of them stand half-empty.

If there are any young Central Europeans thinking about the future at all, they lack a vision that would spur their local economies and societies to move a step beyond being cheap assembly shops and suppliers to German industry. For example, the Polish deputy prime minister came up with a stimulating program of innovation in an attempt to transform the cheap labor economy into something with higher added value. However, the problem is that this program is being championed by the current government, which shows no signs of being able to convince wider society beyond the relatively narrow confines of its supporters to trust its vision.

As a result, young people in Central Europe find themselves facing two extreme options: either pack it all in and go elsewhere after graduating, or succumb, be co-opted, find a job, and keep away from politics. The overwhelming majority, of course, finds itself somewhere between these two extremes, but somehow this narrows the space for the naturally largest group—those who are ambitious and would like to pursue their dreams while at the same time enjoying decent lives and finding jobs at home.

MARTIN EHL

since 1992 working for various Czech print and online media, since January of 2006 Chief International Editor of *Hospodářské noviny* daily. Regular bi-weekly column Middle Europa at English language internet magazine *Transitions Online* (www.tol.cz), for this column he was awarder "Writing for Central Europe" prize in Austria in 2012. Co-editor of *Visegrad Insight* magazine. | Photo: Hospodářské noviny Archive

ASPEN.REVIEW
JAKUB MAJMUREK

INTERVIEW
CENTRAL EUROPE
TRUMP
US FOREIGN POLICY

Kenneth R. Weinstein: Trump Knows More about Central Europe than He's Given Credit For

Central European nations should continue their advocacy efforts here in the United States, and work to rebuild some of the ties that have weakened in recent years. President Trump has greater knowledge of the region—says Kenneth R. Weinstein in an interview with Jakub Majmurek.

During the US presidential campaign the controversies surrounding Donald Trump were nowhere more intense than in the area of foreign and security policy. What was so offensive in Trump's foreign policy proposals to foreign policy establishment—both liberal and conservative?

The vast majority of Republican-oriented foreign policy professionals rejected Donald Trump's foreign policy vision because he rejected and mocked their foreign policy principles, expertise, and legacy. He argued their internationalism sold out the United States, whether through badly negotiated trade deals, one-sided alliance agreements, or wars in the Middle East that, he claimed, left a legacy of ruin. He highlighted what he saw as the errors of the War on Terror, even arguing that the Bush administration deceived Americans into going into Iraq.

Many critics accused Donald Trump that he never did have any coherent vision of foreign policy. Would you agree with that statement?

President Trump isn't a policy wonk. And, like most American presidents, he sought the office of president because he wanted to work on domestic, not international, issues. He didn't study international relations, trade, or security policy. Nonetheless, he has an instinctive yet coherent foreign policy vision, one that is rooted in the tradition that my Hudson Institute colleague Walter Russell Mead has termed "Jacksonian," a nationalist, populist vision first framed by President Andrew Jackson. This vision is distinctly anti-internationalist and anti-elitist. Jacksonianism draws its original support from the Scotch-Irish of Appalachia against the commercial classes of the East Coast. It believes so profoundly in American exceptionalism that it rejects the idea that America can export democracy. Instead, it holds that US overseas engagements should be in defense of US interests. But when these interests are threatened from abroad, Jacksonian America is willing to fight all out wars.

How can we translate that philosophy into a set of some finite goals of Trump administration on the global stage?

The Trump administration will seek to rebalance what it sees as unfair trade agreements and will seek to get America's allies, especially in NATO, to meet their commitments to increase defense spending. Trump is most concerned about ISIS and Islamic radicalism in the short term, and Iran and China in the longer term.

Defeating ISIS will be the first major defense policy priority. Controlling Iranian regional hegemony and stopping the Iranian nuclear program, a threat to US interests and to our closest Middle East ally, Israel, is Trump's second major priority. His third main priority is to rebalance the trade and security relationship with China, which, in Trump's vision, has gutted our manufacturing sector through unfair trade practices while aggressively seeking regional hegemony through military buildup.

The accusations of Russian meddling in the US election will likely continue to be around throughout the Trump presidency.

And where could we put Russia in that puzzle?

Into these priorities, Russia figures only as a potential ally—one whose value is questionable—not as a main focus.

Donald Trump's supposed ties with Russia were one of the main argument against his presidency. The Russian issue is still coming back, more than one month after Trump's inauguration. Do you think it will ever stop haunting his administration?

The accusations of Russian meddling in the US election will likely continue to be around throughout the Trump presidency. First, this line of inquiry benefits Congressional Democrats who are eager to claim

that Trump is not a legitimate president. So even if the president has reaffirmed the importance of NATO, is welcoming Montenegro to the alliance, and is encouraging exploitation and exportation of American energy resources, there are some who will continue to claim that he is a stooge of Russia.

You don't seem to think that there's some truth in that claim, do you?
So far, the person who seems to have had the most significant contacts in Russia, Carter Page, is a low-level campaign advisor who barely knew the president. The notion that Attorney General Jeff Sessions had nefarious meetings with Russian ambassador as part of some broader plot is ludicrous: one of these "meetings" was an event, sponsored in part by the State Department at the GOP Convention in Cleveland, for the foreign diplomatic corps; the other was a meeting in Sessions' Senate office with his staffers. Sessions, a former federal judge with a deep track record of integrity, knows that it is completely illegal to discuss campaign business in a Senate office. But because of all these accusations, Mr. Sessions was wise to quickly recuse himself from any potential investigations into this question.

Are all these "Russian affairs" going to harm US image on the world stage?
The issue will only become harmful to the image of the US if it can be proven that the Trump campaign colluded deeply with Russia—and nothing of the sort has been proven.

And how in your opinion are Russian-American relations going to develop under President Trump? What does Trump want to achieve on the Russian front? Is it actually realistic from Trump to expect that he can just start to "get along well" with Putin?
I have never believed that President Trump would be Vladimir Putin's poodle. Yes, Putin got his attention by flattering him in the midst of a presidential campaign in which he was mocked around the globe. And, yes, Trump has business ties to Russia. But Trump doesn't give anything away for nothing—and Putin, as Prime Minister Abe has learned in the case of the Northern Territories, can't take yes for an answer. Were Putin far more subtle and far less aggressive, he might be able to offer a serious deal to the president. But that would require Putin to make significant concessions—a sign of weakness that the old Leningrad hooligan would never do.

Yes, Putin got his attention by flattering him in the midst of a presidential campaign in which he was mocked around the globe. And, yes, Trump has business ties to Russia. But Trump doesn't give anything away for nothing

Nonetheless, one thing Trump said about Russia raised some red flags—specifically in the Central-Eastern Europe.

The President has repeatedly denounced Russian behavior since he took office, whether over the Russian submarine off the coast of Connecticut or over arms control treaty violations. I don't see how Russia and the US start things over—the chemistry is already poisoned by Russian behavior. And Trump seems to understand that Russia is of minor value in fighting ISIS. So I would urge Central Europeans not to be too pessimistic about President Trump. He has no interest in being humiliated by Russia.

Trump's remarks about NATO raised similar concerns in our region. Is Trump administration going to honor the obligations embedded in the North Atlantic Treaty?

During the campaign, Donald Trump offered strong criticism of NATO. He recognized that the organization was bloated, less than efficient to meet the challenges of the 21st century, "obsolete" as he put it. Since the election, he has repeatedly reaffirmed his full commitment to NATO, and sent Vice President Pence to NATO headquarters to do the same. His major foreign and defense policy advisors (Tillerson, Mattis, McMaster) are strong transatlanticists. Leaders in Central and Eastern Europe do not need to be worried. But they should do all that they can to get each of the NATO allies to meet the 2 percent of GDP goals for defense spending that Poland and Estonia already meet. And they should think through serious measures to reform a bloated bureaucracy and inefficient decision-making process in Brussels.

Leaders in Central and Eastern Europe do not need to be worried. But they should do all that they can to get each of the NATO allies to meet the 2 percent of GDP goals for defense spending that Poland and Estonia already meet.

Some opinion leaders in Central and Eastern Europe are concerned that Trump would like a new Yalta-like agreement between US, Russia, and China, which would set a new division of the zones of influence between great super-powers. Do you think that this is what the Trump administration really wants? If it is so, does it not put Central and Eastern Europe in a very precarious position?

I cannot imagine for a second that this is what Trump wants. This is science fiction, or worse. President Trump doesn't trust China, has put it on warning with regards to Taiwan and North Korea, and has signaled his full support of our ally Japan against North Korea. He seems to have moved away from his fascination with Vladimir Putin, and a glance

at Russian media makes it clear that the Kremlin's previous fascination with Trump has turned into worry. Their initial enthusiasm has been tempered.

Ukrainians should continue to advocate for their country in the same manner that they did under the last US president but there is currently little indication that policies on Ukraine will change in the near future.

What is the place of Central and Eastern Europe in Trump's view of global order? Is there any? Many Eastern Europeans do have the feeling that for Trump's White House their region is kind of expendable. Is that feeling ungrounded?

Trump understands the fragile world of Central and Eastern Europe and has greater knowledge of the region than most Central and Eastern Europeans realize. His first wife, Ivana, is Czech; his eldest child speaks fluent Czech and two others are reputed to have learned some Czech from their mother and grandmother, and know the country of their ancestors firsthand. The First Lady is, of course, a proud Slovenian and has taught her son, President Trump's youngest child, the Slovenian language. Still, as I mentioned above, his greatest foreign policy concerns are with China, ISIS, and trade. It is likely that, at least for the present time, his interactions with Central and Eastern Europe will revolve around those issues.

What does Trump administration signify for Ukraine? Many pro-Western Ukrainians have the feeling that Ukraine is going to be the greatest victim of Trump's victory. Do you think that the Ukrainians are right to be afraid?

In large part, this remains to be seen. The Trump administration is still quite new and is still installing their people in key positions in the State and Defense Departments. There have been relatively few policy statements from the Tillerson State Department, but it is notable that in the space of a month, it issued three statements that reaffirm the sovereignty of Ukraine and condemn the Russian-backed violence in its east. Certainly, Ukrainians should continue to advocate for their country in the same manner that they did under the last US president—and would do under any new administration—but there is currently little indication that policies on Ukraine will change in the near future.

Trump seemed to be quite happy about Brexit, he's also quite willing to meet with anti-European, populist politicians like Nigel Farage or Marine Le Pen. Some European leaders are concerned that the new administration is going to play into EU disintegration. Is that concern well-informed?

No, this is excessive. First, he has not met with Marine Le Pen although he had the opportunity. Indeed, Farage supported him during his campaign and they've met since, but I would not put Farage in the same category as Le Pen, his party does not have the history of racism and antisemitism that the National Front has. Trump has never said he would support anti-EU forces or try to destabilize the EU, but rather, more as a commentary, he has pointed to issues within the EU that have led to Brexit: the mismanaged refugee crisis, the legitimate desire to have border controls, the necessity to fight radical Islam. These are concerns shared by vast numbers of European citizens.

What are Trump's plans towards EU?

The EU is not Donald Trump's priority: he will look to forge bilateral partnerships with countries that are willing to invest in security and defense. Besides, most of the challenges faced by the European Union are linked to the EU's own flaws, and can only be remedied by European leaders: it would be wrong to focus on the rhetoric of the American president.

In 2017 we're going to have extremely important elections in France in Germany. Do you think that the victory of the populist forces can lead to a profound crisis or even possible disintegration of the EU?

Yes, a Le Pen victory would mean the end of the European Union project, and the triumph of populist and anti-American forces in Europe. Such an outcome would be detrimental to American interests. Le Pen is anti-EU and also advocates closer ties to Putin's Russia and leaving NATO. Her rise is a testament of the failure of the French political establishment to deal with the dual challenge of high unemployment and the failures of the integration system. The next president will urgently have to tackle these matters in a bold way.

What do you think the French elections are going to look like? Is Macron going to challenge Marine Le Pen in the second round? Is he going to win against her?

Trump has never said he would support anti-EU forces or try to destabilize the EU, but rather, more as a commentary, he has pointed to issues within the EU that have led to Brexit: the mismanaged refugee crisis.

I suspect that, assuming Fillon stays in the race, Emmanuel Macron will win the French presidential election. He has run an astute race as an outsider, dynamic and young, running against the two major parties and promising real reform. Le Pen will certainly attack Macron for his past as an investment banker and paint

him as the embodiment of the Paris elites and all that is wrong with Paris and Brussels. She will certainly draw some support from the hard left and easily double her father's score against Jacques Chirac in 2002. But she will be seen as reckless as her economic platform. The prospect of leaving the euro, especially with no sensible replacement plan, will deter many voters.

How is the new post-Hollande France going to tread in its policy towards Russia, Germany, and European integration?

There was a major discrepancy between Hollande's domestic inability to pursue an ambitious reform agenda and his bold international behavior. On issues like Syria or the Iranian nuclear negotiations, France has often held a tougher line than the Obama administration and Hollande has not hesitated to send French troops to combat Al Qaeda in Mali. On the domestic front, he has imposed a state of emergency and hardened the French legislative arsenal against terrorism. But France's economic woes have been a burden on this international agenda. I would expect Macron to continue this policy of robust French presence on the international stage, especially if he manages to complete a policy of reforming France's rigid labor market and complex tax system. Furthermore, he is today the only major candidate to favor continued sanctions against Russia, which has led Wikileaks to threaten him and Russian media to target him. Marine Le Pen would clearly mean a more isolationist French policy: she would likely attempt to leave the EU and NATO while aligning with Moscow, thus alienating partners like the UK and Germany. Besides, her statist economic platform (she is in favor of major increases in minimum wage, returning the retirement age to 60) would weaken France. A Macron victory, especially in the numbers currently projected by polls, would put a halt to the populist wave that has overtaken Western democracies in the last years. But if these last years have taught us anything, it is not to make any hasty electoral predictions!

How would the possible victory of SPD and Martin Schulz affect German policy towards Russia, US, and Europe?

The SPD has traditionally advocated for stronger ties with Russia and to carry on the "Ostpolitik" of Willy Brandt. There are, however, some doubts that Schulz would follow that line. During his time in the European Union, he has come up against Russian interference, has worked to uphold EU sanctions on Russia, and may be far less willing to turn towards an accommodating stance. However, Schulz would likely take a page from Gerhard Schroeder's playbook. Schroeder ran against the Iraq war in his surprise, come-from-behind victory in

2002; he may well campaign by taking some distance from the Trump administration and refuse to eventually bring Germany to spend 2 percent on defense. He could significantly increase the transaction costs of assuring alliance unity at an already challenging time for NATO.

How could all these changes affect Central and Eastern Europe?

Much of how the results of these events affect Central and Eastern Europe will hinge on how the individual countries react and respond to these changes. Certainly, a situation in which Le Pen and Schulz—both candidates seen to be more friendly to Russia than the current leaders of their countries—are elected would be likely to put the region on alert that the European bloc will be far weaker on the Kremlin issue than it has previously been. Sanctions on Russia over their actions in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine would be far more likely to be lifted, a reality that would displease Poland and the Baltic nations, but might sit better with nations like Hungary.Central European nations should continue their advocacy efforts here in the United States, and work to rebuild some of the ties that have weakened in recent years. They should continue to increase the amount of money they spend on their defenses, and make clear to their neighbors, including Germany, that the continent must take more responsibility for its security.

A Macron victory, especially in the numbers currently projected by polls, would put a halt to the populist wave that has overtaken Western democracies in the last years.

KENNETH R. WEINSTEIN
is the president and chief executive officer of Hudson Institute. He has written widely on international affairs for leading publications in the United States, Europe, and Asia. He is an expert on U.S. foreign policy and international affairs who comments on national and international affairs on television and in numerous publications, including *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Weekly Standard*, *Bungei Shimbun* (Japan), *Le Figaro* and *Le Monde*. Weinstein is listed in *Who's Who in America*, and serves by presidential appointment and Senate confirmation as a member of the Broadcasting Board of Governors, the oversight body for US government civilian international media, including the Voice of America, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio Free Asia, and Middle East Broadcasting. He has been decorated with a knighthood in Arts and Letters by the French Ministry of Culture and Communication as a Chevalier dans l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres. | Photo: Aspen Review Archive

ASPEN.REVIEW
MAŁGORZATA FIDELIS

POLITICS
POPULISM
RIGHT-WING
POLITICAL CHRISTIANITY
HISTORICAL REFLECTION
ETHICAL RESISTANCE

Right-Wing Populism and the New Morality: A Historical Reflection

The election of Trump represents a "Post-Christian" turn. When we look at the way in which many people and religious leaders form and sustain their communities in recent years, the link between community building and exclusion becomes even clearer.

On January 25, Donald Trump, flanked by older white men, signed the executive order to reinstate and expand "the global gag rule." The photo of the event was shared on social media. In short, this gag rule prohibits federal funding to non-governmental organizations that support the right to abortion (and as of now—if they even mention the right to abortion). The order

will hurt millions of women in the so-called Third World, who will not be able to receive family planning counseling. The photo was not accidental. It was a powerful illustration of how gender works as "a primary way of signifying relationships of power."[1] The satisfied grin on Trump's face as he was signing the order and the all-male entourage had a specific message for the public: this is what the powerful can do to the powerless. The image set the tone for other decisions that were meant to inflict harm on other people: women, immigrants, Latinos, Muslims, and so on. These included the order to start constructing the wall on the American-Mexican border, and the travel ban on seven predominantly Muslim countries (now halted by the courts). All of this has been accompanied by Trump's campaign-like rallies filled with hate, insults, and aggression.

What the current wave of populist movements share is not only a set of political decisions and tactics but also an attempt to undermine humanism, mock basic human decency, eliminate empathy, and desensitize the audience towards human suffering. Like every revolution, the authoritarian populist one aims at transforming the symbolic and moral grounding of an entire community.[2] In the United States, and in other countries governed by right-wing populist leaders such as Hungary and Poland, illiberal policies are accompanied by active work to normalize exclusion, aggression, and denigration of those who look or think in a different way. Trump and his spokesmen use a variety of linguistic and technological means to accomplish this. They alter the language. Lies become "alternative facts." Trump's insults towards various groups are called "a different style of presidency." Inciting conflict is depicted as "unifying the American people." And these acts are intentionally made into spectacles to be broadcasted by the media for everyone to see and get accustomed to.

Like every revolution, the authoritarian populist one aims at transforming the symbolic and moral grounding of an entire community.

Why should we worry about this kind of "propaganda"? Are most people not immune to the inflammatory rhetoric of dictators and violent ways of resolving political conflicts after the catastrophic experiences of the twentieth century? The answer is no, especially if there is active work on the part of those in power to change the ethical underpinnings of society. In the mid-1940s, prompted by the rise of fascism, Max Horkheimer and

Theodor Adorno set out to explain "why mankind instead of entering into a truly human condition, is sinking into a new kind of barbarism."[3] This question is particularly relevant today. One can debate Horkheimer's and Adorno's dark vision of Enlightenment as "totalitarian," but the two philosophers were right on one account: the line between civilization and barbarism is thin and precarious.

What Can We Learn from History?

As a historian I have been trained to support my statements with "hard" evidence from the archives, and to use analytical distance when writing about events and actors. I find these building blocks of my historical training challenged by recent political developments. We are living in an era in which traditional tools of social sciences and humanities may need reassessment. Polling data repeatedly proved unreliable in predicting results of elections and referendums. And how many political scientists would have anticipated that the Congress, this bulwark of the American system of checks and balances, could so swiftly become a tool in the hands of the executive?

We are living in the era in which traditional tools of social sciences and humanities may need reassessment. Polling data repeatedly proved unreliable in predicting results of elections and referendums.

None of these should surprise historians, at least not on an intellectual level. While studying the past, one constantly deals with contingency, the unpredictability of human actions, and the unintended outcomes. Historians of 20th-century Europe (and Germany, in particular) have not shied away from bringing historical light to current events. They tend to focus, however, on "high politics" and the role of leaders.[4] However, historical knowledge may be most useful when it illuminates the experiences of ordinary people, cultural beliefs, identities, and emotions, all of which enable and propel a broader political change. How did people come to believe in authoritarian and totalitarian regimes as viable solutions to social, economic, and political problems? And how can we avoid the temptation to dwell on the historical parallels and start looking for useful ways of understanding and resisting the current populist wave instead?

Europe and the United States are Not Devastated by a Total War

While the affinity of today's right-wing populism to interwar fascism is hard to deny, the historical inquiry can also reveal significant contextual differences between the two. Present-day Europe and the United States are not the same as Europe and Germany of the 1920s and 1930s. It would be difficult, for example, to understand the rise of fascism without taking into account the First World War. The Great War was a watershed for Europeans. It killed millions, devastated communities in unimaginable ways, and radicalized large segments of the population. It also changed the moral fabric of societies making violence an acceptable way to solve political and social problems. In the cases of Bolshevik Russia, Fascist Italy, and Nazi Germany, violence borne out of the Great War became a legitimate way to forge new societies.

The current populist movements grew on different ground in this respect. Right-wing populist leaders in Europe and the United States are not speaking to societies devastated by a total war. This is perhaps why they are so desperately looking for other ways to shake the moral underpinnings of communities. Using the newest technology, populist leaders and their helpers create catastrophic visions to spread fear, uncertainty, and demoralization among the population. Campaign slogans for Law and Justice Party (PiS) in Poland talked about "Poland in ruins," and Jarosław Kaczyński claimed that the refugees from Syria (virtually non-existent in Poland) were about to infect Poles with germs and disease. Likewise, Trump and his spokesmen have been inventing terrorist massacres from Bowling Green to Sweden. The election of Trump in particular (who openly promoted violence in the name of the allegedly embattled "American nation" during his campaign), is symptomatic of how this new rhetoric strikes at the core human values resulting in deep and dangerous polarization of society. This polarization is no longer about political or cultural divide but increasingly about the basic understanding of right and wrong.

The current populist movements grew on different ground in this respect. Right-wing populist leaders in Europe and the United States are not speaking to societies devastated by a total war.

1) Scott, Joan Wallach. 1999. *Gender and the Politics of History*. New York: Columbia University Press, 42.

2) Historians such as François Furet, Keith Baker, and others argue that the French Revolution was primarily a political process: "It was political not simply because it represented a struggle for the possession of power, but because it transformed the symbolic grounding of an entire community and reconstituted the logic of social relations in the most profound sense." See Baker, Keith Michael. 1981. "Enlightenment and Revolution in France: Old Problems, Renewed Approaches." In: *The Journal of Modern History* 53, no. 2, 281-303, 284.

3) Horkheimer, Max and Adorno, Theodor W.. 1999. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, transl. by John Cumming. New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, ix.

4) See, for example, an interview with Evans, Richard by Chotiner, Isaak. 2017. "Too Close for Comfort. How much do the early days of the Trump administration look like the Third Reich. Historian Richard Evans weighs in." *slate.com* 10th February 2017. (http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/interrogation/2017/02/historian_richard_evans_says_trump_s_america_isn_t_exactly_like_the_third.html) See also new book by Snyder, Timothy. 2017. *On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century*. New York: Penguin.

"The New Morality" and Community Building

After the US elections on November 8, many commentators have focused on socio-economic factors as decisive in Trump's victory. We are often told that economically deprived white workers were driven to supporting Trump (and other populist leaders elsewhere) out of desperation. I do not mean to dismiss the powerful role of socio-economic structures. But the focus on impersonal structures overshadows the agency of individuals and groups. It is important to consider how socio-economic identities are shaped and re-shaped by political, ideological, and emotional practices. Perhaps a useful way to think about recent events may be to look at populist attempts to create a new "moral" community. These attempts feed on existing allegiances, such as religion or social class, but use them to alter human relationships.

Using the newest technology, populist leaders and their helpers create catastrophic visions to spread fear, uncertainty, and demoralization among the population.

Impersonal structures overshadows the agency of individuals and groups. It is important to consider how socio-economic identities are shaped and re-shaped by political, ideological, and emotional practices.

Recently, I often find myself going back to Thomas Kühne's powerful book, *Belonging and Genocide: Hitler's Community, 1918–1945*.[5] The book explores the "constitutive rather than the destructive side of mass murder" by vividly demonstrating how atrocities committed against the "enemy" can strengthen communal bonds among the perpetrators (and those on whose behalf the crimes are being committed).[6] My point is not to provide a direct comparison between present-day right-wing populism and "Hitler's community." Kühne's book refers to the specific case of Nazi Germany and the Holocaust, and it needs to be read in that particular context. The applicability of his arguments to the present, however, is still there: Kühne powerfully demonstrates that morality is socially constructed, and that it can be used for destructive purposes. The notions of good and evil are not timeless. They can change. The mass murder was possible because the new Nazi "morality" rejected the idea of universal human values: "Repudiating the Judeo-Christian traditions of mercy toward the weak and the Enlightenment principles of universalism, individualism, and egalitarianism, Nazi ethics demanded

that charity, kindness, and pity be restricted to Aryan Germans."[7] We may be hearing the exclusionary language of Trump, but it is possible that others are hearing the moral message of new community building. Like democracy, morality cannot be taken for granted.

A Post-Christian Moment?

For me, one manifestation of how the "new morality" is taking ground was the mass voting of self-identified Christians for Trump. I use the term "Christian" in a broad ecumenical sense rather than in a narrow American Christian fundamentalist sense. According to statistical data, 81 percent of white evangelicals voted for Trump. This was a larger percentage of evangelicals than that who voted for Mitt Romney in 2012 (78 percent), George W. Bush in 2004 (78 percent), and John McCain in 2008 (74 percent). White Catholics also tended to vote for Trump at the ratio of 60 to 37 percent. This is somewhat similar to the overwhelming support for PiS in Poland on the part of fundamentalist Catholics associated with Radio Maryja, and on the part of the Catholic hierarchy. There are, of course, differences between the function of religion in Poland and the United States (for example, one could argue that Catholicism in Poland is more of a social ritual than a religious identity). Nevertheless, it is significant that many of those who self-identify as Christian believers, honest, and moral people, voted for authoritarian leaders filled with un-Christian messages of hate, exclusion, and revenge.

I am tempted to say that the election of Trump represents a "post-Christian" turn. The term post-Christianity has multiple meanings, and it is often used by religious leaders in a negative way to denote an unwelcome departure of society from the teachings of the Church (or the Bible). On the most basic level, post-Christianity means de-centering of Christian religion with-

It is significant that many of those who self-identify as Christian believers, honest, and moral people, voted for authoritarian leaders filled with un-Christian messages of hate, exclusion, and revenge.

in the Western world, the home of medieval Christendom. It does not necessarily mean the decline of Christianity, but rather the world in which, as Charles Taylor explains, "Belief in God is no longer axiomatic. There are alternatives."[8] Rather than disappearing, religion finds new forms of expression and ways of adjusting to the modern world. In that sense, the Christian

5) Kühne, Thomas. 2010. *Belonging and Genocide: Hitler's Community, 1918-1945*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

6) Kühne, *Belonging and Genocide*, 1.

7) Kühne, *Belonging and Genocide*, 5.

8) Taylor, Charles. 2007. *A Secular Age*, Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 3.

9) Quoted in Burana, Lily. 2016. "Jesus Wept: How can you call yourself a Christian if you voted for Donald Trump?". *salon.com*. 18th November 2016 (http://www.salon.com/2016/11/19/jesus-wept-how-can-you-call-yourself-a-christian-if-you-voted-for-donald-trump/).

vote for right-wing populists could mean that the faithful themselves abandon the core Christian values (without abandoning the church or religious community) in search of a new outlet for their beliefs and emotions. It is worth noting here that the core Christian values are also the core humanist secular values as both recognize the humanity of others before making claims on how to relate to God and other humans.

The Radio Maryja community in Poland just as "born again" Christian groups in the United States often assert their identity by demonizing and excluding those who are not like them.

When we look at the way in which many people and religious leaders form and sustain their communities in recent years, the link between community building and hate becomes even clearer. For example, the Radio Maryja community in Poland just as "born again" Christian groups in the United States often assert their identity by demonizing and excluding those who are not like them. The ideas of Christian love and universalism are displaced by the drive for exclusive communal bonds and for boosting self-esteem through religious belonging.

The Christian vote is symptomatic of the process of disintegration of human values. In voting for Trump, self-identified "religious believers" chose not just an openly immoral person, but a leader who repeatedly depicts doing harm to other people as "good." This is how altering the moral grounding of a community looks like. If it takes root, it can have more lasting and detrimental consequences than Trump's executive orders.

Ethics as Resistance

Not all white evangelicals and Catholics voted for Trump. In fact, many religious leaders and faithful were shocked to see such a high proportion of Christians supporting the "un-Christian" Trump. Many would probably agree with Minister Mihee Kim-Kort, who wrote on her blog: "We lost something on November 9th. More than an election. Something—call it *humanity, compassion, hope*—faltered and perished, and something in me, too."[9] The movement to establish sanctuary churches and the network of private homes, in which undocumented immigrants could find shelter against inhumane deportation schemes is a strong sign that resistance against Trump policies can also come from within religious communities.[10]

Humanistic ethical values are not easy to be redefined. As Kühne shows, the process of implementing "race morality" in the Third Reich took time, and it relied on "progressive norm breaking." [11] The fact that Trump and his helpers spend so much time on legitimizing outright dishonest and hateful behavior tells us something about the difficulty of breaking universalist moral barriers.

10) Lah, Kyung and Moya, Alberto and Simon, Mallory. 2017. "Underground network readiness homes to hide undocumented immigrants." *cnn.com*. 23rd February 2017 (http://www.cnn.com/2017/02/23/us/california-immigrant-safe-houses).

11) Kühne, *Belonging and Genocide*, 6.

Finding Effective Ways to Link Politics and Ethics

As supporters of democracy are looking for launching an effective opposition to Trump, one could also hear voices urging restraint in "moralizing" to Trump supporters as that could further alienate those who feel unjustly accused of racism, sexism, and everything else that their candidate (now the president) displays on a daily basis. Moral judgments passed on individuals indeed might not be helpful in changing their minds, but one has to be careful not to give up on ethics and humanism. Rather, we need to find effective ways of articulating the link between politics and ethics, and reasserting the common ethical ground, because human values are part of politics. What Václav Havel once wrote about the necessity of "living in truth" rings particularly true today. Unlike Havel, I do not think that ethical resistance should replace politics, but "living in truth" is the necessary step to integrate the two. Havel also offered lessons on the fragility of human condition: "There are times when we must sink to the bottom of our misery to understand truth, just as we must descend to the bottom of the well to see the stars in broad daylight."[12] There are times when the massive assault on human values could become the source of strength for those who defend them.

Moral judgments passed on individuals indeed might not be helpful in changing their minds, but one has to be careful not to give up on ethics and humanism.

12) Vaclav Havel, "The Power of the Powerless," http://www.vaclavhavel.cz/showtrans.php?cat=eseje&val=2_aj_eseje.html&typ=HTML Accessed 25 February 2017.

MAŁGORZATA FIDELIS
is an associate professor of history, University of Illinois at Chicago. Her research focuses on social and cultural issues, particularly everyday life and the relationship between individuals and state power, in post-1945 Eastern Europe. She is the author of *Women, Communism, and Industrialization in Postwar Poland* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), Polish translation, 2015. | Photo: Aspen Review Archive

ASPEN.REVIEW
RONALD G. ASCH

The EU in 2017

POLITICS
EU
BREXIT
EUROZONE
POPULISM

Once a separate eurozone budget and a eurozone ministry of finance will have been set up, countries outside the eurozone might well find themselves deprived of many of the subsidies which they enjoy now. The Eastern European countries will be well advised to think twice before they take such a step.

When a narrow majority of British voters decided last year that their country should leave the European Union, this came as quite a shock to the political elite both in Brussels and in most member states of the EU; the prevailing opinion was that such a decision could only be the result of some fit of madness. Wild xenophobia, a kind of irrational nationalism not seen in Western Europe since 1945, and the irresponsible behavior of some overambitious politicians such as the frivolous Mr. Johnson who does admittedly often look and behave as if he were a figure invented by the writer P. G. Wodehouse (a kind of Bertie Wooster as foreign secretary), seemed to be the only explanation for a decision which was bound to lead to Britain's terminal economic decline, not to mention her complete political marginalization in Europe.

The Fallout from the Brexit Referendum

It is certainly true that it will be hellishly difficult to re-negotiate the relationship between the United Kingdom and the remaining EU countries. Whatever the divorce is going to be like, it is not going to be an amicable one, but then divorces rarely are. Britain's financial industry in particular will not find it easy to adjust to the new conditions after Brexit and may take many years, perhaps up to a decade to do so. Moreover, given the fact that the electorate was deeply divided about the issues at stake, it will be difficult to heal the divisions which the debate about Europe has opened up and is still creating; in the case of Scotland these divisions may turn out to be so deep that the Anglo-Scottish Union will break up so that Scotland can remain in the EU. That will in part depend on the price of crude oil over the next couple of years as an independent Scotland would desperately need the income from the oil industry.

Nevertheless, one is surprised that few commentators so far have dared to reflect on the impact Brexit will have on the rest of the EU. The UK is, in economic terms and depending on which year you look at, the second or the third largest economy in Europe (for year 2015 it was 2.6 trillion euro GDP compared to 2.2 for France and 3.0 for Germany) and many forecasts assume that in 15–20 years it will be Europe's largest economy, partly because of demographic factors. Admittedly, Brexit might reduce both economic growth and immigration and therefore prove these forecasts wrong, but still, as some economists have pointed out, if all countries of the EU were to leave the Union except the eight strongest economies (these eight would include Poland and Sweden) the effect in economic terms would be the same as that of Britain alone leaving the EU. Germany at the moment is exporting slightly less than 60% of her goods to other EU countries, after Brexit this figure will be down to about 50%. The effect is even more striking in terms of defense policy. There are only two countries in Europe that still have armies of their own which can be deployed to achieve limited political objectives by military means without direct US support, France and Britain, and one of these two countries will in future no longer belong to the EU.

The Flawed Monetary System of the Euro and the British Decision to Leave the EU

In other words, whatever Brexit may mean for Britain, it is bound to be a disaster for the EU. Admittedly the British electorate was always more skeptical about the European project than let us say German or Italian voters. But Brussels was clearly unable to persuade a sufficient number of British citizens that this project remained an attractive one and lacked the will to reassure them that in future the European institutions such as the Commission or, perhaps even more importantly, the European Court of Justice would refrain from extending their authority silently ever further, thereby undermining national sovereignty, something that had always been deeply resented in the United Kingdom.

Whatever the divorce is going to be like, it is not going to be an amicable one, but then divorces rarely are.

The deeply flawed project of the euro also played a major and a possibly decisive role. That is all the more true as the euro crisis created the impression in Britain and elsewhere that Europe was once more under the rule of Germany as a malevolent hegemonic power imposing austerity and

unpopular economic reforms on its unwilling partners. In reality this is largely a distortion of the truth as Germany has to stand by impotently while the ECB is creating a de facto mutual liability for all public debt in the eurozone through its program of buying almost unlimited amounts of government bonds. It was such mutual liability that Germany had openly rejected when the euro was created, and in theory the statutes of the ECB do not allow the central bank

There are only two countries in Europe that still have armies of their own which can be deployed to achieve limited political objectives by military means without direct US support, France and Britain

to engage in direct monetary financing of government spending; but with an extremely compliant European Court of Justice there are virtually no limits to what Mr. Draghi can do. The rule of law may be a splendid idea, but it is not what the EU is really good at when it comes to the euro and how it is being managed. This may be inevitable given the seriousness of the crisis (*silent leges inter arma*), but how can different nations cooperate when they cannot trust each other because virtually no legal rules apply when push comes to shove?

However, this was not the real concern of the British press when it analyzed the euro crisis. Most papers both left-wing and conservative rather relished the chance to depict Merkel as a slightly milder version of some evil German political figures from the past. Thus the vote for Brexit had also strong anti-German undertones. In this context Merkel's refugee policy was certainly less than helpful, one has to admit. It created the impression that the German chancellor wanted to impose a policy of completely open borders on all European countries. This may never have been her intention, however, the fact that she and her government clearly lost control in late 2015 and early 2016 over the situation during the refugee crisis had a huge political impact. As the discussion about the EU in Britain was very much about immigration policy, this may have been crucial in giving the Brexiteers the push which they needed to win the referendum.

Thus Merkel is at least to some extent responsible for a political decision taken by Britain which will greatly harm German interests in the EU. Britain, although never an easy partner, always opposed protectionist trade policies and the vision of the EU which saw the Union primarily as a mechanism designed to distribute ever-growing amounts of subsidies to industries and regions which are unable to compete without such support with-

in the Single Market. With Britain gone, the advocates of a more *dirigiste,* anti-liberal economic policy may well win the day in Brussels.

Where Does Brexit Leave Eastern and East Central Europe?

One might say that the end of British opposition to more subsidies within the EU is quite good news for the countries of East Central and Eastern Europe (if one ignores the fact that Britain is a major net contributor to this budget), in particular for Poland which in the past has received a huge amount of financial support from Brussels. But is that really true? Even before Britain decided to leave the EU it was the eurozone countries that called the shots in Brussels, the politics of the last six years were very much about the future of the eurozone. With Britain gone, the influence of non-eurozone countries in Brussels will decline further.

The vote for Brexit had also strong anti-German undertones. In this context Merkel's refugee policy was certainly less than helpful, one has to admit.

The situation could deteriorate even more dramatically once a separate eurozone budget and a eurozone ministry of finance will have been set up. These ideas are unpopular in Germany, but as Germany has lost most of the rear-guard actions in the war about the euro over the last couple of years, it is only too likely that this battle will eventually be lost as well. And once there is a separate eurozone budget, countries outside the eurozone might well find themselves deprived of many of the subsidies which they enjoy now. After all, the total amount of money available is not unlimited.

Of course there is a solution to that problem: the Eastern European countries could all join the eurozone. But their governments will be well advised to think twice before they take such a step. Once a country has entered the eurozone, there is hardly any way it can escape from it no matter whether it needs a weaker currency such as Greece (or, less urgently, Finland) or wants to escape from the problem of debt mutualization, like Germany. Essentially, the euro is on the one hand a mechanism which ensures that less competitive countries are permanently de-industrialized (this effect is clearly visible in Italy and France and to a slightly lesser extent in Spain as well), and on the other hand it forces the more successful countries which have imposed harsh reforms on pensioners or welfare recipients in the past to underwrite the debt of the deficit countries in one form or another.

That is the logic of the commons and the euro follows such a logic. In the end, Poland and the Czech Republic might even find themselves paying out subsidies to Italy to rescue Italian banks as the bail-in-rule for the shareholders and creditors of bankrupt banks is now about to be scrapped (the Monte dei Paschi case is highly significant here), shortly after it has been officially agreed upon. Same procedure as every year, one might say. Those are the rules of the game and one should know them before one participates in it.

A Future for the EU without Britain?

Where does all that leave the EU? Theoretically, at least from the perspective of the Brussels mandarins and the perpetual advocates of an ever-closer union (men like the grandiloquent Martin Schulz or the overenthusiastic Guy Verhofstadt), in the best of all possible worlds. With Britain gone, one has managed to get rid of a perpetual troublemaker, the black sheep of the EU family one might say. The weight of the EU as a whole in world affairs has of course been much diminished, but some sacrifices need to be made from time to time. Moreover, Germany has more or less acquiesced in her defeat in the battle about the future of the euro and accepted debt mutualization as long as this can be hidden from the eyes of voters in Germany.

However, the underlying problems remain unresolved. Economic growth in crucial countries such as Italy and France—Greece we all know has been written off long ago—remains very sluggish. And there is little hope for the future. Matteo Renzi's policies in Italy have been largely rejected by the electorate, and in the upcoming presidential elections in France a majority of voters, though perhaps a narrow one, seems to prefer candidates of the far right or the hard left, candidates who promise that painful reforms can be avoided and who more or less want to return to the economic policies of the 1980s, either outside the monetary union or within. Draghi—that is the implicit hope in the latter case—or the German tax payer will willingly finance an even more generous welfare state and an even bigger public sector than at present.

The real problem is more serious. Not just in France but even in the Netherlands and Germany the political class is losing the trust of the electorate. Many voters have lost all confidence in professional politicians and even in the political system as such. This pronounced distrust that politicians encounter has always been a feature of the political culture of countries such as Italy and Greece, but in other countries such as post-war Germany it is a more

recent phenomenon. It is at least to some extent due not so much to the "evil populists" who spread xenophobia and resentments—although such people do benefit from the prevailing mood—but to the fact that the political elite has invested its moral and symbolic capital in schemes which just do not work in the way they should. The common currency is among these projects, but it is not the only one, as the entire EU structure (including the rules for immigration and the free movement of employees within the union) has been designed for much fairer and milder weather than the force ten economic and political gales we have to endure at the moment.

Politicians in most European countries try to stem the tide of the so-called populism and nationalism by upholding the old idea of European unification and by repeating the traditional incantations about Europe as a peace project and the euro as the basis of everlasting prosperity. The British Prime Minister Theresa May, whatever one might think about her otherwise, is quite different in this respect; admittedly she has little choice given the outcome of the referendum last year. She tries to ride the wave of "populism" and by taking her country out of the EU she hopes to contain the rising protest against the entire political system and the metropolitan elite. That is admittedly a risky policy to follow and her alliance with the madcap American President "The Donald" Trump will hardly make it less risky, but in the end her policies may be more successful in the long run than the attempts to keep afloat a ship that is leaking left, right, and center; pumping ever growing quantities of hot air into the EU's political and financial ballast tanks may not be enough in the long run.

The real problem is more serious. Not just in France but even in the Netherlands and Germany the political class is losing the trust of the electorate.

RONALD G. ASCH
is professor of early modern history at the University of Freiburg. The focus of his research is the British history of the 16th and 17th century, the history of the Thirty Years' War and the European aristocracy. His latest monograph is *Sacral Kingship between Disenchantment and Re-enchantment. The French and English Monarchies 1587-1688*, Berghahn, New York /Oxford 2014. Until July 2015 he was a member of the party Alternative für Deutschland (AfD). | Photo: Aspen Review Archive

ASPEN.REVIEW
ŁUKASZ GRZESICZAK

INTERVEIW
POLITICS
EU

Klaus Bachmann: Only a Strong EU May Save Itself

Whoever wants more powers for nation-states and weaker EU institutions, he will get a European Union where instead of the European Commission it will be Germany dictating to the EU what it should do—says the German political scientist Klaus Bachmann in an interview with the Łukasz Grzesiczak.

"Czech-German relations may be an example for the entire world," said the Czech Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka on the 20th anniversary of the signing of the Czech-German declaration by Václav Klaus and Helmut Kohl (February 21, 1997, Prague). Is your opinion the same?

I am very cautious in making such categorical judgements and I do not believe that such examples can be transferred to other regions of the world. And yet I know that among the diplomats and scientists from South Korea, China, and Japan there is a significant interest in what they call German–French, German–Czech, and Polish–German reconciliation.

Still as a foreign minister, just before assuming the office of the German president, Frank-Walter Steinmeier met with his Czech counterpart Lubomír Zaorálek. Was that more than just a courtesy?

I did not notice that Germans started to treat the Czechs, rather than the Poles, as the leaders of the region. The economic and geopolitical importance of Czechia and Poland is very different and if only for that reason the relations with Poland will be more important for Germany than its relations with Czechia. But I can imagine that for Steinmeier, Zaorálek was simply a nicer guy than Witold Waszczykowski, his unpredictable colleague from Poland.

The Merkel doctrine: "Nobody is left behind." It regarded Portugal, Ireland, or Greece during the eurozone crisis, Greece during the migration crisis, and now Poland or Hungary because of their problems with the rule of law.

Is the Visegrad Group an important partner for German foreign policy?

I don't think so. V4 is not a homogenous partner and in many matters has no coherent position. Virtually the only issue it is unanimous on is the question of refugees. But in Czechia and Slovakia there is a difference of opinion on that between the president and the government. I think that from the point of view of the Visegrad Group it is a remarkable progress that it is perceived as a group at all, recently by Angela Merkel.

So what are the most important challenges you see in the relations between Germany and the Visegrad Group countries? Can the V4 be a partner of Germany in the EU?

Yes, but to the same extent as any other regional group and any other EU country. Additionally, one has to be aware that the V4 is relatively weak, both economically and demographically, compared to other groups such as the South (Portugal, Spain, Italy, Greece), the Iberian countries, the countries of the North (Sweden, Denmark, Finland, and in the Schengen context also Norway), or even the Benelux countries. We will notice that when comparing votes which representatives of all these groups have in the EU Council and the European Parliament. Even in those places where the V4 has more votes—compared to the Nordic countries and the Benelux for example—it is definitely weaker economically.

What kind of EU does Germany want?

They want a European Union of 28 or (after Brexit) 27 states which are increasingly integrating with the participation of strong supranational institutions, such as the European Commission, the European Parliament, and the European Court of Justice. If it is not possible, for example because Great Britain leaves the Union, the EU should remain as numerous as possible. It could be called the Merkel doctrine: "Nobody is left behind." It regarded Portugal, Ireland, or Greece during the eurozone crisis, Greece during the migration crisis, and now Poland or Hungary because of their problems with the rule of law. Germany itself, German pressure groups, and German government sometimes complain that institutions "mingle in other people's affairs." It was so, for example, when the Commission asked the German minister of traffic to change his concept of motorway charges in such a way that it would not discriminate against foreigners (which undermines the sense of this project or makes it unprofitable). The minister changed the bill and this delayed the work on it to such an extent that it did not become the law during his term in office. There was no attempt to introduce the bill against the position of the Commission. This is a consensus which stretches over the whole German party system-respecting supranational institutions, even

when it is against the German interests.

For Germany this is a condition for EU's functioning?

Without that everyone would "take a free ride." Initially, they would agree to far-reaching common efforts, in order to look good before their own public, and then, when the political, social, and financial cost of implementing such decisions would have to be borne, they would pretend that these measures are impossible to introduce. This is done with domestic pressure groups in mind, for which implementation of such decisions means bearing particular costs. It can be seen now during the discussion about raising the military expenditure within NATO. NATO has no supranational institutions which could persuade the member states to respect jointly-taken decisions (to spend 2% of the GDP on defense). The member states at first agreed to these 2%, and then did not implement it, hoping that others would do it for them. This is the free-riding I spoke about. Currently, the Americans are trying to exploit their hegemonic position within NATO to persuade others to respect these decisions. It is a very good illustration of what would happen in the EU if supranational institutions were too weak.

Germany would become the United States of Europe?

It would mean that Germany would behave in the EU like Americans within NATO. In other words, whoever wants more powers for nation-states and weaker EU institutions—as the governments of Hungary and Poland demand—he will get a European Union where instead of the European Commission it will be Germany dictating to the EU what it should do. And then the EU will break up, for it probably will be beyond the power of Germany to play such a role. And therefore virtually all political forces in Germany support strengthening rather than weakening supranational institutions.

How do you assess the relations between Berlin and Bratislava and Budapest?

I do not think that our relations with Slovakia particularly stand out from our relations with other countries. Budapest is a more interesting case. We had two politicians in the EU who attempted to create themselves as leaders of opposing tendencies in Europe. Alexis Tsipras aspired to the position of the savior of the European radical left, but was unsuccessful because the left to the left of social democracy is very weak and has made its presence felt only in few countries, mainly in Spain and Greece. The other politician who has challenged the mainstream policy in the EU is Viktor Orbán, but he does it from the right angle. When it comes to controlling the-extreme right and the right-wing/populist movements in the EU, Orbán does not have much chance, for his country is too weak

and there are too many other candidates for the position of the savior of the right. On top of it all, Vladimir Putin is very active in this company. Moreover, Orbán himself is unable to decide if he should attack Merkel and Germany, and without that it is difficult to build an image of a politician who challenges the European liberal mainstream.

In early February, Chancellor Merkel met in Warsaw with Jarosław Kaczyński and representatives of an opposition party. How does Berlin assess the current situation in Poland?

In contrast to the Polish participants of these talks (who immediately rushed to the media and blabbed about what they had been talking about with Merkel), the chancellor herself never spoke about it. From what I know, the behavior of the Polish side did not make the best impression on her. It regarded both the talks with representatives of the governing camp and with the opposition. What to make of

The Americans are trying to exploit their hegemonic position within NATO to persuade others to respect these decisions. It is a very good illustration of what would happen in the EU if supranational institutions were too weak.

MEPs who propose to abolish the position of the president of the European Union Council in order to strike at the candidacy of Donald Tusk in a situation where it would require changing European treaties, which would take a few years? What to make of representatives of the opposition who have their five minutes to present the threats to democracy and the rule of law in Poland, who may contradict the government's narrative on this subject, and instead they prefer to talk about sugar beet?

Warsaw loses credibility in the German eyes? What can be the consequences of this?

The current Polish government is repeatedly making far-reaching demands—probably meant to impress the Polish public—whose implementation would be harmful not only for Poland but even for the government itself. One example is the reform of treaties. If it came to that, then given the balance of power in the EU the result would be exactly the opposite to what the Polish government wants. After Great Britain leaving the EU, only Poland, Hungary, and maybe Denmark would demand the renationalization of EU powers. But even if by some miracle it came to that, it would result in the breakup of the EU, the emergence of a hard core centered around Germany and isolated from the rest, and a scenario which I described before.

The current Polish government repeatedly announces proposals which would make sense only if they were not implemented. The idea is to chase the bunny, not to catch it. This is not a policy which would be cred-

ible for others. The consequences are that other countries more and more rarely seek the support of Warsaw or consult things with it and there is a growing number of groups, informal bodies, and meetings in which Poland does not take part. One day we will wake up and Poland will still be in the EU, but in fact it will be in the same situation as Great Britain, not an EU member.

After Great Britain leaving the EU, only Poland, Hungary, and maybe Denmark would demand the renationalization of EU powers.

What does an average German think about Poles and other inhabitants of Central Europe?

Not much. A positive image of Poland lingers on, for stereotypes—both positive and negative ones—are astonishingly permanent and resistant to current events. Slightly harmful to the Polish image was this explosion of xenophobia towards the Muslims during the migration crisis. Until that time, very many people who are interested in Poland accepted the stereotype of Polish tolerance and hospitality. Until late 1990s, Poland was regarded in Germany almost as an exemplary success story, a country which very efficiently—and with lower financial and social cost than the former East Germany—managed to build democracy and market economy. And suddenly, out of nowhere, emerged a government which claims that Poland is a country in ruin, corrupt, torn with inequalities, and steeped in mafia-type arrangements. The governing camp in Poland uses a language which, when translated into German, very strongly smacks of the language used by the Nazi movement in the 1930s. A nation which under the leader of one party is at last awakening from lethargy, rising from its knees, immigrants spreading diseases, etc. In German it sounds like taken straight out of Freikorps and SA leaflets. I know that it is not like that, for I live here, but to a German listener who is interested in Poland the effect is overwhelming.

Angela Merkel will be running for the office of the chancellor for the fourth time in the autumn parliamentary elections. What are her chances of victory?

It is difficult to predict. A few percent of the votes may decide about which party will form the government. A paradoxical situation is possible where Merkel wins the elections, but does not become chancellor, for SPD will form a coalition with the left (Die Linke) and the Greens. Currently the SPD is rapidly regaining the electorate it lost in recent years. Two scenarios are the most probable: another grand coalition or a left-wing government under the leadership of the SPD.

Will foreign policy be an important issue of this elections? If yes, which

matters will be the most significant?

Trump's policy and Putin's policy influence the course of the election campaign, but foreign policy rarely determines the choices of German voters. Social questions are the most important here: economic inequalities, which in Germany are bigger than in Poland, and social mobility. There are also many areas where foreign policy becomes domestic policy. Turkey tries to use the population of Turkish origin to influence the politics in Turkey and, using authoritarian methods, persuades them to vote "yes" in the Turkish referendum on introducing the presidential system. The government in Istanbul also tries to make an impact on politics in Germany. A similar phenomenon can be observed among the Russian-speaking population, part of which succumbs to Russian propaganda and spreads it against Merkel. The aim is to have a left-wing government, one that would be more willing to abolish sanctions against Russia and to have a "reset" in foreign policy—especially in the context of Ukraine. I think that such a government would be less involved in financial and economic support for Ukraine.

A paradoxical situation is possible where Merkel wins the elections, but does not become chancellor, for SPD will form a coalition with the left (Die Linke) and the Greens.

To what extent the possible left-wing government in Germany would adjust its policy towards Poland?

A left-wing government would probably put an even stronger pressure for deeper integration while it is doubtful it would continue the "nobody is left behind" doctrine. Certainly such a government would be less willing to pay for the maintenance of a great EU and stopping centrifugal movements, especially in the countries ruled by the right. For this reason another grand coalition of CDU and SPD would probably be the best for Poland.

KLAUS BACHMANN

Klaus Bachmann worked as a foreign correspondent from 1988 to 2001, writing from Poland, Ukraine, Latvia, and Belarus and getting published in various periodicals in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. He became a docent at the University of Wrocław in 2004 and then in 2006 at the University for Social Sciences and Humanities in Warsaw. His career in the academia spans teaching and research positions at universities in Bordeaux, Vienna, Stellenbosch (South Africa), Beijing (Renmin University of China), and Washington, D.C., (American Center for Contemporary German Studies at Johns Hopkins). His current work lies in several scientific projects in the territory of former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Tanzania, Namibia, and South Africa on the topic of colonialism, international criminal tribunals, and games theory. He is an author of books and writings on German, Austrian, and Polish culture, history, and politics, on European Union as well as on the German–Polish and Polish–Ukrainian relations.

| Photo: SWPS Uniwersytet Humanistycznospołeczny

The V4 as an Anti-German Coalition

ASPEN.REVIEW
HANS KUNDNANI

POLITICS
EU
VISEGRAD
GERMAN DOMINATION

In the refugee crisis a new dynamic emerged between Germany and the V4—all members of the Schengen area. If in the euro crisis the EU was divided between north and south, in the refugee crisis it was divided between east and west.

In 1991, as they transitioned from communism, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland formalized their cooperation as the Visegrad Group.[1] Since the four central European countries (as they became after the dissolution of Czechoslovakia in 1993) joined the European Union as part of the "big bang" enlargement in 2004, they countries have sought to use the group to amplify their influence within it. But the V4 have generally struggled to cohere as a group and failed to have a significant impact on the EU—until the refugee crisis in the summer of 2015, when they joined forces to oppose a German plan to "relocate" refugees between member states on the basis of mandatory quotas.[2] So, is the V4 most cohesive and effective as a veto player in opposition to Germany?

Not Only Economic Interests

The idea that the vocation of the V4 could be as an anti-German coalition seems particularly surprising because of the way the four countries are de-

1) See Visegrad Declaration 1991, http://www.visegrad-group.eu/documents/visegrad-declarations/visegrad-declaration-110412.

2) The V4 did cohere and have an impact in negotiations on the EU budgets for 2014 to 2020. In particular it successfully opposed cuts to the EU cohesion funds. I would like to thank Agata Gostyńska-Jakubowska and Konrad Popławski for pointing this out to me.

pendent on Germany in economic terms. Germany is the most important trading partner for each of the V4. In the last decade in particular, central Europe has become "an assembly plant for German companies," as Konrad Popławski puts it.[3] Some analysts have seen a "greater German economy" emerging through the increased economic interdependence between Germany and central Europe.[4] Others have even written of the re-emergence of a "German-dominated Mitteleuropa" in which "entire industries" in the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia are "offshoots of German companies."[5]

The V4's response to each of the three major crises the EU has faced in the last seven years illustrates that how states act is not always determined by economic interests, at least not in the way economic interests are defined by liberal economists.

The German automobile industry plays a particularly important role in the economies of the V4. From the 2000s onwards, German car companies increasingly outsourced production to countries like Hungary and Slovakia in order to lower production costs—a major and often underrated factor in the increased "competitiveness" of the German economy in the second half of the decade.[6] The presence of the German automobile industry in Hungary and Slovakia is particularly strong. Audi, a subsidiary of Volkswagen, is the biggest investor in Hungary. Volkswagen is also one of the biggest employers in Slovakia, which produces more cars per capita than any other country in the world.

However, the V4's response to each of the three major crises the EU has faced in the last seven years—the euro crisis, the Ukraine crisis, and the refugee crisis—illustrates that how states act is not always determined by economic interests, at least not in the way economic interests are defined by liberal economists. In the euro crisis, the relationship of the V4 to Germany did seem to be largely a function of its integration into, and dependence on, the German economy. In the Ukraine crisis, however, economic interests were subordinated to security concerns shaped by history and threat perceptions. In the refugee crisis, issues of culture and identity were decisive—even when German politicians threatened to cut EU structural funds to the V4 if they did not agree to take their "fair share" of refugees.[7]

Difficulties in Acting Collectively

The V4's response to the three crises also illustrates the difficulties they face in acting collectively. Sometimes in the last seven years, the four countries have simply defined their national interests in heterogeneous ways and have therefore been unable to cohere as a group. Even when their interests have been aligned, they have generally pursued them separately rather than together. In particular, as Germany has emerged as the de facto leader of the EU since the beginning of the euro crisis, they have—like other member states including even the United Kingdom—increasingly gone to Berlin to pursue their interests in the EU. Thus the temptation of a bilateral "special relationship" with Germany has undermined the coherence of the V4 as a group.

In the euro crisis, the EU was divided between north and south as member states adopted a mixture of bandwagoning and balancing in relation to Germany, the largest creditor—and therefore the most powerful—country in the eurozone. The eurozone "periphery" seemed to be under pressure to form what George Soros called a "common front" against Germany.[8] The breakthrough in the euro crisis in 2012 was the product of exactly such an anti-German coalition of France, Italy, and Spain. Meanwhile the countries of central Europe seemed to be forming what I described as "a kind of geo-economic equivalent of a German sphere of influence."[9] In short, the south seemed to be balancing and the east seemed to be bandwagoning.

In the last seven years, the four countries have simply defined their national interests in heterogeneous ways and have therefore been unable to cohere as a group.

The V4 were generally sympathetic to the thrust of German eurozone policy.[10] In particular, despite, or perhaps because of, the difficult economic transformations they had themselves been through, they supported the imposition of austerity on "crisis countries" in the eurozone. Slovakia was particularly vocal during the renewed discussion around bailing out Greece in 2015.[11] Nevertheless, the V4 was structurally inhibited from playing a role in the euro crisis as a group because out of the four countries only Slovakia was a member of the single currency. There were also differences of policy. In particular, the Czech Republic opposed the Fiscal Compact and became the only EU member state apart from the United Kingdom to refuse to sign it in 2012 (though it changed its position under Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka and signed it in 2014).

3) Popławski, Konrad. 2016. "The Role of Central Europe in the German Economy. The Political Consequences". *osw.pl*. (https://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/osw-report/2016-05-16/role-central-europe-german-economy-political-consequences). Warsaw: Centre for Eastern Studies. p. 6.

4) "Europe's future in an age of austerity". 2012. Centre for European Reform conference report. Ditchley Park. Oxfordshire, 9–10 November 2012, p. 6, http://www.cer.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/attachments/pdf/2012/ditchley_event_rpt-14dec12-6728.pdf.

5) See for example Mitchell, Wess A. and Havránek, Jan. 2013. "Atlanticism in Retreat", *The American Interest*, November/December 2013 (http://www.the-american-interest.com/2013/10/10/atlanticism-in-retreat/).

6) See Kundnani, Hans . 2014. *The Paradox of German Power*. London: Hurst, pp. 74-77.

In the Ukraine crisis, meanwhile, the V4 were deeply divided. Although all four countries are to some extent economically dependent on Russia, particularly for energy, their responses were determined by the different threat perceptions they had. While Poland under the Civic Platform government of Donald Tusk was among the most hawkish countries calling for a tough response to Russia's annexation of the Crimea and to their destabilization of eastern Ukraine, Hungary under Viktor Orbán was the most pro-Russian. Slovakia under Robert Fico was also opposed to economic sanctions against Russia. As a result of these differing interests, the V4 was again largely irrelevant as a group in the Ukraine crisis—though Poland initially played an important role in diplomacy with Russia through the Weimar group and co-operated with the Baltics and even the UK on security.

The V4 were generally sympathetic to the thrust of German eurozone policy. In particular, despite, or perhaps because of, the difficult economic transformations they had themselves been through.

A New Dynamic between Germany and the V4

In the refugee crisis, however, a new dynamic emerged between Germany and the V4—all members of the Schengen area.[12] If in the euro crisis the EU was divided between north and south, in the refugee crisis it was divided between east and west. In this context, the V4 played an analogous role to the one played by the eurozone "periphery" in the euro crisis: it balanced against Germany rather than bandwagoning with it. The V4 became "a kind of central European awkward squad," as Neil Buckley and Henry Foy of the Financial Times put it. Orbán—who emerged as Chancellor Angela Merkel's biggest critic even though his party, Fidesz, belongs to the same grouping in the European Parliament as the German Christian Democrats—accused Germany of "moral imperialism," an echo of accusations of "fiscal imperialism" from the eurozone "periphery" in the euro crisis.

Initially, in the refugee crisis the V4 were divided: the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia voted against the European Commission's plan to "relocate" 120,000 refugees from Greece and Italy in the Justice and Home Affairs Council in September 2015, but Poland voted in favor of it, though it too was opposed to mandatory quotas for refugees. Still, after

7) de Maizière, Thomas. 2015. *ZDF*, De Maizière, the German interior minister, suggested that the EU might cut structural funds to those countries that rejected binding quotas. "We must talk about ways of exerting pressure," he said. 15 September 2015.

8) Soros, George. 2012. "The Tragedy of the European Union and How to Resolve It". *New York Review of Books*. 27 September 2012, available at http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2012/sep/27/tragedy-european-union-and-how-resolve-it/?pagination=false.

PiS won the parliamentary elections in Poland in October and formed a new government, the V4 countries were united against Germany. While Prime Minister Tusk had acted as a conduit between the V4 and Germany that facilitated co-operation, the PiS government sought instead to join forces with other central and eastern European countries in order to form a counterweight to German power.

If in the euro crisis the EU was divided between north and south, in the refugee crisis it was divided between east and west. In this context, the V4 played an analogous role to the one played by the eurozone "periphery" in the euro crisis.

Of the three crises the EU has faced since 2010, the V4 was clearly most effective as an anti-German coalition. In the euro crisis, the V4 had roughly aligned interests, but, partly because of the way the V4 intersects with the variable geometry of the EU, they pursued them bilaterally rather than as a group. In the Ukraine crisis, they had different interests and therefore again failed to cohere as a group. It was only in the refugee crisis, in which the V4 had aligned interests that were directly opposed to Germany's, that they formed a coherent grouping. This is perhaps not surprising: it is logical that the V4 countries would generally seek to pursue their interests bilaterally with Germany and join forces when they need allies to oppose Germany-like the eurozone "periphery" did in the euro crisis.

9) Kundnani, *The Paradox of German Power*, p. 111.

10) On the V4 and Germany in the euro crisis, see Handl, Vladimir. 2013.The Visegrad Four and German hegemony in the euro zone. Visegrad Fund. December 2013 http://visegradexperts.eu/data/_uploaded/Finals/Vladimir%20Handl.pdf.

11) See Foy, Henry. 2015."Slovakia rules out further financial aid for Greece", *Financial Times*, 19 February 2015, https://www.ft.com/content/692bfc12-b831-11e4-86bb-00144feab7de. Slovak Finance Minister Peter Kažimír was particularly vocal on twitter. See Steinhauser, Gabrielle and Kängsepp, Liis and Kaža, Juris. 2015."Greece's Small but Mighty Critics in Eastern Europe Start to Vent". *Wall Street Journal*. 11 July 2015. (https://www.wsj.com/articles/greeces-small-but-mighty-critics-in-eastern-europe-start-to-vent-1436607216).

12) On the V4 in the refugee crisis, see Krastev, Ivan. 2016. "The end of the German moment", Transatlantic Academy. 21 September 2016 (http://www.transatlanticacademy.org/node/961).

HANS KUNDNANI
is a senior transatlantic fellow with German Marshall Fund's Europe program and the author of two books, *Utopia or Auschwitz. Germany's 1968 Generation and the Holocaust* (2009); and *The Paradox of German Power* (2014). | Photo: Aspen Review Archive

ASPEN.REVIEW
ADAM BALCER

POLITICS
EU
BREXIT
EUROZONE
GERMANY

Germany, Central Europe, and the EU after Brexit

Britain's leaving the EU, which will probably take place in two or three years, represents a decisive change in the Union's balance of power. The EU will become even more synonymous with the eurozone.

The British referendum on leaving the EU (Brexit) is the most important event in the history of the EU since the great expansion in 2004. The United Kingdom is the second largest economy of the EU, responsible for about 15% of the GDP of the whole Union. Consequently, its leaving the EU increases the share of Germany in the EU GDP from 20% to 25%, while the share of the eurozone in the entire GDP of the union will go up from over two thirds (including Croatia and Denmark with their currency boards) to about 85%. The United Kingdom is also an EU member with the largest—besides France—military potential, including a nuclear arsenal.

Today the greatest responsibility (again) for the future shape of the EU lies with Germany, not only because of the fact that they are the largest economy with the most numerous population, but also because of their exceptional economic relations with EU members not belonging to the euro-

Today the greatest responsibility for the future shape of the EU lies with Germany because of their exceptional economic relations with EU members not belonging to the eurozone.

zone (Central Europe, Scandinavia). We should not expect crucial decisions on the shape of the European Union before the elections in France and Germany (2017). But even today, on the basis of discussions going on in Germany and Europe and the proposals emerging from them, we can perceive the possible directions of change. At the beginning of 2017, we hear from the European leaders more often than ever that the scenario of a "multispeed Europe" may be inevitable or even desirable; an idea which until recently used to be considered rather taboo. Indeed, the main message from the meeting in Versailles on March 7, 2017, among leaders of France, Germany, Italy, and Spain was clear: "differentiated cooperation" is increasingly seen as the way forward for the EU in order to avoid the risks of disintegration.

Security Policy without the United Kingdom

The process of Britain's leaving the EU means the necessity of a profound reflection on the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, the United Kingdom spends the biggest amount of money on defense in absolute terms out of all the EU countries (USD exchange rate from 2015) or comes second after France (constant exchange rate from 2014). Military expenditure of these two countries is at a very similar level. Their joint expenditure is only slightly lower than the contributions of all remaining EU countries taken together. What is more, France and United Kingdom are distinguished in the EU by a particularly close bilateral cooperation in the sphere of security and by possessing nuclear arsenals. Both countries spend more than 2% of their GDP on defense. Among other European Union countries only Estonia, Greece, and Poland are in this category.

So Britain's leaving the EU means that the second biggest military spender after France will be Germany, but between Germany on the one hand, and France and United Kingdom on the other, there are fundamental

differences regarding security policy. German defense spending constituted just 1.2% of the GDP in 2015 (which amounts to about three-fourths of the French expenditure). It has remained on a similar level for many years. Spain and Italy spend a similar share of their GDP on defense, although in the case of Italy in 2004 it was 1.9% of the GDP. In absolute terms, joint military expenditure of Italy and Spain is at the level of the German defense spending. More importantly, because of the legacy of the Second World War and pacifist social sentiments, Berlin is radically less ready for military interventions abroad compared to London and Paris. For the same reasons it is very difficult to imagine an increase of German military expenditure to the level of 2% of GDP or producing nuclear arms.

However, Germany became very much involved in preparing a CSDP reform taking Brexit into account. In mid-October 2016, defense ministers of France, Spain, Italy, and Germany presented a joint plan of reforming CSDP. They announced that should they not gain the support of the entire EU, they would promote a project within the so-called mechanism of enhanced cooperation included in the Lisbon Treaty (a coalition of the willing). The four ministers declared that their aim was neither "building a European army" nor "competing with NATO." What they are after is making the Union capable of conducting independent military operations, including "of high-intensity," in its neighborhood.

Serving as a model are to be such initiatives from the past as interventions in Mali or Somalia, although they were organized by particular Union countries (especially by France) rather than the entire EU. To make it possible, the EU countries would establish a separate military staff in Brussels. What is more, the meetings of EU defense ministers would be organized once a month. Now such consultations take place only occasionally during meetings of foreign ministers.

An integral part of the plan is the proposal to consolidate the arms industry of the member states and the development of the most modern military technologies. The plan assumes a major increase in the budget of the European Defence Agency (EDA) established in 2004. So far, the development of the EDA was blocked by the United Kingdom. The signatories also proposed creating a logistics center, where military equipment necessary for overseas operations would be kept. The EU would also coordinate protecting crucial institutions of the member states against cyber-attacks.

The Eurozone and Its EU Neighbors

The countries from outside the eurozone to a large extent constitute a coherent geographic area within the EU. The countries not belonging to the eurozone (cut across by Slovakia, which does use the common currency) stretch from the north to the south from Sweden to Bulgaria. Their societies and governments present varying attitudes towards adopting the common currency. A Eurobarometer poll from December 2016 showed that the majority of Croats, Romanians, and Hungarians had a positive attitude towards eurozone accession, while most Bulgarians were against it (50% against, 38% for, 12% undecided).

Staunch opponents of joining the eurozone are Czechs (almost 75% against), Swedes and Danes (about 65–70% against), and Poles (more than 55% against, in domestic polls more than 66%). These social sentiments to a large extent translate into the approach of the governments to the euro. Bulgaria, Croatia, and Romania declare their willingness or conduct and economic policy subordinated to the aim of joining the eurozone in the near future. Denmark has an opt-out clause. Czechia, Poland, Sweden, and Hungary, although under the terms of the accession treaty obligated to join the eurozone, do not take any action in this direction.

So Britain's leaving the EU means that the second biggest military spender after France will be Germany, but between Germany on the one hand, and France and United Kingdom on the other, there are fundamental differences regarding security policy.

Even in the geographic aspect, Germany is connected in a special way with the EU members from outside the eurozone. Within the EU, the German border is the longest border between euro and non-euro countries (Denmark, Poland, Czechia). Beside Slovakia, Germany is also the only eurozone country bordering with so many non-members. Analyzing the economic relations of Germany with the non-euro EU countries, it should be emphasized that the German economy is generally globalizing and becoming less and less "European." The share of the EU in the German trade balance declined from 63% in 1995 to 57% in 2015.

The importance of the current eurozone countries for the German trade has decreased much more. In mid-1990s, 47% of German trade was with these countries, by 2015 their share had shrunk to 37%. In 2000, for

1) Sunday Times Rich List. 2016.

2) Oxfam. 2016.

3) Smith, Adam. 1776. *An Inquiry into the Wealth of Nations*. 1, 5, 56.

4) Mill, J.S. 1848. *Principles of Political Economy*. 5, 2.

5) Standing, G. 2016. *The Corruption of Capitalism*. London: Biteback Publishing.

6) Hobson, J.A. 1937. *Property and Improperty*. London: Gollancz.

7) Tawney, R.H. 1920, 2004. *The Acquisitive Society*. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications.

comparison, 15–20% of German foreign trade was with the non-euro EU countries. What is more, the share of these countries in the German trade balance significantly increased in the last two decades. As a result, even after Britain's leaving of the EU, almost 30% of German EU trade involves countries not belonging to the eurozone.

The countries not belonging to the eurozone stretch from the north to the south from Sweden to Bulgaria. Their societies and governments present varying attitudes towards adopting the common currency.

The share of these countries in German foreign direct investments within the EU is very similar. (Meanwhile, foreign direct investments of Germany in the EU countries constitute more than 40% of all German FDI stocks). Germany is the most important trade partner for all countries not belonging to the eurozone. Its share is often very high: 25–30% in the case of Poland, Czechia, and Hungary, 20% in the case of Romania and Denmark, and about 15% in the case of Bulgaria, Croatia, and Sweden. Germany is a crucial and often most important foreign direct investor in these countries (especially in Poland, Czechia, and Hungary). To sum up, no other big eurozone country is so strongly connected with those EU states which do not use the common currency.

The German Visions of Europe

The referendum on the United Kingdom's leaving of the EU sparked a debate in Germany on the future of the union. This debate revealed marked differences of positions between Christian Democracy and Social Democracy. The former supports further informal integration (a coalition of the willing in situations when the European Commission is incapable of solving problems) and with greater emphasis on cooperation with countries from outside the eurozone. More important for the Social Democrats is institutional integration (federalism) and the focus on the hard core of the eurozone.

Soon after the British vote, the then German Foreign Minister Frank Walter Steinmeier, one of the leaders of Social Democracy (SPD), alongside with the French foreign minister announced a document "Strong Europe in the world of uncertainty." They declared that their countries would "keep

moving towards a political union in Europe" and invited the rest of Europeans to participate in this undertaking. In their opinion, the EU must create an economic and currency union. They claim that introducing a common fiscal policy constitutes the "missing milestone of the European Monetary Union," and in the "long perspective it should ensure macroeconomic stability on the eurozone level and limit one-way transfers." In the same period, Steinmeier organized meetings with foreign ministers of EU founding members (Belgium, France, Holland, Luxembourg, Italy), who represent left-wing parties and generally supported the ideas put forward in the document "Strong Europe."

Steinmeier's actions were criticized by the finance minister Wolfgang Schäuble from Christian Democracy (CDU) in an interview for *Welt am Sonntag*. According to Schäuble, the EU countries which Steinmeier did not invite to the meeting justifiably "felt uncertain and excluded." According to Schäuble, we should now avoid anything which could increase the rift between the old and the new EU members (he named the Baltic countries and Poland in this context). In the interview for *Welt am Sonntag*, Schäuble said that he had nothing against European Commission trying to solve problems, but when it fails, "we should act as fast and possible" and governments should intervene. Schäuble named the refugee crisis, military co-operation, and digitization as areas where fast EU action was necessary. The German finance minister said: "The time has come for pragmatism. Even if not all 27 states join at once, then at least some begin this process. And if the European Commission does not join, then we will take matters into our own hands, we will solve problems in negotiations between governments." Schäuble also declared himself against changes to Union treaties, for "we have no time for that." At the Malta summit in February 2017, Chancellor Angela Merkel spoke in the same vein—she said she considered the concept of "multispeed Europe" as a necessary answer to challenges facing the EU. She believes that this project should be found in the declaration prepared for the 60th anniversary of the Rome Treaties celebrated in March.

The referendum on the United Kingdom's leaving of the EU sparked a debate in Germany on the future of the union. This debate revealed marked differences of positions between Christian Democracy and Social Democracy.

The question of a common EU approach to the problem of refugees, mentioned by Schäuble, is important for the German left too, but also in this case the answer is the development of EU institutions. In "Strong Europe" the ministers decided that "Germany and France are convinced that it is time to introduce a truly integrated asylum, refugee, and migration policy." In order to implement this policy they proposed establishing "the first multinational border guard and coastguard."

Mainstream German parties (CDU, SPD, the Greens, the Liberals from the FDP) are united in their staunch support for stopping Euroskeptic populism, nationalism, and authoritarian tendencies through introducing a new mechanism of control protecting democracy, fundamental rights, and the rule of law. The European Parliament adopted a resolution in this matter in late October 2016. It assumes an annual assessment of the functioning of the democratic systems and the rule of law in all EU countries through EU and national institutions. The resolution was supported by 405 MEPs, with 171 voting against and 39 abstaining. The opponents included all Euroskeptic parties being in opposition in their countries as well as the British Tories, the Polish Law and Justice, and the Hungarian Fidesz.

What Next?

The coming years will offer the most serious challenge for the German European policy since the world crisis in 2009 hitting the eurozone. Germany may again prove to be an island of stability among the largest EU countries. After the autumn parliamentary elections various scenarios are possible (CDU–the Greens–FDP, CDU–SPD, SPD–the Greens–Die Linke). When Martin Schultz took charge of the SPD election campaign, Social Democrats overtook Christian Democrats in the polls for the first time since 2006. Of crucial importance for German policy in the EU will be the spring presidential elections in France. If you can very hardly imagine the EU with Italy outside the eurozone, then French leaving the EU as proposed by Marie Le Pen, the leader of the extreme right, would mean most probably the end of this organization.

Mainstream German parties are united in their staunch support for stopping Euroskeptic populism, nationalism, and authoritarian tendencies through introducing a new mechanism of control protecting democracy, fundamental rights, and the rule of law.

The victory of the center-right's candidate Francois Fillon or—the more probable scenario—the center-left's candidate Emanuel Macron because of their platform of deep economic reforms (more emphasized by Fillion) and an unambiguous support for a closer integration of the eurozone would be advantageous for Germany in the context of the eurozone's future. In general, we must be prepared for an accelerated internal integration within the eurozone on a more institutional basis (if SPD wins) or on a more pragmatic basis (if CDU wins). A closer integration within the eurozone means that the EU countries from outside the zone will face fundamental decisions regarding their relations with the increasingly integrated common currency area.

A closer integration within the eurozone means that the EU countries from outside the zone will face fundamental decisions regarding their relations with the increasingly integrated common currency area.

Berlin will encourage them to adopt the common currency, perceiving this as a chance for strengthening its position in the EU. The main economic argument used by Germany will be that integration of the eurozone means de facto diversification of the common market and the EU budget. Germany will want to include these countries in common initiatives going beyond the eurozone (for example, monitoring of democracy and the rule of law, common defense policy, refugees, digitalization/innovative technologies). It seems that Sweden will be the most willing to cooperate with Germany, Hungary and Poland will be at the opposite pole, and the Balkan countries (Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia, their position significantly changed should they join the eurozone), Czechia, and Denmark in-between.

For Germany this situation means that Poland, the largest European economy not using the common currency and by far the most important political and economic EU partner of Berlin from outside the eurozone (after Brexit), will probably become an EU member most resistant to European integration. At the same time, the German side will even more decisively treat European integration as a top priority.

ADAM BALCER
is a political scientist, expert in the area of the Black Sea region and the Polish foreign policy. He works as a Project Manager at WiseEUROPA and a National Researcher at the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR). He gives lectures at the Centre of East European Studies (SEW) at the Warsaw University and Diplomatic Academy.
Photo: Aspen Review Archive

ASPEN.REVIEW
TOMASZ
MAĆKOWIAK

INTERVIEW
POLITICS

Nicolas Maslowski: A Dangerous Time of Chaos

The financial crisis showed the weakness of America. Undermining the world order in this situation is much easier and successive actors are starting to do that—says Nicolas Maslowski in an interview with Tomasz Maćkowiak.

After the immigration crisis, after Brexit and Donald Trump's victory, after populism started raising its head in successive countries in Europe, first there were voices that the atmosphere reminded that of the 1930s. And then, logically, that we were headed towards another great war. Will there be a war? Or perhaps it is already underway?

I don't know if there will be a war. I see that the directions in which contemporary world is going are much more alarming than anything that happened in the past decades, especially since the collapse of communism after 1989, and, as it seemed, a global victory of democracy.

When did the breakthrough occur?

I don't know if there was any breakthrough. Perhaps it was the financial crisis of 2008. In fact, there is a number of factors which jointly start to create a very dangerous situation. Simplifying things a bit, you could say that the greatest dangers to peace are violent changes in the balance of power between the most important players and also chaos. These two factors are sometimes intertwined with each other. For example, for several years—at least since the conflict with Georgia in 2008—Russia has been unleashing huge chaos around its borders. Even earlier, at least since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Moscow exploited chaos to further its interests. It was so in the early 1990s in Moldova, in Nagorno—Karabakh, it was so in Georgia, which resulted in the overthrow of Zviad Gamsachurdia and replacing him with Eduard Shevardnadze. At the same time, the conflict around Abkhazia was generated and immediately frozen. Such a frozen conflict

is very useful for Russians, for it allows them to destabilize the situation in the long term and wait for an opportunity. Such actions have their source in the Russian concept of power, which says that international relations are a zero—sum game. If somebody is stronger, then we are weaker. If we weaken someone, it strengthens us. There is no situation where everybody wins. Therefore weakening an enemy is always good. Today this tactics can be seen in Syria. Never mind if Aleppo still exists or not. It is important that it no longer is in the hands of someone else.

Most of the problems of the Western world result from disorder and chaos. On the one hand, the West may be afraid of conflicts with countries which declare their willingness to undermine the world order, such as Russia or China. On the other hand, equally dangerous are centers of chaos connected with global terrorism, often emerging in places where the state is not working too efficiently. A source of chaos in international relations is lack of domestic order in particular countries. Let us take the Middle East—conflicts erupt there all the time, but these are not conflicts between strong countries. There simply are no strong countries there. In the Middle East, we have three countries where the structure of the state resembles the Western world: it is of course Israel, but also Turkey and Iran. They are all examples of stability, at least on their own territory. The existence of these states or tensions between them are not the source of problems in the region. The source of problems is the lack of modern structures of the rule of law in other countries of the region: Palestine, now in Syria and Iraq, in Lebanon, or Yemen. This is where the sources of chaos lie.

Well, it is difficult to speak about stability in Turkey now.

But I am not speaking about democracy! There is no democracy in Iran. I am speaking about domestic order which rules there. Some time ago Zbigniew Brzeziński promoted the idea that Iran was not an enemy of the West, an enemy of the West was chaos in the Middle East. If this is true, then the West and Iran have a common enemy, namely the chaos. This means that the interests of Iran and the West are convergent! Unfortunately, at a certain point such thinking lost ground in the West. When America overthrew Saddam Hussein, it did it in the "realistic" style, one that is presented by Russia now. The assumption was that if you weaken the enemy, plunge him into chaos, then the world will be better. And if you destroy Hussein, there will be democracy in Iraq. You can see how it ended.

The Russian concept of power says that international relations are a zero-sum game. If somebody is stronger, then we are weaker.

So chaos prevails?

Not necessarily. Let us take China. It also wants to weaken its competitors. It took a number of actions intended to decrease the influence of India and Japan—its greatest competitors in the region. But it does not try to unleash chaos in these countries. The truth is that China, more than other countries, is afraid of the lack of stability, for it knows very well that destabilization in their own country could very easily appear. The very existence of modern Chinese state is something new. It has existed for less than 70 years—it was built by Mao Zedong.

After the downfall of communism in 1989, many conflicts accompanying the Cold War disappeared. People started to get rich, live increasingly longer, democracy and optimism ruled the day.

The old Chinese civilization has such an inferiority complex?

Of course, they keep saying that as a civilization they are 5,000 years old. But as an independent state they came to existence relatively recently, it is a new situation and they are not used to it. They also have the trauma of colonialism—a weak state that was unable to defend the nation either from the intruders from the West or from local magnates.

And the West is not worried about its own stability?

Stability in the West has for several decades been strongly connected with the mission of America. The Americans had a sense of responsibility for the fate of the world. We must of course remember that this role of America also has its dark side. Americans treated Europeans as equals, but the same could not be said about South Americans. We should not forget that voting rights for black US citizens are a relatively fresh thing. All this is a truth which demands further study and should be a warning for the future. But let's not forget that it was America which provided a source of stability.

But not any longer.

After the downfall of communism in 1989, many conflicts accompanying the Cold War disappeared. People started to get rich, live increasingly longer, democracy and optimism ruled the day. Now all this is not so certain. Trends have turned around. The financial crisis not only affected the American standards of living, but above all showed America's weakness. Undermining the world order in this situation is much easier and successive actors are starting to do that. A change of the world order in this situation can be an opportunity for war.

Some people say that the war is already going on, because people are fighting in Syria, in Ukraine...

The war in Ukraine is not a world war. But it is true that this war is directly connected with Russia and its world-power ambitions. It is also true that Russia may be a threat to the world, for it has a nuclear arsenal capable of destroying our planet. But no more than that! Besides that, Russia is not powerful enough to run a global policy, as in the times of the Soviet Union.

You must be joking! Russia tries to influence and does influence policy in Central and Eastern Europe. We also know for certain that the Kremlin is strongly involved in the domestic policy of Western countries. A CIA report has just been revealed saying that Russia interfered in the election campaign in the US!

No, they wrote that Russia "attempted to influence..." It is a great difference. All is relative. If you ignore the atomic arsenal, the Russian army does not count. Of course it's more powerful than the Polish army, but in comparison to the US Army? Until recently, the Russians had only one military base abroad (not counting the countries of the former Soviet Union)—in Syria. America has military bases roughly all over the world. Russia has one aircraft carrier, but it is an old machine, dysfunctional, the planes have trouble taking off and landing when they are loaded with ammunition. Who else has aircraft carriers? China has one, Thailand has one, Great Britain has one and a half, France has one. America has 15 aircraft carriers. A comparison of the military power of Russia and France is very telling. With its one aircraft carrier "De Gaulle," France is strongly involved militarily in global conflicts, it runs military operations virtually all the time: in Mali, in Lebanon, in Syria. It conducts more wars than Russia and its actions are more effective, they have the intended results. They also do not generate such a great sense of threat. This is due to the fact that French policy is very constructive, as is the policy of European countries in general. They believe that if your neighbor is in a good shape, then we will all be in a good shape.

You said that America is now weaker. Where does it come from?

Things happened which probably had to happen. For 200 years we have observed the global process of modernization, which is a combination of several elements: industrialization, effective state, effective fiscal policy, demographic transition (a drop in the fertility rate with simultaneous decrease in child mortality and greater longevity), and so on. The world is changing—people live better, longer, they are richer. The first countries to enter that path were England, France, Germany, and Holland. Then America joined them. Japan chose an accelerated, non-traditional way of modernization. Now it can be seen that this process has been globalized,

The weakening of the West also results from the fact that some politicians, seeing the increasing chaos in the world, decided that it was better to withdraw from global politics and concentrate on the domestic scene.

many countries are catching up with the advanced world. And this process raises the question if such countries as Russia, China, and perhaps even Central and Eastern Europe will not stop halfway—if for political, economic, or historical reasons they are not doomed to eternal catching up and perpetual incompleteness. I am unable to answer this question.

To what extent is the change in the balance of power between the strongest players dangerous for Central Europe? Or to put it differently: is the change of administration in the US dangerous for us?

The weakening of the West also results from the fact that some politicians, seeing the increasing chaos in the world, decided that it was better to withdraw from global politics and concentrate on the domestic scene. This is new isolationism. Before the war, it was very strong in the US, but after the war it vanished. And today it is again visible, president Trump is a representative of this new isolationism. But it is more complicated than that. The chaos (or the sense of chaos) also has its cultural aspect. Once the world was neatly ordered: every country had its culture, language, symbols, religious life. Now, due to liberalism which calls for tolerance for otherness, respect for other cultures and religions, many people have a sense of threat to the existing symbolic order. This partly explains Brexit or Trump's campaign. In Poland this fear is also increasingly felt. And it is expressed in the hostility towards the European Union. The union becomes an element of globalization, destroying the symbolic order of national cultures. Destruction or breakup of the European Union could fundamentally affect the security of Central Europe. Without the union Central Europe would be very weak. This is also dangerous for the entire Europe. Forces promoting the anti-union ideas are not aware of the dangers involved in it.

But there are ideas for regional alliances, the Intermarium...

If you arithmetically combined the Polish, Ukrainian, Bulgarian, and other armies, it would still hardly be enough to counter the Russian army, not to speak about NATO. And this is a theoretical concept, for I very much doubt if you could combine these armies in any way!

And the economy?

The potential is very promising, but under the condition that these countries will stay on the modernizing course.

To what extent the scenario of EU's breakup or the scenario where the union exists only on paper are real? This year we have elections in France, in Germany...

The political factor is very important here. The economies of this system are strongly interconnected and this will serve as a stabilizing element. But there may always be surprises. Brexit was a huge surprise.

Another huge surprise was the behavior of Central European countries in the context of the refugee crisis. It turned out that countries admitted to the EU for moral reasons—to help the neighbors—are unwilling to help anyone, even symbolically. How strong is the disappointment among Western elites?

Mutual misunderstanding is very deep. In the name of European solidarity Western people agreed to a huge transfer of funds to the East of the continent. Now, when it turned out that the countries of the East also have to give something, but they don't want to, the behavior of their political elites was received in the West with great astonishment. The West simply does not understand it. On the other hand, in the West people also argue about everything, including refugees and ways of helping them. So the situation is not as dramatic as that. The fear of refugees has no rational basis. In 2016, about 500,000 people arrived in Europe. The European Union has more than 500 million inhabitants. So it turns out that there was an increase of about 0.1%. It can hardly be called an invasion. What people are really afraid of is undermining the symbolic order. I already spoke about it: they are afraid that their customs, lifestyle, way of experiencing their religion will be destroyed. And they are right, for globalization significantly and irreversibly undermines these values! People have the right to feel afraid! It is unfortunate that they connect this fear not with globalization, but with refugees, whom they blame for all their misfortunes.

NICOLAS MASLOWSKI

is a sociologist and political scientist, currently the director of the Center for French Civilization and Francophone Studies in Poland. This French-Polish Center specializing in Social and Human Sciences was created by Michel Foucault in 1958 in Warsaw. During his stay in Prague (1999–2016), Nicolas worked as a lecturer at the Department of Historical Sociology, Faculty of Humanities of Charles University, as well as at the Jan Masaryk Center for international Studies of the University of Economics in Prague. He was specializing in sociology of international relations, great powers relations from a historical perspective, as well as issues of collective memory. He is a former student of the Institute of Political Studies of Paris and he has defended his PhD at the University of Paris X-La Defense Nanterre. He works currently on Central Europe, communism and post-communism, protests, international relations and the historical sociology of recognition. | Photo: Aspen Review Archive

Is the Liberal World Order Seriously Threatened?

Jiří Pehe

In the opinion of a number of experts and liberal politicians, the rise of nationalistic populism in the United States, as represented by the administration of Donald Trump, may threaten the liberal world order, which has already been under pressure from increasingly autocratic leaders in Russia and Turkey. However, if such warnings are to be taken seriously, perhaps we need look first at the forces that have created what we call the liberal world order.

First and foremost, we need to answer the question of whether the liberal world order has been created primarily by *political action* or primarily by *globalization*—which, in turn, is primarily driven by modern technologies, science, and capital.

Politics undeniably played an important role in the creation of the liberal world order. In looking back, it is easy to identify some important political events, such as adoption of the Washington Consensus in 1989 and later the signing of a number of international free-trade agreements, for example NAFTA, while at the same time the role of the World Trade Organization kept growing.

Most States Transferred Their Functions on to Supranational Organizations

In some regions of the world, this process has been accompanied by the efforts of states to integrate or cooperate ever more closely politically. These projects, for example the European Union, have not necessarily achieved what they set out to do in some of their agreements, but they have still reached significant levels of political integration, in which their member states transferred parts of their sovereignty on to transnational institutions.

The most pertinent feature in the development of the international order in the last 27 years has been the steady removal of various trade and political barriers, accompanied by an increasing willingness of developed and developing nations to cooperate not only on a bilateral level but through a multitude of international organizations.

As Anne-Marie Slaughter pointed out in her book *The New World Order*, in the last few decades most nation states have gone through the process of "disaggregation," in which they voluntarily transferred a variety of their functions on to supranational organizations, many of which then started generating regulatory frameworks, in which the nation states need to operate.

This process, of course, affects more than the others those states that voluntarily engaged in the projects of economic and political integration, such as the European Union, but is not limited only to them. Hundreds of international organizations and institutions with responsibilities for specific fields (from health to ecology) that now function globally have created a dense network. It is not easy for any given state—regardless of its size and power—to operate entirely outside this network anymore.

In other words: the world does not have one common government, but in a number of important areas it already follows common sets of rules, which have been put in place gradually through the work of international organizations. This multilevel intertwining of interests and voluntary sharing of many standards and rules distinguishes the current international order significantly from what existed before the World War II.

A Single State Could Not Destroy the Liberal World

So, one answer to the question of who will salvage the liberal world order and how that will be done is *the liberal world order itself*, as it has developed in the last quarter of a century. It is not easy to destroy with the political action of a single state (or even several states).

One of the reasons why this order cannot be easily destroyed or bypassed is that *underlying forces* are tied to the process of globalization, and globalization itself has been driven much more by new technologies and science than by political decisions.

The most pertinent feature in the development of the international order in the last 27 years has been the steady removal of various trade and political barriers, accompanied by an increasing willingness to cooperate.

This new world order is based predominantly on truly global financial markets, globally functioning supranational corporations, and an intertwined world of communications. All of these new phenomena

transcend national borders, and they will continue functioning in this way regardless of how many international trade agreements Donald Trump manages to extricate the US from.

In other words, the liberal world order is very closely tied to globalization that increasingly connects the world on many different levels. When the United States voluntarily, as a consequence of a misguided political decision, abandoned the Transpacific Trade Partnership, it has created a situation that will ultimately cause damage primarily to its own economy. The remaining nations will find a way to cooperate, because it is more advantageous for them to do so than to pursue the old system of bilateral agreements.

The same is true about the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership. Many American corporations will simply use the EU-Canada Trade Agreement as a proxy by registering in Canada. In other words, if the US prefers to retreat from these projects, its place and leadership will be partly taken over by nations such as Japan (or even China) in the Pacific region and by Canada in transatlantic trade relations.

There are, of course, other threats to the liberal world order than just "economic nationalism," as Trump's strategic adviser Steve Bannon likes to call the American attempt to leave the globalized economy. We can see illiberal tendencies in a number of liberal democracies, or even outright attempts to transform democratic systems into autocracies. And what keeps the liberal world order afloat is, after all, the critical mass of liberal democracies in the world.

The world does not have one common government, but in a number of important areas it already follows common sets of rules, which have been put in place gradually through the work of international organizations.

However, just like with the liberal world order, we should note that in those countries where liberal democracies have existed for a relatively long time, they now have institutions and practices that make it difficult to subvert the liberal order. While on the procedural side of things there is a lot of confusion related to the fact that traditional political parties are weak and new populist formations (many of them with the agenda of undermining the liberal world order and retreating behind their state's national borders) are on the rise, on the side of liberal constitutionalism most Western liberal democracies are quite healthy.

The Safeguards of Liberal Democracies Have Not Been Significantly Weakened Anywhere

The system of "liberal constitutionalism" represented by courts therefore sprang into action when the British government tried to bypass the parliament in its effort to initiate Brexit, and American courts blocked an immigration order issued by Donald Trump. These constitutional safeguards of liberal democracies have not been significantly weakened anywhere, and even if a strong illiberal party managed to win in a Western country, it would find it difficult to bypass them.

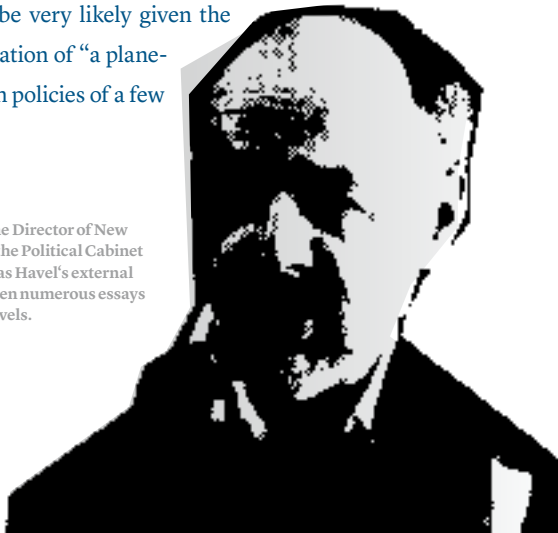
When the United States voluntarily, as a consequence of a misguided political decision, abandoned the Transpacific Trade Partnership, it has created a situation that will ultimately cause damage primarily to its own economy.

That is, unfortunately, much easier to do in emerging democracies, with their weak civil societies and post-authoritarian political cultures. In countries such as Hungary or Poland the attack of illiberal populist parties against the very pillars of liberal constitutionalism has been much more successful than it could ever be in the West.

Nevertheless, even weak, emerging democracies—such as those in Eastern Europe—benefit in the end from their membership in the organizations that form the backbone of the liberal world order, especially the EU. If they were left on their own, their democratic systems would probably collapse. But due to their membership in the EU and other organizations, the best their illiberal leaders can do at this point is to toy with autocratic tendencies.

To sum up, the world liberal order is under pressure but *not mortally threatened*. For that to happen, the forces of globalization and an intricate web of international institutions that have developed in the last decades would have to collapse first. And this does not seem to be very likely given the fact that the forces of globalization, driving the creation of "a planetary civilization," are ultimately much stronger than policies of a few would-be autocrats.

JIŘÍ PEHE
is a Czech political analyst and writer, and since 1999, he has been the Director of New York University's academic center in Prague. He was the director of the Political Cabinet in the office of Czech President Václav Havel and continued serving as Havel's external political advisor until the end of Havel's term in 2003. Pehe has written numerous essays and papers and has also published several books, including three novels.
Photo: Aspen Review Archive



ASPEN.REVIEW
WALTER ISAACSON

ECONOMY
INTERNET
TECHNOLOGIES
AUTHENTICATION
SECURITY

The Internet Is Broken. Here's How to Fix It.

We have to fix the Internet. After forty years in existence, it has begun to corrode, both itself and us. It is still a marvelous and miraculous invention, but now there are bugs in the foundation, bats in the belfry, and trolls in the basement.

We have to fix the Internet. After forty years in existence, it has begun to corrode, both itself and us. It is still a marvelous and miraculous invention, but now there are bugs in the foundation, bats in the belfry, and trolls in the basement.

I do not mean this to be one of those technophobic rants dissing the Internet for rewiring our brains to give us the twitchy attention span of Donald Trump on Twitter or pontificating about how we have to log off and smell the flowers. Those qualms about new technologies have existed ever since Plato

fretted that the technology of writing would threaten memorization and oratory. I love the Internet and all of its digital offshoots. What I bemoan is its decline.

There is a bug in its original design that at first seemed like a feature but has gradually, and now rapidly, been exploited by hackers and trolls and malevolent actors: its packets are encoded with the address of their destination but not of their authentic origin. With a circuit-switched network, you can track or trace back the origins of the information, but that is not true with the packet-switched design of the Internet.

For years, the benefits of anonymity on the Net outweighed its drawbacks. People felt more free to express themselves, which was especially valuable if they were dissidents or hiding a personal secret.

Compounding this was the architecture that Tim Berners-Lee and the inventors of the early browsers created for the World Wide Web. It brilliantly allowed the whole of the earth's computers to be webbed together and navigated through hyperlinks. But the links were one-way. You knew where the links took you. But if you had a webpage or piece of content, you did not exactly know who was linking to you or coming to use your content.

All of that enshrined the potential for anonymity. You could make comments anonymously. Go to a webpage anonymously. Consume content anonymously. With a little effort, send email anonymously. And if you figured out a way to get into someone's servers or databases, you could do it anonymously.

For years, the benefits of anonymity on the Net outweighed its drawbacks. People felt more free to express themselves, which was especially valuable if they were dissidents or hiding a personal secret. This was celebrated in the famous 1993 *New Yorker* cartoon, "On the Internet, nobody knows you're a dog."

The Web Is No Longer an Agora

Now the problem is nobody can tell if you are a troll. Or a hacker. Or a bot. Or a Macedonian teenager publishing a story that the Pope has endorsed Trump.

This has poisoned civil discourse, enabled hacking, permitted cyberbullying, and made email a risk. Its inherent lack of security has allowed Russian actors to screw with our democratic process.

The lack of secure identification and authentication inherent in the Internet's genetic code has also prevented easy transactions, thwarted financial inclusion, destroyed the business models of content creators, unleashed deluges of spam, and forced us to use passwords and two-factor authentication schemes that would have baffled Houdini.

Now the problem is nobody can tell if you are a troll. Or a hacker. Or a bot. Or a Macedonian teenager publishing a story that the Pope has endorsed Trump.

The trillions being spent and the IQ points of computer science talent being allocated to tackle security issues makes it a drag (rather than a spur) to productivity in some sectors.

In Plato's *Republic*, we learn the tale of the Ring of Gyges. Put it on, and you turn invisible and anonymous. The question that Plato asks is whether those who put the ring on will be civil and moral. He thinks not. The Internet has proven him correct.

The Web is no longer a place of community, no longer an agora. Every day more sites are eliminating their comments sections.

If We Could Start from Scratch, Here Is What I Think We Would Do:

— Create a system that enables content producers to negotiate with aggregators and search engines to get a royalty whenever their content is used, like ASCAP has negotiated for public performances and radio airings of its members' works.

— Embed a simple digital wallet and currency for quick and easy small payments for songs, blogs, articles, and whatever other digital content is for sale.

— Encode emails with an authenticated return or originating address.

— Enforce critical properties and security at the lowest levels of the system possible, such as in the hardware or in the programming language, instead of leaving it to programmers to incorporate security into every line of code they write.

— Build chips and machines that update the notion of an Internet packet. For those who want, their packets could be encoded or tagged with metadata that describe what they contain and give the rules for how it can be used.

A Reform of the the Web Is a Matter of Cost and Social Will

Most Internet engineers think that these reforms are possible, from Vint Cerf, the original TCP/IP coauthor, to Milo Medin of Google, to Howard Shrobe, the director of cybersecurity at MIT. "We don't need to live in cyber hell," Shrobe has argued.

Implementing them is less a matter of technology than of cost and social will. Some people, understandably, will resist any diminution of anonymity, which they sometimes label privacy.

So the best approach, I think, would be to try to create a voluntary system of verified identification and authentication for those who want to use it.

People would not be forced to use such a system. If they wanted to communicate and surf anonymously, they could. But those of us who choose, at times, not to be anonymous and not to deal with people who are anonymous should have that right as well. That is the way it works in the real world.

The benefits would be many: Easy and secure ways to deal with your finances and medical records. Small payment systems that could reward valued content rather than the current incentive to concentrate on clickbait for advertising. Less hacking, spamming, cyberbullying, trolling, and the spewing of anonymous hate. And the possibility of a more civil discourse.

The Web is no longer a place of community, no longer an agora. Every day more sites are eliminating their comments sections.

WALTER ISAACSON
the CEO of the Aspen Institute, is the author of *The Innovators* and biographies of Henry Kissinger, Benjamin Franklin, Albert Einstein, and Steve Jobs. This essay is partly drawn from a talk delivered to the American Academy of Arts and was originally published by www.linkedin.com. | Photo: Aspen Review Archive

ASPEN.REVIEW
KONRAD NIKLEWICZ

INTERVIEW
ECONOMY
MULTI-SPEED EUROPE
WHITE PAPER
EUROZONE
EU BUDGET

Fabian Zuleeg: The *Multi-Speed* Europe Scenario Is the Most Realistic One

There are political risks attached to further integration of the eurozone within the model of "multi-speed Europe," but far greater risk would be to allow the eurozone to fail—says Fabian Zuleeg in an interview with Konrad Niklewicz.

In March, the European Commission has tabled the long-awaited "White Paper" on the future of the EU. It contains five possible scenarios, among them: deeper integration, multispeed Europe, and limiting the EU only to the Single Market. Which one is going to happen?

It is not going to be one, clear scenario. What we are talking about is the mixture of all the alternative options that the Commission presented. There will be differentiated integration—which we always had, so it's only a continuation. In some areas we will see more competences and more sovereignty being transferred to the European Union. In other areas we might see some steps backwards.

It seems that the European Commission itself prefers the scenario it calls "the multi-speed Europe."

I think that what the Commission is implying is that the "multi-speed Europe" scenario is the most realistic one. And it's not a question of Commission's preferences, but the political reality. I'm not sure whether the Commission, if it had free choice, wouldn't opt for a scenario of deeper European integration, across the board, more uniform. But in current environment such scenario is simply improbable, hence—the multi-speed.

The scenario of multi-speed Europe provides that willing countries of the EU can go further and deepen their cooperation in certain areas, without waiting for the rest of the pack. The natural candidates are the countries of eurozone. Aren't we risking that the eurozone will integrate so deeply that the European Union will become an empty, meaningless shell, with a few countries left behind?

The big question mark is: what the differentiated integration really means? It is still very unclear. We do not know, for example, what legal tools will be used by the willing countries to change the speed of integration. However, it is fair to assume that at some point in time, the cohesiveness of the European Union might be challenged by the very fact of existence of different groups of differently integrated countries. Indeed, the eurozone is the natural

The eurozone is the natural candidate for differentiated integration. And it's not because there are countries who want to distance themselves from the others.

candidate for such differentiated integration. And it's not because there are countries who want to distance themselves from the others. The eurozone must start this process because there is a lot of unfinished business in its construction. It's not by a political desire, it is by necessity. Will this process of reform exclude other countries, non-euro member states? To some extent: yes. But that has always been the case! The choice in the end is for the non-eurozone countries to join the currency. And if they do not want to do that—there's nothing in the system that could force them. But they cannot expect that the necessary changes in the euro construction will not be tackled. Further integration of the eurozone, which is necessary in order to tackle the structural flaws, does not necessarily mean that the European Union will break up in two parts, the core (eurozone) and the periphery. That risk would only start to materialize if the eurozone countries decided to deepen the integration in other than economic areas, such as defense, security, foreign affairs, etc. Only then we would be in a situation of the eurozone versus the periphery.

There are political risks attached to further integration of the eurozone within the model of "multi-speed Europe." But far greater risk would be to allow the eurozone to fail.

The mere addressing of the structural flaws in the European Monetary Union is not dangerous. Members of the eurozone do not have a choice, it is something that has to be done. In concrete terms, they have to finish the construction of the Banking Union, introduce some form of common deposit guarantees. Finally, some countries of the eurozone will have to accept that there needs to be some sort of fiscal transfer within the area. Whether this fiscal transfer is achieved by fiscal means or by carving out of the European Union budget—that is secondary. Much depends on the ability of France and Germany to come together on these crucial issues. So, to conclude: there are political risks attached to further integration of the eurozone within the model of "multi-speed Europe." But far greater risk would be to allow the eurozone to fail. The consequences of that would be incalculable. European Union could afford it.

The question is whether Germany and France can find a common ground. Both countries so far have been presenting rather opposite views on economic governance. France preferred debt expansion, Germany called for austerity. Moreover, there will be elections in both countries this year.

My expectation is that both sets of elections are not going to produce a disaster, we are going to have centrist governments in both countries. Slightly different,

perhaps, but Europe-oriented nonetheless. Which means that we will have, for the first time since long, a window of political opportunity to strike a deal.

Would the EU budget lose importance if a new eurozone's own budget were created?

It all depends on how one would design such a budget. Besides, the creation of a totally separate EU budget would require a Treaty change—which is not very probable. So, I'd rather expect a hybrid solution: either a part of the overall EU budget would be ring-fenced for the eurozone or new mechanisms, similar to the existing European Stability Mechanism [a guarantee mechanism for eurozone members—editor's note], would be created. Having said that, some consequences for the non-eurozone countries are to be expected. Some countries might not be willing to keep the EU budget intact, make up for the financial loss caused by the Brexit, and create additional financial envelope for the eurozone—all at the same time. This is simply not politically possible. So, to address the new challenges, the funding of the Cohesion Policy and Agriculture Policy will be under pressure. Which, in turn, will have important implications for non-eurozone countries. There might be some negative consequences for them...

...which forces us to repeat the question: aren't we risking a creation of permanent divisions within the European Union? Aren't we facing a situation where the eurozone countries, debating on their own, would be making political decisions that affect the whole EU and not only their zone? Let's imagine that one day eurozone members decide to establish common fiscal policy. It would affect the whole EU economy, not only the eurozone.

Of course! But in this scenario, it was the sovereign choice of the affected not to join the eurozone. It is inevitable that decisions taken within the eurozone will have impact on those who are not involved. The reality is that the eurozone itself is a form of permanent separation—as long there are countries that remain outside. As long as any given country opts for staying out of the area of common currency, there will be limits to the benefits and to the obligations as well.

The rights of the non-euro member states that are provided by the Single Market legislation will not be challenged. The freedoms that constitute the backbone of the Single Market are written in the Treaties.

It is hard to argue that eurozone membership is easy. It is not. Countries that wish to get in have to sacrifice a lot. Among other things, they have to sacrifice parts of their sovereignty. It's a question of do-

mestic political decision: in or out? Nobody could rationally expect to reap benefits without being the member of the eurozone. Every choice has its consequences. It is similar to the case of Norway: it opted not to be a member of the European Union. Instead, it is part of our Single Market—but without voting rights. And it has to pay a substantial amount of money to the EU budget. As things stands now, Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic are members of the European Union, but without voting rights in the eurozone. The rights of the non-euro member states that are provided by the Single Market legislation will not be challenged. The freedoms that constitute the backbone of the Single Market are written in the Treaties. European Commission will guard them, there's always a possibility to recourse to the European Court of Justice. The fact that eurozone decisions affect non-eurozone countries does not mean that the latter are stripped of their rights. There are legal safeguards, even in areas of differentiated (multi-speed) integration. One should also remember: the eurozone member states have majority in the EU, also in terms of population, as 70% of EU citizens live in the eurozone. So, theoretically, the eurozone countries will be able to decide something in their internal discussion and then to formally vote for it in the European Union Council. Countries who complain about being excluded are in fact excluding themselves by not being willing to join the eurozone. Besides, when they were joining the EU, they legally committed themselves to join.

The fact that eurozone decisions affect non-eurozone countries does not mean that the latter are stripped of their rights. There are legal safeguards, even in areas of differentiated (multi-speed) integration.

Some of those countries claim that their commitment from 2003 is no longer binding, because the eurozone itself has changed so much. It is a different eurozone now than it was 14 years ago when they were committing to it.

I've heard this argument before, but I do not find it credible. First, no country is being forced into eurozone, it still is a choice. Second, it is either unrealistic or deliberately unrealistic to think that something like the economic union or even the Single Market couldn't change overtime. And in the end countries such as Poland have the choice to decide whether they want to stay within the European Union or not. There's no force obliging a country to stay in the EU. If the framework of the European Union has changed so much in the intervening years—changed so much that it is no longer in their interest to stay—then there is a choice they will have to make.

So, what should be the advice to non-euro member states from the Central Europe: Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Romania? Should they accelerate their efforts to join the euro?

Yes. Especially after the Brexit vote, we are moving towards the European Union, where by far the biggest economic and political weight will be within the eurozone. So, for countries that are currently outside, it limits them both in terms of economic integration but also in terms of influence. Still, there is a price to pay: and this price for many countries at the moment is a very difficult one to pay. It is the price of sovereignty.

Is the transfer of sovereignty the only price to pay? Many economists say that being outside the eurozone allows for a high degree of flexibility in times of crises. Poland is a good example. In 2008, when the crisis hit the hardest, this country was the only one to avoid recession, partly because its currency could devaluate due to the exchange rate fluctuations.

It is inherently in the interest of those countries to join the euro. We're living now in a much more volatile world. The risk of currency fluctuations and the instability that this might bring is not to be underestimated. Look at what is happening to the British pound now. Imagine the same happening in Hungary or Poland. With the trade ties, with high level of import penetration, consumer goods, etc.—the effects would be more dramatic than the ones we are seeing in the UK. On inflation, consumer process, wages, living standards. I'm not denying that in certain situation, the flexibility of currency fluctuation is helpful. What I'm saying is that you cannot offset structural weaknesses of any given economy by a constant policy of devaluation.

Greece's example shows that it might be better not to join the euro as long the domestic economy is not fully ready.

One should not speculate what would be the situation in Greece if it was not in the eurozone. It is not the common currency that plunged the country into crisis. Structural flaws in the economy did, the ones that existed there for many years. The only thing the common currency did was to show these flaws.

There's no force obliging a country to stay in the EU. If the framework of the European Union has changed so much in the intervening years then there is a choice they will have to make.

Without the euro, Greece would be able to devaluate its currency in order to regain competitiveness.

I doubt it. Does anybody seriously believe that Greece would be able to print drachmas in order to pay pensions, health service, etc.? By now, this currency would

be worthless. Besides, this is a discussion how to make the eggs out of omelet. It is impossible, we are where we are, and we can only think how to improve the situation in Greece, member of the eurozone. Countries need to reform their economies regardless of their willingness or not to join the euro. It is in their best interest, as simple as that.

Some of the citizens might see it differently. Across the whole continent, populists are on the rise. Marine Le Pen might be the next president of France. She openly calls for exiting the eurozone, if not the EU altogether.

Yes, we have a populist challenge in many countries. But let's see what happens this year. I do not think populists will do as well as they hope to. Partially because of what's currently happening: there is a backlash against populism after Brexit referendum and after Donald Trump. People all over the Europe are starting to rediscover the value of the EU, talking about their belonging, about the security that the EU gives. The success of Martin Schultz in Germany is a stunning example of German population looking for something different than a negative, nationalistic populism. You have the same effect in France with the candidacy of Emmanuel Macron. Macron is not considered to be part of the old establishment but at the same time he represents the progressive, forward-looking agenda. The defining line of the political battle we all face is between people who believe in openness and liberal democracy, and those who don't. That of course would require deep changes in the established political forces, political parties. It will also affect many other institutions like media or trade unions. We have to show our citizens that openness of our societies is something that helps us dealing with the challenges we face, not something that threatens us. Of course, the EU will need to be better at protecting its citizens—because they feel threatened, although they have not been harmed objectively. What we are dealing with in many cases is the fear and perception of danger, not a real damage. People ask questions about their future: will they still have jobs, will they be able to compete, what will happen to their kids, the next generation, will the society still be cohesive? And dealing with fears and perceptions is often more tricky than dealing with real problems. For example, if we had a situation where we could identify the true losers of globalization, then the clas-

We're living now in a much more volatile world. The risk of currency fluctuations and the instability that this might bring is not to be underestimated. Look at what is happening to the British pound now. Imagine the same happening in Hungary or Poland.

sical response would be "distribution." We would materially compensate those who lost because of the globalization. But it won't help fighting the fear—because the ones we would have to tax in order to collect additional resources are the ones who are actually afraid of the future.

Governments seem to bow to populist calls. Are Germany and France right, when they are pushing for changes in the posted workers' directive, which basically boils down to limiting the freedom of movement of the workers? By doing so, French and Germany governments bow to the populist calls, demanding that the "Polish plumber" (or lorry driver) is no longer allowed to undermine the local pay and working conditions.
If there are abuses of freedom of moment, like unjustified claims for social benefits, then we need to address them. But I am not saying that this is the case with posted workers. It has to be proven. In the end, the European Court of Justice will always weigh the decisions taken by governments against the letter of the Treaties. Freedom of movement is in the Treaties. Unjustified limitations, with an aim to limit the competition, will by stricken down by the court.

European Commission often says that a new Europe, the Europe of results, is needed to overcome the current mood and regain public support.
Yes, but these need to be real results: just saying that we are doing something—and not delivering—is far worse than doing nothing. In the past, the EU has often created expectations it could not meet for lack of competences and mechanisms. Just to give the example: the idea that Europe will address youth unemployment was deeply wrong. Even at the national level we don't have the tools to tackle this problem efficiently. Expectation management is crucial: we have to tell the people that there are things that Europe can do, and that there are things it can't do. The title "Europe of results" in itself is not the answer to populism.

People all over the Europe are starting to rediscover the value of the EU, talking about their belonging, about the security that the EU gives.

FABIAN ZULEEG
is the chief executive and chief economist of the European Policy Centre, a Brussels-based not-for-profit think tank on European Union affairs. He is also an honorary fellow at the Europa Institute of the University of Edinburgh and an honorary professor at Heriot Watt University. His research focuses on the economic and euro crises, including the reform of the new economic governance at eurozone level. He also works on the Single Market, Digitalisation, European labour markets and the EU budget. He has a long-standing interest in the political economy of European integration, with a particular focus on the UK-EU relationship, analysing the impact of Brexit on the UK and the rest of the EU, as well as the process of separation. He was appointed to the Standing Council on Europe, established by Scotland's first minister after the Brexit vote in June 2016. He regularly comments on current political and economic issues in the EU in the media.
Photo: European Policy Centre

ASPEN.REVIEW
RAFAŁ WOŚ

ECONOMY
UBI
FINLAND
SOCIAL EXPERIMENT
UNEMPLOYMENT
ECONOMIC EMANCIPATION

Unconditional Basic Income (UBI)

For a few decades we were told that money from the government should be spend cautiously, so that it would not make its beneficiaries lazy. The unconditional basic income (UBI) mocks all these sanctities.

So far, it is the Finns who went furthest in this direction. Since January 2017, the local government agency of social security (called Kela) gives you money for the very fact that you exist. Specifically, €560 a month. For the time being it that does not give the money to everyone. Randomly assigned to this experimental program were 2000 unemployed from the 25-56 age group. They'll get the money for two years. The €560 will replace the benefits they were getting from various government programs of the welfare state. If they received more, Kela will make up the difference.

The new transfer is unconditional. That means that it will be paid regardless of how the life of the beneficiary will play out. He finds work? Then he will have his salary plus the €560. He will lose his job? The €560 is supposed to cushion the fall, to prevent him from falling into the trap of exclusion and permanent unemployment. It will also put an end to calculations by the poorest if it is profitable for them to take up work risking the loss of social benefits. The unconditional nature of the €560 has one more advantage. It is an income which does not depend on the good will of the bureaucratic machine. It is rightfully owed to the citizen, which is why it does not create this peculiar relation of clientelism, the side effect of the classic philosophy of welfare state in the second half of the 20th century. In this sense, it does not deprive the beneficiary of his dignity and does not stigmatize him as a parasite, living at the expense of others.

The unconditional basic income is the hottest economic idea of recent years. Its charm also lies in the fact that it cannot be easily labelled as ideological.

We will learn in early 2019 how the Finnish project plays out. Will unconditional income lead to a decline in unemployment? Does it become a model for reforming the welfare state? What side effects (good and bad) will be produced by giving money to people for the very fact that they exist? The answers are awaited not only in Helsinki. Unconditional basic income is spoken about today in many places of the developed world. Last year, the proposal for unconditional basic income to the tune of CHF2.5 thousand was put forward in Switzerland. However, it was rejected by a significant majority. One of the reasons was that it was not supported by the government. Still, it should be said that 25% of the voters were for this proposal, which may mean that one day the issue will come back.

This year, pilot projects will also be launched in a number of Dutch cities. For example, the authorities in Utrecht developed the following scheme: the basis is €970. Some participants of the experiment will receive the sum under the condition that they actively seek work. Another part will receive the money unconditionally. Yet others will get an additional €125, but only if they sign up for voluntary work. Yet others will pocket the €125 automatically, but will have to give them back if they do not undertake voluntary work. In the same period, a number of Italian cities will provide the poorest families with financial injections. In a sense, the group of experimenting countries also includes

Poland with the government's flagship program 500+. Although in Poland the target group is households with children, it is worth noting that from two children up the Polish program works exactly as the UBI. The PLN500 (about EUR115) per child is to be paid regardless of any other criterion. This sum in the Polish financial reality may constitute an important item in the household budget, especially in poorer homes.

For the unconditional basic income to make sense, three fundamental assumptions must be fulfilled. First, the income must be high enough to ensure economic existence to everyone.

The UBI Cannot Be Easily Labelled As Ideological

The above enumeration itself shows that unconditional basic income is the hottest economic idea of recent years. Its charm also lies in the fact that it cannot be easily labelled as ideological. In fact it was so ever since the idea for "money for existence" emerged. Thomas Paine, one of the American founding fathers, was the first to put it forward in 1797. He proposed creating a fund from which every citizen would receive "start-up" money when reaching 21. It was not intended as an act of charity, but as a kind of compensation for the universal expropriation of land ownership, which occurred as a result of land ownership becoming common. Echoes of the French Revolution (in which Paine participated) could definitely be heard in this idea. At the same time, the concept was acceptable for colonial elites which pursued the American Revolution. A revolution much less socially radical, and at times even reactionary.

The subject of the basic income came back during the Great Crisis. It was quite seriously discussed in the 1940s in Great Britain (it was then called "social dividend"). But ultimately it lost out to the ideas of the classic welfare state based on conditional transfers directed at the poorest. Another chance for introducing the idea appeared in the US under the economically conservative administrations of Nixon and Carter. The idea even took the shape of specific bills, but they were rejected by the Congress. Something like the UBI was introduced only locally in the resources-rich and not very populous Alaska. Also economic liberals were interested in the idea, and Milton Friedman considered a vision of a "negative income tax," however, under his conception it was meant rather as a way for shedding the

burden of social security expenditure by the government. It is worth noting that all these discussions ended when neoliberalism entered the historical stage (sometime in the 1970s).

It was only the shock of 2008 and the stagnation which is going on until today that created a new political constellation favorable for the UBI. Today it is liked by many communities including economic conservatives, who see in the basic income a chance for the "return to the roots," slightly curbing the influence of the too expansive (in their opinion) government, which too readily assumed the role of a nanny. It is also liked by the left, mostly the more radical one. They believe that the UBI is one of the most innovative ways of countering the pathologies of contemporary capitalism. Such is the situation that with globalized markets and the lack of a sensible systemic alternative (for no one treats communism seriously today), capital has gained too much advantage over labor. The problem is that the bulk of humanity lives from work, so an excessive power of capital inevitably increases social inequalities and leads to political tensions. A well-structured UBI could at least partly remedy that.

The Universality of the Basic Income Is Important

But what does it exactly mean, "remedy"? For the unconditional basic income to make sense, three fundamental assumptions must be fulfilled. First, the income must be high enough to ensure economic existence to everyone. If it is too low, it will only become yet another way of stimulating demand, subsidizing business from the government budget.

It cannot stigmatize those who receive it as losers. In other words, it must be their right.

For the income to really influence economic emancipation of the citizens, it also has to be unconditional, it cannot stigmatize those who receive it as losers. In other words, it must be their right. Universality of the basic income is important, for in the real world its introduction will certainly encounter much resistance. The demand to introduce income limits (cutting off the highest earners from the UBI mechanism) will certainly appear. Experiences of social policy in democratic capitalist countries prove that there is a catch in such thinking. Namely, when redistribution programs (that is transferring resources from the wealthy to the less wealthy) are not universal, they very easily end up in a box labelled "fight against poverty," and their efficiency is limited. Such programs are then an easy prey to be liquidated under pressure

for consolidation of public finances. All this because politically active social classes do not regard such programs as "their own" and they are not much interested in defending them.

Third, UBI should be a supplement to the mechanisms of the welfare state rather than its replacement (in this sense the Finnish pilot program does not meet the most maximalist assumptions). Let us imagine a situation where today's complex and sophisticated mechanisms of the welfare state are dismantled. Of course, I am speaking about those mechanisms which exist in Western Europe and not about their much reduced and grotesque versions created on our side of the Iron Curtain. So I am speaking not only about unemployment benefits, but also housing benefits, a system of government aid for families with children and seniors, or the institution of the social worker. And now let us imagine that it all disappears, replaced by the UBI. Does it not lead to the dangerous market logic invading those areas which it has been forbidden to enter? Unfortunately, chances for that are quite big. There is a risk that it will all end up with climbing to another level of brutal neoliberal reality, rather than reviving the concept of the common good and welfare state.

Will Be the People Discouraged from Working?

UBI's critics of course repeat that such an income will have one fundamental flaw: it will discourage people from working. And how will societies create wealth then? This argument can be taken on in many ways. One of the most interesting counter-arguments was presented recently (January 2017) by the commentator Matt Bruenig in the journal *Jacobin*. He said that discouraging from work does not bother anyone in the context of the really existing mechanism of unconditional basic income: capital gains. Bruenig quotes recent (2016) assessments of the well-known French trio (Piketty, Saez, Zucman), who show that about 30% of income acquired by Western economies is a rentier income: interest, dividends, or other types of rent. And it is by no means a new phenomenon. A century ago this percentage was at a very similar level.

UBI's critics of course repeat that such an income will have one fundamental flaw: it will discourage people from working. And how will societies create wealth then?

It is worth recalling that only a small part of capital gains comes from the fruit of your own work (savings or some very good investments). In most cases the rentiers are the heirs of some previously accumulated capital. So why do we allow them to get unconditional basic income and deny it to those who had less luck? People who "did not choose their parents well," as Jan Kulczyk said? Why do the former have the right to get money for nothing and the latter do not have it? What kind of morality is that? Besides the famous satirical principle: "Free market for the poor, socialism for the wealthy."

It is worth recalling that only a small part of capital gains comes from the fruit of your own work. In most cases the rentiers are the heirs of some previously accumulated capital. So why do we allow them to get unconditional basic income and deny it to those who had less luck?

The coming years will be crucial from the point of view of UBI supporters. The first hard conclusions from field experiments will start coming from numerous places of the Western world. And our discussion about the income will cease to be almost entirely theoretical and maintained in the tone of "wow, what a curious concept!" The time will come for politicians to translate the UBI idea into a specific project. How much? Should everyone be eligible? How do we combine it with the existing mechanisms? And finally, how do we provide the project with solid financing? We may cautiously assume that it will occur in the 2020s or the 2030s—a not too distant future.

RAFAŁ WOŚ
works for the *Polityka* weekly and is the author of the book *Liberalism: An Infantile Disorder*. Winner of Grand Press Economy, Fikus Prize, and Polish German Journalistic Award. His next book *No Country for the Worker* will be out in 2017.
Photo: Polityka Archive

COMMENT
LIBERALISM
DEMOCRATIC
CAPITALISM
FUKUYAMA

The End of History, Postponed

The Liberal Order Is on the Defensive Due to Our Lack of Will

Tomáš Klvaňa

For the first time in seven decades the thing that is often imprecisely called the liberal order is not on the offensive. There were problems in the past, often much larger than now, bloodier wars, communism, or terror, but the liberal order—a dynamic phenomenon—was on the march. Not so today.

Several reasons can be attributed to such state of affairs. The United States, the driver of the liberal order ever since World War II, is diminished. China is ascendant. Nervousness has crept in about our assumptions that Beijing will liberalize as it gets richer. The European Union is going through

an existential crisis and it is far from certain that it will be with us in a decade. At the same time, digital communication has democratized public discourse to the point that almost everyone, regardless of ability and skill, education, and substance of thought, can participate. We are in the midst of one of those changes that will have civilizational impact, and naturally do not yet have a good vantage point to see where it will all go.

These are all clear and hard causes of our predicament, showing in the weakening of liberal politics. But it is above all our own weakness that is the primary cause of the retreat. We have let the liberal order down by lack of will.

The Quest of Knowledge and Competition Is Fully Possible Only in Democratic Capitalism

And yet there are no objective reasons for the abandonment of the order's pillars—constitutional democracy and free-market capitalism. It is chiefly due to these building blocks that over the last half-century a billion people in Asia and the Americas rose out of destitution, many entering the middle class. From the Internet to genomics, from the artificial intelligence to smartphones, from virtual reality to the improved health care, all the technological and scientific wonders are products of the free quest for knowledge and competition that is fully possible only in democratic capitalism.

In other words: our crisis is of leadership. In politics across post-industrial nations, there seems to be a dearth of strong champions of the liberal order, international and domestic. Yet without leadership in politics we will not be able to move back into proactive mode elsewhere. Leaders must make a strong case for democratic capitalism and liberal internationalism.

The United States, the driver of the liberal order ever since World War II, is diminished. China is ascendant. The European Union is going through an existential crisis and it is far from certain that it will be with us in a decade.

Abroad and at home, our errors were not in applying wrong lessons, but sometimes applying them either stupidly (the harsh free-market reforms in Latin America and Russia in the 1990s), or losing resolve too quickly (the war in Iraq). Even in regions where the democratic and economic transformations were relatively successful, like Central and Eastern

Europe, corruption and cultural deafness alienated all too many citizens from free markets, free trade, and liberal democracy. The lessons are not in abandoning but improving them, making institutions stronger, cleaner, and more agile.

The important work must start at home, in domestic affairs. The kind of interconnected society emerging all around requires a stronger sense of democratic citizenship than we have now, and it will not emerge automatically. Across the West we have largely abandoned systematic attempts to educate young people in the virtues of citizenship and practices of democracy. We do not teach historical and philosophical underpinnings of liberal constitutionalism. Too many students are intellectually defenseless when faced with demagoguery, right-wing populism, or radical-left socialism. They do not know how and why to argue against them and indeed many are adopting some of these chimeras as if they were real solutions to legitimate problems. And all too often, young people do not know how to argue at all. Thus life-long learning, a buzzword that nonetheless soon will be a must, should not be just about preparing people for the economy based on artificial intelligence, but above all it must prepare a new generation of citizens—defenders of open society.

In politics across post-industrial nations, there seems to be a dearth of strong champions of the liberal order, international and domestic. Yet without leadership in politics we will not be able to move back into proactive mode elsewhere.

A Matter of Survival of a Decent, Prosperous Culture

The defense of liberal constitutionalism and free-market capitalism is not a matter of left or right. It is the matter of survival of a decent, prosperous culture, which two decades ago Francis Fukuyama declared ideologically victorious. His essay was brilliant but premature. He was, however, absolutely right in believing that from the point of view of competing ideologies, democracy and capitalism are objectively still by far the most desirable, and as such do represent the pinnacle of history. There is no system more attractive to the vast majority globally: not the fundamentalist Islam, not *chávismo*, and certainly not the kleptocracy in Moscow that some on the European and American right mistake for protection of conservative values.

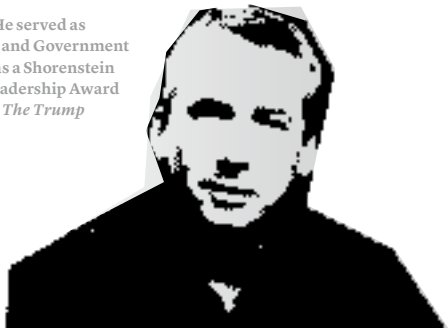
It seems that a lack of vigor in the capitalism-cum-democracy camp is a kind of political and cultural malaise. We have allowed the internal erosion and now we find ourselves in a hole. It is worth remembering what came after the malaise of the 1970s in Western politics: a revival represented on the right by Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, and on the left by Tony Blair, Bill Clinton, Gerhard Schröder, and others.

Across the West we have largely abandoned systematic attempts to educate young people in the virtues of citizenship and practices of democracy. We do not teach historical and philosophical underpinnings of liberal constitutionalism.

This is the year of important elections in Europe, and we might have started to turn the corner. In Netherlands, a decent, mainstream, establishment right beat the right-wing xenophobes decidedly. At the time of writing I cannot know the outcome of French presidential and German parliamentary elections, but for the defenders of liberal order the situation certainly does not look hopeless. Czech parliamentary elections later this year might confirm that despite problems, not all Central Europe has gone authoritarian.

The politically weakened Blair in the UK has caught second breath, starting an impressive fight for the resurrection of centrist politics. He needs support and it should come from the younger generation of politicians. The task ahead is monumental and truly global. It might require yet another revolution.

TOMÁŠ KLVAŇA
is Visiting Professor at the New York University Center in Prague. He served as Spokesman and Policy Adviser for President of the Czech Republic and Government Envoy for Communications of the Missile Defense Program. He was a Shorenstein Fellow at Harvard University. In 2012 he received Distinguished Leadership Award For Internationals from University of Minnesota. His latest book is *The Trump Phenomenon* (2016, in Czech). | Photo: Aspen Review Archive



ASPEN.REVIEW
JERZY JARNIEWICZ

CULTURE
NOBEL PRIZE
BOB DYLAN
LYRICS
POETRY

I'm a poet and I know it. The Nobel Prize and Bob Dylan's Literary Credentials

For those who deal with literature more often than once in a blue moon, Nobel Prizes in Literature are not very exciting. They do not define the directions of literature's development, and certainly do not identify what is most interesting in the writing of today.

In consequence, non-casual readers of literature usually remain indifferent to them, just as true cinema lovers do not care for the Oscars. Literary life goes along an entirely different track, the best proof of that being the list of great writers who did not receive the prize, from Proust and Joyce through Nabokov and Borges to John Ashbery. The Nobel Prizes in Literature may increase the popularity of awarded writers and boost the sales of their works (although this effect is often astonishingly short-lived, expiring in less than a year); sometimes the prize enhances the status of lesser-known cultural areas remaining outside the circle of the so-called great languages; furthermore, in most cases the direct motivation for choosing the winner is non-literary, i.e. political. The Nobel Prize for Bob Dylan from last year changed something in this respect, although, let us make it clear, Dylan did not need the prize. I do not think that the sales of his records increased. Dylan is an actor in a theatre in which popularity is much greater than the popularity of even the trendiest Nobel Prize winner. For the first time has the committee awarded an artist whose work sells not in hundreds of thousands nor even in millions but in tens of millions of copies and whose image is as familiar as that of the greatest film stars. What is more, Dylan has for long had an assured place in the history of contemporary culture of the last half-century: any survey of this culture (the 1960s counterculture especially) that would not include the contribution of Dylan would be simply unreliable.

New Chapter in History of Nobel Prizes

It was not Dylan who needed the Nobel Prize—it was the Nobel Prize which needed Dylan. Last year's decision opened a new chapter in the history of these prizes, so it would be only a slight exaggeration to say that the importance of this event could be compared to the moment when the male colleges of the University of Oxford opened their doors to women in 1974. The Nobel Committee awarded a rock star, for the first time in its history taking a sufficiently broad definition of literature to contain the poetry of rock, or more generally, literature which coexists with music. Thus it noticed this branch of literary creativity which in the present times is perhaps most dynamic and expansive: pop and rock lyrics (besides advertising slogans, graffiti, and the language of blogs) constitute, whether we want it or not, our natural poetic surroundings, and so to a growing extent they shape our literary taste and expectations. Years ago, pop artists decided that they could not ignore the aesthetics of everyday life: posters, billboards, industrial design, the typography of color magazines, record covers, etc., for it is them that shape our aesthetic sensibility and function as the fundamental point of reference in our iconic space. One can speak of an interesting imbalance: art opened itself to the iconosphere of the everyday and the popular, while literature still looks at the poetry of rock and pop songs from above and gives it a wide berth.

Not surprisingly, the Nobel for Dylan provoked a number of critical comments. Objections to last year's verdict could be divided into two groups. First, there are those who deny Dylan's work the status of literature and Dylan himself the status of a poet. They may appreciate his achievement in the history of rock music, but they situate it completely outside the sphere of literature. Second, what arouses opposition is not that the committee went beyond the borders of literature, but that it reached for pop culture, i.e. for something trivial, worthless, and banal. It was not a risky transgression but a degradation of the prize. Sometimes both these charges—that it is music rather than literature and popular culture rather than high culture—appear jointly. "What an absurdity! A musician got the literary Nobel Prize," wrote one of the best-known right-wing websites in Poland, although critical

For the first time has the committee awarded an artist whose work sells not in hundreds of thousands nor even in millions but in tens of millions of copies and whose image is as familiar as that of the greatest film stars.

remarks towards the verdict are not limited to the right: they are launched from both sides of the political divide. The eminent Polish prose writer Paweł Huelle was not hiding his indignation: "Awarding the literary Nobel Prize to Dylan is something astonishing and pathetic. Dylan as a writer has not distinguished himself in any way." It is worth examining these charges and refuting them both.

Let us start with the fundamental truth which is too often forgotten: awarding the literary prize to the author of works designed to be sung, the Nobel Committee perhaps made a historic breach in its previous practice, but it did not make any re-evaluation of literature. It is not a subversive verdict, on the contrary: it goes back to the sources of poetry, for poetry started from song. Awarding a poet-singer such as Dylan is not a revolutionary gesture but

It was not Dylan who needed the Nobel Prize—it was the Nobel Prize which needed Dylan.

a reminder of those forms of literature which have existed since its very beginnings. If in the context of the Nobel Prize for Dylan, Homer's name was mentioned, it was not because someone wanted to equate these two authors, but because they both made poetry for the voice rather than for the letter.

The tradition of oral poetry flourished with medieval poets active all around Europe: Provençal troubadours, German minnesingers, Scandinavian skalds, Anglo-Saxon scopes, or Celtic bards, showing affinity to what Dylan has been doing. But there is another medieval tradition of which Dylan is an heir–ballads. As the etymology of the name indicates, they were created as songs to be danced to and before they were written down, they lived in a variable oral form. Passed on from generation to generation, they entertained and moved the listeners, they caused a shudder of horror while commenting upon the world and opening the doors to the land of fantasy. They often played the function of broadsheets, telling current sensational stories as if taken from criminal chronicles, speaking about what happened at the court of a local landlord, who murdered whom, who fell in love with whom, and who travelled to where. These ballads, as we know, went through numerous transformations: in the version created by the Romantics they came close to lyrical poetry. Their urban variety soon evolved.

Dylan grew up on these ballads, many of which had been created on the English-Scottish border or in Ireland and arrived in America with the early settlers. America cultivated this heritage and hence ballads are still a liv-

ing form of art. To no small extent we owe it to Francis James Child, who collected almost 300 such ballads and published them in a monumental three volume edition. Were it not for this legacy, we probably would not have had Dylan's famous ballads such as *Ballad of Hollis Brown, The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll, Ballad in Plain D, A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall, The Ballad of Frankie Lee and Judas Priest*. This tradition, which Dylan took over and enriched, is supplemented in his work with the tradition of blues, an endemic American genre reflecting the history of black America, although not far removed from the ballad, connecting poetry with music.

Pop Artists Wander Around With Their Ballads

If today there are continuators of the tradition of the ballad, then we can find them among rock and pop artists. They not only write and perform often sophisticated lyrics, but like their medieval predecessors they wander around with these songs in long concert tours. Dylan's predecessors in the art of oral poetry can also be found in the 20th century—among American beatniks, whose poems, such as the famous *Howl* by Allen Ginsberg, Dylan's friend and collaborator, were rather recited in the form of singsong than read out, often with musical accompaniment, closer to the poetics of jazz and jazz improvisation than printed poetry.

Awarding the literary prize to the author of works designed to be sung, the Nobel Committee perhaps made a historic breach in its previous practice, but it did not make any re-evaluation of literature. It is not a subversive verdict, on the contrary.

Literature which closely coexists with music and with the voice of the performer is fully legitimate and the Nobel Committee did not make any breach here. On hearing the charge that this kind of poetry exists only when it is performed, that it only works when it is combined with music and therefore it is worthless as a text, we can respond with a question: is *Hamlet* or *Waiting for Godot* completely fulfilled on the pages of the book? Does a play not need stage fulfilment to be realized in full? No one questions the literary value of even the most theatrical plays by Beckett (a Nobel Prize winner after all), where the rhythm of speech, the use of silence and light, stage movement (or lack of it), stage design, and so on play a pivotal role, sometimes more important than the word. It is similar with Dylan's texts, which

being literature, find fulfilment only in their musical and stage implementation. It is in combination with music that the peculiar poetry of his work is revealed: many of Dylan's poetic devices and formal resources used in his songs find justification only when we hear Dylan sing these songs. This does not deprive them of their literary value.

Literature which closely coexists with music and with the voice of the performer is fully legitimate and the Nobel Committee did not make any breach here.

A poem has its graphic shape, important when we read it: for example, the arrangement of verses in the sonnet creates the familiar visual composition on a page that cannot be communicated by voice. Using small letters in a poem is also a device which works only in the graphic mode—it disappears when we are only listening to such a poem. We regard poetry with an important graphic component as obvious and legitimate; but when the vocal or musical component becomes important in the text, we tend to regard it as a proof that such a text is incomplete or deficient. The qualities of such Dylan's songs as *A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall* (which by the way is a variation on the 17th-century English ballad *Lord Randall*) will only be activated when the song is sung, when the repetition of the eponymous verse is accompanied by a crescendo building an effect of growing, inescapable horror. Such a crescendo is a quality which you cannot write down, it goes beyond language, but it remains an important element of the work, justifying its repetitiveness. Meanwhile, on hearing about the planned edition of Polish translation of Dylan's texts one of the critics, Marcin Sendecki, wrote: "Dylan in the form of a bare, printed text will be naked as Andersen's emperor." Would the critics say the same about Beckett, the author of miniature plays such as *Breath*?

What Makes Literature Literary?

Another kind of problem appears in the discussions on the issue if Dylan's work is sufficiently literary to aspire to the literary Nobel Prize. The question can be formulated differently: is Dylan a poet or (merely) an author of lyrics. It is worth noting that when we formulate it like that, the "poet" is not a neutral term for a certain profession, an activity you can do better or worse, but it becomes an evaluative and ennobling term. Under such an understanding of the term, a poet is not a person who works with words paying attention to

how they connect with each other, but someone gifted, anointed, exceptional. In his Nobel Prize speech Dylan seems to express indifference to the question if his work qualifies as literature: "Not once have I ever had the time to ask myself 'Are my songs *literature*?'" Significantly, Dylan does not question the literary nature of his work, only says that he had no time for such reflections. We can, however, ask what is it that makes literature literary and then we can try finding these qualities in Dylan's texts. It is often claimed that a text is literary if it invokes tradition. Dylan as few other rock lyricists draws on the literary past, finding inspiration in the Bible, medieval ballads, Shakespeare's plays, the poetry of French symbolists, the poems of Eliot, the prose and poetry of the Beat Generation.

Literariness of a given work can also be measured by its influence on contemporary language. Dylan meets this criterion with a vengeance, for many phrases from his songs entered the English language, becoming popular sayings and catchphrases. Quoted in various versions, often by people who do not know who their author is, these phrases enrich contemporary English. Examples: "You don't need a weatherman to tell which way the wind blows." (*Subterranean Homesick Blues*) "Something is happening but you don't know what it is." (*Ballad of a Thin Man*) "To be outside the law you must be honest." (*Absolutely Sweet Marie*)

And, finally, we come to the third criterion of literariness, that is, influence on later artists. Dylan not only transformed the way rock and pop lyrics were written. Until his time these texts could irritate with their infantilism and formulaic nature. Dylan showed that you could write songs which could match the most sophisticated literary texts with their degree of formal and semantic complication, opening the way for later poets of rock, such as Lou Reed, Patti Smith, Bruce Springsteen, or Nick Cave. It was as a consequence of meeting Dylan that the Beatles went away from simple texts of the "boy meets girl" type and started to write more ambiguous lyrics, playful, anecdotal, surrealistic, introducing puns and literary allusions. As Bruce Springsteen said in his speech welcoming Dylan to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame: Presley liberated our bodies, Dylan liberated our minds. However, Dylan influenced not only the poets of rock. Inspired by him were also such poets as the Irishman Paul Muldoon or the British Mark Ford, both of whom contributed to an anthology with a meaningful title: *Bob Dylan with Poets and Professors*.

In Opposition to Anything That Could Limit His Artistic Sovereignty

Dylan is a literary continent. He started offering us his witty, insightful commentaries on our reality in the early 1960s and has been doing that for over half a century, still seeking new forms of artistic expression. Successive generations recognized themselves in his songs, not only Americans; they found in his lyrics their own language with which they could speak about this world and credibly describe it. It does not matter if it was a language of almost journalistic stories reporting on racial and social conflicts in America; or visions of approaching destruction sprinkled with biblical phrases; or a psychedelic whirlwind of images and phrases drawn from drug experiences; or love songs covering the whole range of emotions from desire through anger, sadness, and malice to eroticized fantasy; or an evangelizing language which adorned the poetics of American gospel songs; or the poetry of raw blues, undercut with melancholy and resignation; or perhaps cinematic narratives blurring the line between what we view on the screen and what we see in our dreams; or long, epic poems with a gallery of memorable figures: outcasts, vagabonds, junkies, circus performers, thieves. It is a richness for which it is difficult to find a common denominator besides the unchanging nonconformity of the artist.

Literariness of a given work can also be measured by its influence on contemporary language. Dylan meets this criterion with a vengeance, for many phrases from his songs entered the English language, becoming popular sayings and catchphrases.

It has often been said that Dylan would perfect a certain genre only to abandon it after a while and make a radical U-turn, completely changing his style, as if constant metamorphosis was the *raison d'être* of his work. Or to put it differently: he was in an unceasing opposition to anything that could limit his artistic sovereignty, submit him to some external power, close him in some tested formula. Dylan changed his language, he also changed himself, starting with the founding act of the abandonment of his identity and the transformation of Robert Zimmerman into Bob Dylan. Later, every few years, he would undergo another metamorphosis: from a civil rights movement activist marching alongside Martin Luther King on Washington he changes into a rock existentialist hiding behind black sunglasses, then puts on a cowboy hat, goes to Nashville and becomes a pal of Johnny Cash, and a few years later

assumes a new identity and a new name, Rinaldo, and trades the cowboy hat for a straw hat with colored flowers under a bow; but not for long, because Dylan soon becomes baptized and starts to preach about Jesus, only to return to the Jewish tradition, which does not prevent him from singing before the Pope, and then to change into a bluesman and almost at the same time record an album with Christmas carols and two records with Frank Sinatra songs. In Sam Peckinpah's film *Pat Garret and Billy the Kid* Dylan plays the role of a stranger who came from nowhere and bears the telling name Alias. In the song

It has often been said that Dylan would perfect a certain genre only to abandon it after a while and make a radical U-turn, completely changing his style, as if constant metamorphosis was the *raison d'être* of his work.

With God on Our Side, before he sketches the history of America as a series of expansive wars and acts of genocide perpetrated in the name of God, he will say about himself: „My name it is nothing, my age it means less." During the Rolling Thunder Review tour he paints his face white. There is a famous story when one day he entered the stage without make-up and said: "Today I am wearing Bob Dylan's mask." It was not without reason that the producers of the biographical film about Dylan *I'm Not There* employed as many as six actors to play his role, including one woman, perhaps believing that only in this way they would be able to show the truth about Dylan's identity metamorphoses.

Dylan is a constant self-creation, a figure of many names, faces, and biographies, with a rare gift for absorbing, assimilating, and transforming almost anything he encounters on his way. Like Shakespeare, Dylan came to us from a rustic province, a brilliant self-taught man whose reading list was a non-canonical patchwork from world classics to pulp fiction; greedy and avid towards the world, he created a multidimensional work, its popularity matching its sophistication, its craftsmanship going hand-in-hand with fantasy, its entertaining potential with an invitation to think, and seriousness of its intent with the joy of the word.

JERZY JARNIEWICZ
is a Polish poet, translator, and literary critic, who lectures in English at the University of Lodz. He has published ten volumes of poetry, thirteen critical books on contemporary Irish, British, and American literature, and has written extensively for various journals. He is editor of the literary monthly *Literatura na Swiecie* (Warsaw) and has translated the work of many novelists and poets, including James Joyce.
Photo: Justyna Bargielska

ASPEN.REVIEW
PATRYCJA
PUSTKOWIAK

CULTURE
FILM REVIEW
POLAND
FEMINISM
SEX
CATHOLICISM

Where the Most Common Method of Contraception Is Prayer

The Art of Loving. The Story of Michalina Wisłocka

Maria Sadowska

(Poland 2016)

Sex for killing worries? Better not, it may result in a hangover, like getting drunk on your own. Total nudity? Boring, it is better to cover yourself even with the proverbial fig leaf. The man does not have to be beautiful, but he should be well-kept, and the same goes for the woman.

What they do in bed should not be a marital duty and serve only procreation. Sex can be varied. Funny. Tender. And may give great pleasure to both partners. When Michalina Wisłocka collects these and other tips and announces them in Poland in 1978 in a book entitled "The Art of Loving" [English edition *A Practical Guide to Marital Bliss*, 1978], a veritable frenzy is unleashed. Everyone wants to read it. Lots of people copy it on mimeographs. They fight for it. They print pirated versions and sell it at the bazaars. They blush when seeing the sexual positions presented there. The book is sold in 7 million copies. The author becomes famous overnight. So famous that readers stop her in the street and kiss her hands. But they also hate her. Because she writes there about contraception and abortion, they call her "Hitler in a skirt" and threaten to pour hydrochloric acid at her at literary meetings.

When "The Art of Loving" appears in 1978, revolutionizing the sexual life of the Poles, the West has already had the sexual revolution of the 1960s and the second wave of feminism following it. The electrifying subject of human sexuality has been discussed there for years. The need, as they say, is the mother of invention. Those who conduct pioneering research in this field have problems with it themselves. Henry Havelock Ellis, whom Great Britain owes the seven volume *Study of Sexual Psychology* published in 1897-1928, is himself an impotent married to a lesbian. In his monumental work he undermines the theories saying that sex serves exclusively procreation, he questions the belief about the harmfulness of masturbation, and announces that homosexuality is not a disease. The American researcher Alfred Kinsey has problems with his marital sexual life, for he is generously endowed by nature. Seeking solutions for this problem and others, he studies thousands of patients and writes groundbreaking books: *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (1948) and *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (1953), both of which revolutionize the then prudish America. Kinsey's knowledge is tested empirically in the 1950s by William H. Masters and Virginia Johnson, who subject sex to precise observations in the laboratory. They engage in it to such an extent that they become a married couple. Thanks to them the world learns the truth about orgasm.

Sex as a Taboo

This knowledge does not reach Poland. In the late 1970s very little is known here about sex. There are no sources to learn about it—pornography is illegal, the Internet is still a thing of the future. Many Polish women do not know what orgasm is. The most common method of contraception is prayer. Those with a higher degree of initiation engage in coitus interruptus. Although condoms are available, they are not very popular and are difficult to get. More enlightened physicians promote spermicidal pessaries, but their effectiveness leaves much to be desired.

Nevertheless, it is still a progress compared to the backwardness in Poland in the 1950s. "People in the countryside knew nothing about sex. For example, men were complaining that their uterus was growing. He comes here so many times, for the uterus is strangling him. It is growing so big that it is strangling him. [...] And women were complaining that the pussy is aching or itching. They also called it 'a little nest.' Another term was 'a doggy.' Men called their thing 'Matthew,'" said Michalina Wisłocka, the mother of the Polish sexual revolution herself, in an interview.

"I am the sexual revolution and I am coming!" This motto promoting the film, based on her life and available since recently to be seen in Polish cinemas, illustrates her intentions very well. This scandalmongering gynecologist and sexologist decides to carry the torch of sexual education on her own. She is perfectly suited to the task—in the coarse times of the People's Republic she lives an absolutely non-standard life and she does not lack cour-

This scandalmongering gynecologist and sexologist decides to carry the torch of sexual education on her own.

age. She always says what she thinks, bluntly. Apparently this is an effect of Asperger's syndrome, one of its symptoms being uncontrolled honesty. She dresses strangely, in colorful attire, always with a scarf around her head. The way she lives scandalizes public opinion. For although Wisłocka, born in 1921, has war experiences and a severe illness behind her, her discoveries—like in the case of other researchers—are primarily influenced by the experiences connected with her intimate life.

Mrs. Sex is like the proverbial shoemaker's children—she is sexually frigid. She gets married as a teenager, but her husband does not manage to arouse desire in her. Sex gives her no pleasure. She is astonished that her best her friend Wanda actually loves it. One day she comes across "Stories to the accompaniment of a lute" by Koizumi Yakumo. She reads there about a great scholar and his two wives and she finds a Solomonic solution: Wanda should live with them. They would both have sex with Michalina's husband, Stach, although Wanda—as the one with more temperament—much more frequently.

Strangely enough, the system works for a good few years. Finally both women get pregnant with Wisłocki–Wanda gives birth to a son, Michalina to a daughter. Publicly they say that both children are the fruit of the Wisłocki marriage. And then the arrangements suddenly breaks down—Wanda has enough being the third one and besides that, numerous love affairs of Stach and his disloyalty come to light. Wanda goes away and takes her son with her, the son who is, by the way, the greatest victim of the triangle—the discovery that Wisłocka is not his mother breaks his life. In a few years, Wisłockis are divorced.

She meets the mysterious sailor Jerzy, who gives her the first orgasm in her life, when on holiday. She is already over 30. Although their affair will last only a month—Jerzy is married—its effects will stay in the Polish culture forever. For it is Jerzy who persuaded Wisłocka to write "The Art of Loving."

"There are no frigid women, only those not aroused sexually," she writes. "Haste is an unforgivable mistake in love." She explains how a woman and a man are built. She proves that sex not only serves procreation but also creates a bond between partners. It improves the mood, it may be fun. And above all, Wisłocka shows that "this" can be done not only in the missionary position. In fact, many readers will not bother reading the text, limiting themselves to browsing these positions with a flushed face.

The struggle to publish "The Art of Loving" will take almost 10 years. "The author has to reckon with the culture and traditions of the Polish society. In the entire popular world literature I have never seen more than 100 pages on intercourse and orgasm," writes one of the reviewers. Nine out of eleven give a negative assessment to the book. It also irritates them that the author is a woman. Conservatively minded men do not like the fact that she could have something to say about sex.

The struggle to publish "The Art of Loving" will take almost 10 years. The author has to reckon with the culture and traditions of the Polish society.

Indeed, this casts a shadow over her career. Although as a gynecologist she receives hundreds of patients, treats infertility, demands wide access to contraception, educates women, travels all over Poland with lectures on conscious maternity, and in the 1970s she even visits a craftsman in Konstancin and orders "slings" enhancing the rigidity of the penis, she is unable to make an academic career. The community of gynecologists does not allow her to write her habilitation treatise.

Problems with the Censorship

When the book finally goes to the censors, the officials complain that the drawings of sexual positions are too big. They want them reduced to the size of postage stamps. Wisłocka wonders how to make them more readable. She proposes to the graphic designer that the woman should be drawn white and the man black. "But why a white woman with a Negro?!" cry the people in outrage. Reviewers painstakingly seek signs of immorality. They try to throw away chapters about contraception and masturbation, which they regard as harmful. "If masturbation was so harmful, everyone would be very damaged," writes the furious Wisłocka to them. The Central Committee of the Communist Party arrests the book—and its members passionately read its photocopied version after hours.

The breakthrough comes when a new director appears in the Iskry publishing house, a friend of Michalina. He explains to the minister that it is a quiet book for marriages. "On the cover you put the groom with a bow tie and the bride with a veil," finally says the minister. "And they will stop saying that it is debauchery, for if for married couples, then for married couples."

The first run will be 100,000, but in the official announcements it will be reduced to 10,000—in order not to scandalize the public. Seven million copies will sell—not counting illegal copies, of course. Wisłocka herself buys her first pirated copy at a bazaar. The book will also be sold in shocking numbers in China, Bulgaria, or East Germany.

The merit of "The Art of Loving" is not only the fact that it appears at all in the absolute desert, which Poland was then in the matters of sexual education, but also that it speaks about them in a very accessible, simple language. A language which could reach—and reach it did—millions. This is a big breakthrough, because until then, sex was spoken about (if at all) in understatements and ambiguities. Wisłocka puts the cards on the table. She pulls the Poles away from thinking about love—dominant for more than 100 years since the culture of Romanticism—as a grand, disembodied rapture, a kinship of souls. She shows that love is also biology. She ignites their imagination, showing that you can have sex not only in the missionary position. She persuades women that they also can have pleasure from sexual life.

When the book finally goes to the censors, the officials complain that the drawings of sexual positions are too big. They want them reduced to the size of postage stamps.

When the book is published, Wisłocka becomes a star overnight. She goes on a round of lectures. "You write so much about the sexual positions, how do you know about them?" they ask. "A blind man will not write about colors!" she retorts. She sails around the world. She buys land near Warsaw and a fur coat made of fox tails. She still behaves very eccentrically. She drinks Coca-Cola with a large amount of sugar. She gives long monologues on subjects that preoccupy her. When she gets bored with someone, she stops talking to him and leaves.

In the 1990s, Wisłocka's fame passes away. Porn shops, porn videos, and porn magazines appear. "The Art of Loving" has an increasingly numerous and bold competition. It ceases to scandalize. Its author falls into a grow-

ing obscurity, she lives in poverty. But her appetite for life remains. In an advanced age and poor health she keeps flirting with young physicians. She dies in 2005.

Although her textbook teaching the Poles to enjoy sex is slightly outdated today, Wisłocka's efforts are relevant in a different dimension.

Although her textbook teaching the Poles to enjoy sex is slightly outdated today (modern, then unknown methods of contraception have appeared, sexual awareness has been completely transformed, and in the light of the gender revolution Wisłocka's advice on how to seduce a man and make him stay may amuse or even irritate), Wisłocka's efforts are relevant in a different dimension. This is well illustrated by the film *The Art of Loving. A story of Michalina Wisłocka*, recently released in Polish cinemas. For this intelligent cinema of the middle, directed by Maria Sadowska and with a script by Krzysztof Rak (responsible for the success of another Polish film, *Bogowie,* directed by Łukasz Palkowski), well played, funny, and brilliant, talks about something which is still very relevant in Poland—about the power of women, their solidarity, and their influence on the mechanisms of power.

In the film *The Art of Loving*—in accordance with conventional wisdom—it is women, wives of party officials, who indirectly make the publication of the book possible, in a gesture of solidarity with Wisłocka and other representatives of their sex, very much needing sexual enlightenment. In contemporary Poland, where the conservative government entertains ideas of tightening the anti-abortion law, even now very restrictive compared to other European countries, and women take to the streets in their mass and participate in black marches to oppose that, the film takes on a new dimension. It also shows that women must still pay a high price for devoting themselves to work in the shape of being misunderstood or having problems with arranging their personal life. The revolution in this area is still going on. As is the fight for good Polish contemporary cinema—which the film community increasingly seems to be winning.

PATRYCJA PUSTKOWIAK
is a writer and journalist, author of a novel *Nocne zwierzęta*, shortlisted for the Nike Literary Prize and nominated for Gdynia Literary Prize. In 2018, the novel will be published in Argentine. She received a scholarship from the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage. Winner of the Adam Włodek Prize. Currently working on her second novel *Maszkaron*. | Photo: Aspen Review Archive

ASPEN.REVIEW
NELLY BEKUS

CULTURE
BOOK REVIEW
RUSSIA
MASS MEDIA
USSR

How the TV Producers Transformed into the Producers of the Country

The Invention of Russia.
From Gorbachev's Freedom to Putin's War.
Arkady Ostrovsky
(Viking 2016)

In recent years, a number of books was published to give an account of the disintegration of Soviet Union and its aftermath. Various factors have been put under scrutiny in attempt to uncover the mechanism of collapse and the following transformation. Chris Miller in his book *The Struggle to Save the Soviet Economy: Mikhail Gorbachev and the Collapse of the USSR*[1] focused on the role of economic policy choices made by the Soviet leadership comparing it to the China's way; Serhii Plokhy in his *The Last Empire: The Final Days of the Soviet Union*[2] discussed the importance of personal rivalry between Gorbachev and Yeltsin, an incompatibility of the Soviet Union institutional design with the electoral democracy as well as with the rising alternative centers of power in national republics that together contributed to the institutional collapse of the USSR. The book by Arkady Ostrovsky *The invention of Russia. From Gorbachev's freedom to Putin's War* proposes yet another lens—the realm of mass media—for exploring the end of the Soviet Union and further development of the Russian state.

One can hardly imagine that one factor could have been solely responsible for the end of the Soviet project. Yet following the Ostrovsky's narration one can come to believe that it was the world of mass media—newspapers and television—that played central role both in the dismantling of the Soviet system and in the forming of ideological design of new Russia. Moreover, Ostrovsky reveals paradoxical similarity between the late Soviet years, Yeltsin's 1990s, and contemporary Putin's rule. Driven by different political aspirations, each of these periods he sees as a product of the media invention game.

"The Soviet Union expired not because it ran out of money—but because it ran out of words."

In the story of the Soviet collapse and the development of new propaganda regime in Putin's Russia narrated by Ostrovsky, media are not anonymous tools used by abstract state apparatus. For him, media are what they are made by peers, creator, and, after the system changes, the owners. Alongside the history of newspapers, journals, and TV channels, Ostrovsky provides insights in the individual stories of those who stood behind media. Such personification of the mass media policies at the turning points of Russian political evolution discloses complex navigation between Kremlin and media usually hidden from the public eye.

One can hardly imagine that one factor could have been solely responsible for the end of the Soviet project. Yet following the Ostrovsky's narration one can come to believe that it was the world of mass media.

Ostrovsky puts those who were in charge of media in the center of the narration on perestroika. They were responsible for providing the public with corresponding ideological plot that would help Soviet citizens to make sense of the system change. Ostrovsky takes us to the backstage of the political and media scene to uncover their choices of explanatory narratives. Soviet system was dismantled by those who benefitted the most from its functioning, because the ruling elite no longer saw any reason to defend the system which constrained their personal enrichment and comforts. Paradoxically, the dismantling of propaganda was not the result of some spontaneous and accidental process. As Otto Latsis, a prominent economics journalist of the time and one of *Moscow News*'s regular authors, wrote in his memoirs, it was "a meticulously planned suicide."[3]

1) Miller, Chris. 2016. *The Struggle to Save the Soviet Economy: Mikhail Gorbachev and the Collapse of the USSR*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.

2) Plokhy, Serhii. 2014. The Last Empire: *The Final Days of the Soviet Union*. New York: Basic Books.

3) Ostrovsky, Arkady. 2015. *The invention of Russia. From Gorbachev's freedom to Putin's War*. London: Atlantic Book, 22.

4) Ostrovsky, Arkady. *The invention of Russia. From Gorbachev's freedom to Putin's War*, 51.

5) Kotkin, Stephen. 2001. *Armageddon Averted: The Soviet Collapse, 1970-2000*. New York: Oxford University Press, 171-176.

6) Ostrovsky Arkady. *The invention of Russia. From Gorbachev's freedom to Putin's War*, 157.

One of the central threads of the Ostrovsky story is an interconnectedness of the past and the present at every turning point in the political evolution of Russia. Thaw generation, men of 1960s that preserved the elements of liberal thinking throughout the Brezhnev and post-Brezhnev decades, was behind the perestroika. It formed two distinct groups in the Soviet society—the "strayers and stayers." The former became dissidents that contested the Soviet project till the very end, like Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Andrei Sinyavsky, Vladimir Budovsky; the latter converted into a liberal-minded state elites that secretly cherished the idea of Soviet liberalization until the moment when this became possible, like Yegor Yakovlev, Otto Latsis, Aleksander Bovin. They were also a product of 1970s, the golden era for soviet intelligentsia, the period of accumulation of knowledge and cultural experience that produced "a cultural layer that sustained a nation for years to come."[4] Gorbachev is thus portrayed by Ostrovsky not as an exceptional figure among the Soviet officials, but as one among others, a man of his generation and milieu. His glasnost campaign just as the whole perestroika project aimed initially at repairing, not deconstructing, the Soviet system. It was driven by liberals' desire "to reinvigorate the genuine socialist ideas,"[5] but the result they achieved was beyond their bravest anticipation.

Ostrovsky puts those who were in charge of media in the center of the narration on perestroika. They were responsible for providing the public with corresponding ideological plot.

A Dispute About the Scenarios of Preserving the USSR

Whether the collapse of the Soviet state and socialist system was the only possible outcome of the perestroika remains a disputed issue in the literature. Stephen Kotkin in his book *Armageddon Averted: The Soviet Collapse* (2001) showed that there were multiple scenarios of preserving Soviet state that Gorbachev could employ, but for various reasons they remained unused. Chris Miller in his book on economic policy choices also revealed strategies of repairing socialism that could potentially preserve the Soviet Union on the foundation of reformed economy. In Ostrovsky's account, however, no other possible outcomes were possible once the perestroika began. "Biggest mistake was to think of perestroika as a new beginning

not as the ending that it actually was" and his major argument rests on what can be named "media determinism:" it was press and television that ultimately undermined the Soviet ideological system. It created an alternative new world in which the old order became utterly irrelevant.

Gorbachev is thus portrayed by Ostrovsky not as an exceptional figure among the Soviet officials, but as one among others, a man of his generation and milieu.

"Print as the main medium of perestroika"

The end of media censorship resulted in the breaking up of the Soviet Union, but not in the way we could think it did. Ostrovsky shows that the break was not the result of shocking exposé of the dark sides of the Soviet life that were previously hidden from public eyes. The end of media censorship resulted in the removal of limits to the creativity of media stakeholders—journalists and ideologists—in inventing new reality. Yegor Yakovlev was appointed editor of *Moscow News*, once a Soviet propaganda tool, and he transformed it into a bonfire of perestroika. At that time, the role of media in public life has been spectacularly different from the one in sustained democracies. Political events were not happening in the real life, they were happening in media first. Every *Moscow News* issue and any news program on TV channels was a political event and they invented new logic and style of making politics. There was a historical parallel between the perestroika teamsters and the Bolshevik's coming to rule in post-tsarist Russia: they, too, won the minds not only by swords but also by words and images. Ironically, Ostrovsky comments, the system which emerged "by the word" also vanished by the word.

In the 1990s, the Soviet television and main newspapers were in the hand of pro-Western liberals who set out to project and invent a new reality. The newspaper *Kommersant* ran by the son of Yegor Yakovlev, Vladimir, was set to be the newspaper for the class of new, Western-like businessmen who did not exist in Russia at all. Creating the media reality for imagined business people not only prepared the ground for the formation of "readership," it invented or rather injected the imagined businesses in the public mind. The idea of the return to the origins—to the mythical Russia's past, served once again as a source of new inspiration. For the generation of 1960s it was the idea of return to Bolsheviks' revolutionary ideals

of 1920s that helped to sustain their moves; after the fall of the Soviet project the return went further back to the pre-revolutionary beginning of twentieth century. This past was associated with newly invented Russian conservatism that the *Kommersant* newspaper represented. "If Russia was to have a proper market, it had to have a proper business newspaper first." This was also the moment of the ultimate split between *Homo soveticus*, "grey and menacing mass of Soviet-bred mass men and women" and forward looking liberals of various types. Newspaper praised the values "the majority of the society had little affinity with," because they had nothing in common with the ideas of soft paternalism and equality. In Ostrovsky's book, however, the public and the society are rarely get into the focus of his narrative, remaining mostly passive recipients of the media's symbolic investments and creations.

TV Producers Transformed into Producers of the Country

Ostrovsky follows the history of struggle for power at the major decisive points in Russia's post-Soviet development: in 1991 when it ended with the defeat of Gorbachev and victory for Yeltsin, and in 1993 when Yeltsin repeated his success and outplayed the camp of nationalists and imperialists. The ideas that were embodied in their political claims, however, had never been totally extinguished but were covered up in the hope they will die by themselves. Twenty years later the Putin's venture to re-claim the great role for Russia manifested the showy return of those claims in a new variation. There were different foreshadows of future transformation of Russia under Putin rule that Ostrovsky traces back in 1990s. He uncovers paradoxical link between the media techniques used by liberal media players to secure the Yeltsin victory when he was clearly unfit to run for presidency and those employed by media to make little-known and trivial figure of Putin a national leader.

The end of media censorship resulted in the removal of limits to the creativity of media stakeholders—journalists and ideologists—in inventing new reality.

Those who ruled the country in the 1990s were hugely responsible for misusing the unprecedented power they had in 1990s—both symbolically, via media, and real, via the oligarchs linked to government.

The Absence of a Broader Democratic Coalition

The problem of Russia in the middle of 1990s, as Ostrovsky shows, is that those who defeated communists in 1996 did not represent a broader coalition of democratic forces and parties, but a narrow alliance of oligarchs and media managers. Yeltsin's victory was not a triumph for democratic institutions, for the rule of law and property rights. It was triumph of those who invested in and stood to benefit most from it—the tycoons and media chiefs. This victory ultimately transformed journalists and media personae into "elites," well paid for their service to oligarchs. It was at that time when Russian journalists gave up objectivity and "European correctness," providing propaganda-style coverage for Yeltsin. They had too much too lose in case of the return

At that time, the role of media in public life has been spectacularly different from the one in sustained democracies. Political events were not happening in the real life, they were happening in media first.

of the communists and the victory of A. Korzhakov's clan which would most probably bring the end to free journalism and its special status in Yeltsin Russia. They were biased and it might have seemed well-justified at that time. The Yeltsin's victory was about saving the country, saving the freedom and liberalism. But ultimately, journalists demonstrated their ability and power of inventing and manipulating reality in rather ruthless and arrogant way. That experience convinced both oligarchs and media stakeholders that the trick performed with the help of TV could be repeated without Yeltsin and that any candidate could be turned into a successor given the right technology. This was the moment when the likelihood of Putin as a future media invention was conceived.

Meanwhile, ideologically, the defeat of communists in 1996 revealed the lack of further purpose that would be shared by new elites—oligarchs, political and economic reformers, and media stakeholders. There was no clear sense of direction, true identity, or history for the country's development. Lack of any raison d'être was not so surprising after all. Oligarchic rule in its contemporary sense of "rule by the few" has no distinct interest in any specific unifying idea. Liberalism and democracy were not synonyms for those running the Russia of 1990s. Besides, in 1996, the interests of media ultimately diverted from the society that wanted stability and normalization of life. Stability was the last thing that television needed. It was

instability that allowed media to exercise influence and keep the audience entertained, even if at the cost of their audience's normal life. There was a principal difference between the perestroika generation and the new liberal elites: if the former had certain values and plan to repair socialism—however deficient and unsuccessful—the latter had none.[6]

The problem of Russia in the middle of 1990s, as Ostrovsky shows, is that those who defeated communists in 1996 did not represent a broader coalition of democratic forces and parties, but a narrow alliance of oligarchs and media managers.

Media magnates and oligarchs did not have their own candidate for the political successor of Yeltsin. Owning the country's most important and influential media they considered themselves to be the power to be reckoned with, whoever the president. The whole political life in Russia was transformed into a spectacle made by media. Surely, the plot of the media shows had radically changed once Putin consolidated his grip on power. Yet the sense of reality repeatedly invented and manipulated remained paradoxically constant. Media in general and television in particular played crucial role in consolidating the nation around the spectacular TV projects. Media shows succeeded in creating experiences based on a narrative of the state and removing any need for doubt, reflection, or repentance. TV producers became the producers of the country, while TV channels started to stage shows that are part of much bigger geopolitical game.

The idea of media determinism in developing Putin's Russia appears to be well sustained in Ostrovsky's book. The shine and the poverty of liberalism in Russia's new history turns out to be just one of the media's numerous creations, replaced by others. In current conditions of post-truth politics, however, the book has a wider appeal. It shows how easily the invented domain realm can come to dominate reality and how proposing deceptive solutions to real problems can give bogus political actors real power.

NELLY BEKUS
holds PhD in Sociology (2007) and currently works at the University of Exeter in the project 1989 after 1989, Rethining the Fall of Socialism from Global Perspective. She is the author of the book *Struggle over Identity. The Official and the Alternative "Belarusianness"* (2010), she also published numerous articles on post-Soviet nation- and state-building, religious and linguistic policies, history, and memory.
Photo: Aspen Review Archive

ASPEN Review

Generation Lost & Found

No. 02
2017

THE ASPEN INSTITUTE
CENTRAL EUROPE

Call for applications!

Aspen Young Leaders Program

October 15–18, 2017
Tále, Slovakia

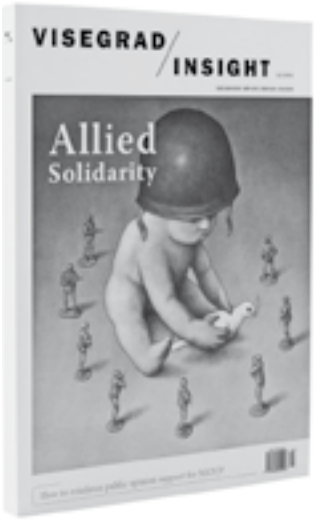
Join or nominate at aspn.me/Leader2017

Program for exceptional and open-minded Central European leaders interested in tackling current social and political challenges.

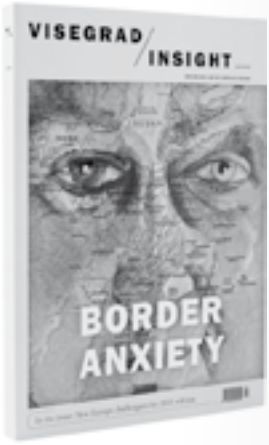
www.visegradinsight.eu

VISEGRAD/INSIGHT

Focus on Central Europe



SECURITY



MIGRATION

INNOVATION

For updates about the next issue follow us

visegradinsight

Partners

direct pojišťovna

mastercard.

FONDATION ZDENEK ET MICHAELA BAKALA

Microsoft

P/R/K PARTNERS

ŠKODA

Google

KPMG

T··Mobile·

VIGO Investments

To reach young people, politicians have to function as a kind of social hubs. Members of the new generation do not like to hear commonplaces, because they can check everything on the Internet in two minutes.

SZILÁRD TECZÁR

Young people have nothing against the liberal democratic system, but from their perspective it's a battle previous generations have fought and won and they see no need to give much thought to how this came about and what needs to be done to maintain it, because they believe it's working, somehow.

MARTIN BUCHTÍK

The Web is no longer a place of community, no longer an agora. Every day more sites are eliminating comments sections.

WALTER ISAACSON

We are living in the era in which traditional tools of social sciences and humanities may need reassessment. Polling data repeatedly