

**CHALLENGES FOR
DEMOCRACY & DEVELOPMENT
IN EASTERN EUROPE**

Essays by

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The Jarl Hjalmarson Foundation has during its almost 35 years of existence promoted freedom and democracy in a number of developing countries, especially in former Eastern Europe. Today our focus is the same as when we started.

We have asked four leading international experts to reflect upon the development of democracy in this region.

A special focus will be on Ukraine. The country is in many respects the key to the future development of Europe as a whole and of an immense geopolitical importance. Parliamentary elections will also be held this Summer.

You will also read about the Jarl Hjalmarson Foundation's Visby conference, an arena for discussions between policy makers on challenges in Eastern Europe hosted annually by the Foundation on the island of Gotland in the Baltic Sea. One of our core tasks is indeed to build and strengthen networks between democratic forces throughout the region.

We hope that you will find the four essays worth reading and that it will also give you some food for thoughts.

Stockholm, June 10, 2019

Peter Egardt, Chairman of the Jarl Hjalmarson Foundation

Is Germany eventually turning to Central Europe?

Knut Abraham

For centuries Germans have been contributing to the history of Central Europe – economically, culturally and politically. Any old map will tell this story. The German language has often been a „lingua franca“ in literature and sciences in the heart of Europe. German speaking regions once were located all over Central and Eastern Europe.

All this has come to an abrupt end by Hitler's terror on neighboring countries, the German aggression of World War II and the darkest of all crimes, the Holocaust. Beside all other consequences for Europe, Germany had destroyed its own contribution to the heart of Europe. 14 million Germans fled their home regions or were expelled. New borders were drawn, Germany divided and its new East became part of the Soviet empire.

While West Germany, led by Konrad Adenauer, integrated itself successfully into the Western world, memories of Central Europe faded away behind the Iron Curtain. Even the simple knowledge of the geography had almost disappeared in the younger generations.

But when history was opened up again by the revolution of the people against their Soviet-backed oppressors, Helmut Kohl – a historian, who never gave up the idea of a reunification – was immediately aware of the fact that the united country would be neighbored by Central European nations like Poland and the Czech Republic, if not also partially be Central Europe itself. On November 9, 1989, the day of the fall of the Berlin wall, Kohl was visiting Warsaw on an extremely important mission to establish contacts with the first non-communist government of Poland, led by Tadeusz Mazowiecki. Kohl decided to fly to Berlin on November 10 (in an American aircraft as German planes were not allowed to land in Berlin until October 3, 1990). Not many people in Warsaw were expecting him back, when he “interrupted” his visit. But Kohl did return, mainly to celebrate a reconciliation mass with Mazowiecki in Kreisau/Krzyzowa in Lower Silesia, an act of friendship which has never been forgotten in the two countries since then.

Consequently, it was Germany and Helmut Kohl strongly backing and pushing the Euro-Atlantic bonds of the region and promoting membership in EU and NATO.

But even with the German capital reestablished in Berlin in the nineties, a general feeling prevailed, that Germany was not really attentive when it came to the expectations of its Central

European neighbors. This was also one of the very first key messages I took from the Visby Conferences, when I joined the great debates there in 2008.

Germany's critical stand on offering a membership perspective to Georgia and Ukraine, a source of incomprehension and even furor (another message I took from Visby) added to the suspicion that we were simply ignoring the fate of these nations. The German position, which was to keep NATO intact and not to overstretch the defense will and capabilities, was not accepted (what was made clear to me in many discussions in the margins of Visby).

Even more upsetting – the suspected “special relationship” of Germany with Russia, culminating in the “Nordstream II” gas pipeline through the Baltic Sea, seen as a fatal “old tradition” to ignore vital interests of Central European and Baltic States.

Consequently it was taken as quite a surprise by many observers that Germany has been explicitly (re-)turning to Central Europe in the recent past. Especially when joining the “Three Seas Initiative”, a Central European club, consisting of Austria, Bulgaria Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.

Germany currently holds the position of an observer, aiming at becoming full member as soon as all members of the club agree.

Beside the great echo Germany's interest in this initiative has received, Germany has dozens of formats of cooperation with Central Europe – from the qualified partnerships to the Chancellor attending the recent Visegrad-Four summit in Bratislava.

So – what was contributing to the recovered passion for Central Europe? As always – a bunch of reasons. Maybe we have simply understood (and the Visby Conferences were an incredibly important catalysator in this) that Poland, Sweden and the Baltic Republics were right in assessing the reality of Putin's aggressive Russia. Germany's tough stand on sanctions against Russia underlines this.

Secondly, the expectations from the region on Germany became more audible and visible. As Radek Sikorski had put it: the region is rather afraid of Germany not acting than Germany taking an active role. The incredibly warm welcome for the German soldiers in NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence in Lithuania came as a big surprise for the German public and many politicians who still believed that any German military

presence east of the river Oder should be avoided not to stir bad memories of World War II.

Additionally, the disastrous Brexit ambitions of the political class in England and Wales with Great Britain probably leaving the EU, is understood in Berlin as a loss of an important partner (also in Central Europe). The German-French tandem remains the basis of all European activities by Berlin as underlined in the new Aachen Treaty signed in spring. But two legs are not enough to make Europe walk.

And finally, Central Europe has become economically extremely important to Germany. While the annual trade with China, Germany's biggest trading partner, is 200 billion Euro, the combined figure for Poland and the Czech Republic is 210 billion Euro. Poland alone is Germany's sixth biggest trading partner, sharing the position with Great Britain.

The Visby Conferences have always been contributing enormously to make us understand what is expected from a leading nation in Europe, a position Germany is perceived of holding. Central Europe is certainly back to the key attention of Berlin.

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Democracy Promotion & Russia

Lilia Shevtsova

Russia has been a popular topic in the international debates for years. "How to read Russia right," "How to respond to the Russia challenge," "Why deterrence is not working?" – These are the usual questions raised that as a rule do not bring clear and persuasive answers. One sometimes gets an impression that "Russia debates" have turned into a moving circus with the familiar participants repeating their mantras without enthusiasm.

Meanwhile, Russia has been amazingly effective in generating misconceptions about itself. Russian political analysts and politicians are especially good at this. They do it both wittingly, for political reasons and due to conformist tendencies too. But why is it that these misconceptions and distortions are then repeated by Western experts?

Anyway, suffice it to say that there is a flabbergasting array of errors and self-deceptions confounding the Western political and analytical community regarding Russia. The past quarter century contains a litany of failures to understand what Russia is about and where it's heading. The most spectacular fiasco

was the failure of Sovietology, which asserted that the Soviet Union was as solid as a rock, right up to the moment it started to crumble. The Western experts by and large continued their myth-creation exercises. A wide array of different schools of thought (comparative studies, transitology, economic and historical determinism, liberal internationalism, neo-conservatism, realism), all employing refined techniques and sophisticated concepts, failed to predict or explain Russia's trajectory. Who could have foreseen that a member of the Council of Europe, a U.S. partner in the "reset," and a participant in the EU Partnership for Modernization would suddenly breach all of the Helsinki Accords principles and upend the world with its revisionist and confrontational agenda? One can only guess what the authors of numerous books and essays on Russia's democracy, Yeltsin's liberal revolution, Russia's integration into the West, U.S.-Russian partnership, Medvedev's reformist ambitions, Putin's modernizing leadership, and engaging Russia are thinking today. All of us have to eat our slice of humble pie and own up to the illusions we have created.

Having complained about the state of the Russian and Western analytical community, I have to admit that there are several intellectual grounds that present unique opportunity to discuss

Russia honestly, without illusions and attempts to accommodate the traditional axioms. The Visby conference is one of them. It has been a platform for exciting – and tough too! – exchange of views between Western politicians and analysts, representatives of Eastern and Central Europe, new independent states and Russia.

I would mention three factors that have made the Visby forum analytically successful and politically important. Firstly, the hosts have been inviting the soulmates, people really interested in pursuing the democratic agenda. Thus, there is no need to waste time arguing with hordes of the "useful idiots" ready to complain about "humiliating Russia" and the "NATO threat" for Russia.

Secondly, debates with representatives of various post-communist states, including those that have joined the EU, allow to deliberate about the transformation models that have their own logic and differ from the transition in other parts of the world.

Thirdly, exchange of views between Russians and representatives of the new independent states, first all Ukraine and Georgia, is extremely important for understanding a new reality in Eurasia.

Finally, the Swedish hosts have succeeded to build motivation system that allows to combine discussion of democracy and security issues, and intertwining of domestic and foreign policy variables.

What are the questions related to Russia that could be of interest in the nearest future in the context of the post-Crimea reality? I would argue that it is high time to review the key perceptions of post-communist Russia and think where we have been wrong and why; what has prevented us from understanding Russia's developments. Both – the Russian analytical community and the Western Russia hands – have been confused about the moods within the Russian society, the evolution of the Russian system and its capacity for reproduction, and the Kremlin foreign policy agenda. One could see new fallacies produced by the pro-Kremlin experts and numerous Western "realists" ready to accommodate the Kremlin.

Debate on misperceptions could be useful for the Western policy makers who are trying to build – so far without much success – a coherent policy on Russia. The Visby forum would become an important vehicle in this area.

Participation in the debates of a new generation of the post-communist intellectual elite and opposition is another field of

the Foundation's activity that we in Russia and new independent states would highly appreciate.

In times of uncertainty and confusion the Visby forum with its tradition, solid reputation and adherence to the principles can be an extremely important network that supports the democracy process in our part of the world.

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Countering Kremlin Dominance and Influence

Stephen B. Nix

There are many challenges today to the promotion of democracy in the Eurasia region. First and most is Russia's resurgence and its assertion of both military and soft power throughout the region.

Russia considers any country's movement towards democracy or Western structures to be an existential threat to Russia's current power structure.

It is no coincidence that the three countries who have signed association agreements with the EU: Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia all have Russian troops on their soil.

Not only does Russia oppose the westernization of these countries, the Kremlin is actively working to restore influence among all of the former Soviet republics in one way or another. It has powerful tools at its disposal: its military capability, its natural resources and its ability to use social media and other soft power mechanisms to try to influence public opinion in a way that distorts the ideals of democracy and human rights.

In order to counter Kremlin domination and influence, it is important that the West focus on several things:

First and foremost, the West must double its efforts to promote democracy in the countries of the Eurasia region. This means additional resources and programming.

Secondly, the United States and its European counterparts must continue to apply pressure on the Kremlin in the form of economic sanctions, both individual and sectoral. Sanctions are the primary leverage that is available to offset the Kremlin efforts to deter and delay Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova in their efforts to further integrate into the European Union.

Third, another way to counter the Kremlin's efforts to roll back democracy is to take the democracy fight directly to the Russian people. The West must increase its efforts to support the democratic political opposition within the Russian federation. This is not just a noble and appropriate course to take. If President Putin has to spend time and resources to counter domestic political efforts, he has less time for foreign interventions of all kinds, whether they be military or political.

In summary, Russia poses the greatest threat to further democratization in the former Soviet Union. It is up to the West to take up this challenge, to meet it, and to counter it forcefully.

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Republican Institute (IRI)*

Challenges for the U.S. and Europe in Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia

David J. Kramer

Eastern Europe, specifically Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova, present major opportunities for the European Union, NATO, and the United States. The question is whether the West will seize these opportunities or, preoccupied with their own challenges, surrender the field to others, specifically Putin's Russia but also China.

The inauguration of a new president in Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, poses the greatest opportunities. Zelenskiy campaigned on a pro-Euro-Atlantic platform, supporting Ukraine's deeper integration into NATO and the European Union, and pledged to pursue those who have been stealing from the public trough, an issue that appealed to many Ukrainians. He called for stripping parliamentary immunity in his inaugural speech. Votes for him came from across the country, undercutting a Kremlin talking point that Ukraine is a deeply divided state. Zelenskiy called for the dissolution of the Rada, Ukraine's parliament, and that election, which had been scheduled for late October, will now take place in late July. Zelenskiy skillfully responded to Russian President Vladimir

Putin's passportization plan for those living in the Donbas, but he needs Western backing in standing up to threats from his Russian counterpart.

Indeed, the U.S. and EU need to fully embrace Zelenskiy and help him with his key goals. That includes helping Ukraine minimize Kremlin interference in the Rada elections. Success in Ukraine – meaning a democratic, prosperous country with a Euro-Atlantic orientation – is in Ukrainians' interest but also in the interests of the rest of Europe and of the United States and Canada. Ukraine is a key piece to realizing the vision of a Europe whole, free, and at peace. Eventually, one day, success in Ukraine will redound to the benefit of Russia and Belarus, too.

Instead, President Trump's personal attorney, Rudy Guiliani, seems determined to drag Ukraine's new leadership into U.S. domestic politics. As part of this, the U.S. ambassador to Kyiv was recalled two months before her term was due to expire, leaving no Senate-confirmed appointee in Ukraine at a critical time. Ukrainians are nervous about the impact Guiliani's efforts may have on the broader U.S.-Ukraine relationship. This means that the EU needs to ramp up its engagement with Zelenskiy and his team – and there are reasons to question whether that will happen given their constant preoccupation with Brexit, the

European Parliamentary elections, and the issue of immigration. NATO, for now, should hold off in getting more involved in Ukraine, given the sensitivity of the membership issue right now, but it should be ready to reaffirm that its door remains open for Ukraine.

Georgia is another country that is determined to steer toward deeper integration with the EU and NATO. The Kremlin has launched an anti-NATO campaign in Georgia, tapping into doubts among some Georgians about whether the Alliance, 11 years after pledging that Georgia and Ukraine would become members in Bucharest, will live up to its promise. One of the main problems in Georgia is that key decisions seem to be made by a billionaire who holds no government position and is unaccountable to voters. Georgian Dream, the party in power, needs to be clearer in conveying its vision for the country rather than focusing simply on consolidating power.

Despite its current challenges, Georgia largely remains an island of democracy amid a sea of authoritarianism. (The revolution in Armenia last year offers hope for the first time in a long time there, but Armenia must constantly balance its relationship with Moscow against Euro-Atlantic aspirations.) Georgia needs a much stronger boost from the EU and U.S., yet here, too, there is no U.S. ambassador in Tbilisi. Otherwise,

Putin's Russia will fill the void, and China is increasing its role there as well. NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg has done a good job of reassuring Tbilisi of NATO support, but the truth is that there is little appetite for incorporating Georgia (or Ukraine for that matter) into the Alliance any time soon. Reassuring both Tbilisi and Kyiv that the door remains open to both NATO and the EU remains critical to both countries and their populations and is the best way to blunt Russian disinformation efforts and China's expanding role.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the launch of the Eastern Partnership (EaP), a policy initiative that “aims to deepen and strengthen relations between the European Union (EU), its Member States and its six Eastern neighbors: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.” All six countries are frontline states, standing between several EU Member States and Russia. That said, they are very different. Three (Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova) aspire for closer relations with the Euro-Atlantic community. One (Armenia, especially after its revolution last year) is struggling to balance its dependence on Moscow with a desire simultaneously for closer relations with the West. Another (Belarus) likes to play the West and Russia off of each other but not in a way that would produce sustainable reform. And the

last (Azerbaijan) is moving completely in the wrong direction under the corrupt, authoritarian leadership of Ilham Aliyev and show little interest in real collaboration with the EaP.

Ukraine (after its Revolution of Dignity in 2014), Georgia and Moldova signed Association and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements with the EU through the EaP. All three countries have also signed visa liberalization agreements with the EU making travel between them and Member States much easier and less expensive.

And yet the EaP from its very beginning explicitly stated to the six Eastern neighbors that this initiative was not an automatic stepping stone to membership. Indeed, on the EU's website, it states this in the clearest terms possible: "The Eastern Partnership initiative is not an EU accession process¹." This obviously is demoralizing to aspirant countries.

NATO, the EU and the United States all need to do better to support pro-European countries such as Ukraine and Georgia, as well as Moldova. Armenia, too, holds potential for improved relations. These countries, if left in a gray zone, will become more vulnerable than they already are to Russian pressure and

¹ https://eeas.europa.eu/diplomatic-network/eastern-partnership/35712/myths-about-eastern-partnership-factsheet_en
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interference, and an expanding China. Europe's new leadership in the Council and the Commission must demonstrate more commitment to the eastern part of Europe than the outgoing figures (with the exception of Donald Tusk). The United States should do the same, but the likelihood of that happening, sadly, is not great any time soon.

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