

სამომხარაგო  
ნიშა

DISCUSSION #1  
APRIL 15

# COVID 19

## LIBERAL VIEWS AND RESPONSES FROM DEMOCRACIES



WEDNESDAY WEBINAR SERIES BY CIVIC IDEA  
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH FNF — SOUTH CAUCASUS | APRIL - MAY' 2020



**MR. TEDO JAPARIDZE**  
FORMER MFA OF GEORGIA



**MR. EDVINAS KERZA VICE**  
MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENCE OF LITHUANIA



**MR. ROMAN JAKIC**  
FORMER MOD OF SLOVENIA



**MR. SEBASTIAN VAGT**  
FNF EUROPEAN AFFAIRS MANAGER

## webinar #1



**HEAD OF CIVIC IDIA**  
FORMER MOD OF GEORGIA

## NEW SECURITY CHALLENGES BROUGHT BY COVID-19 AND RESPONSES BY DEMOCRACIES



**15 TH OF APRIL**  
**10:00-11:30**



**ALEXANDR VONDRA**  
MEP, FORMER MINISTER OF DEFENSE  
OF CZECH REPUBLIC

## DISCUSSION # 1

# NEW SECURITY CHALLENGES BROUGHT BY COVID-19: RESPONSES BY DEMOCRACIES

### SPEAKERS:

Tedo Japaridze

Former MP & Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia

Edvinas Kerza

Vice-Minister of National Defense of Lithuania

Sebastian Vagt

FNF European Affairs Manager, Head of the FNF Security Hub

Roman Jakic

Former MEP & Minister of Defense of Slovenia

Alexandr Vondra

MEP, Former Minister of Defense of Czech Republic

### MODERATOR:

Tinatin Khidasheli

Former MP & Minister of Defense of Georgia



Webinar discussion started with moderator introducing the theme and reasons behind the series to be hosted every Wednesday by Civic IDEA and FNF – South Caucasus for the time of lock-down in Georgia.

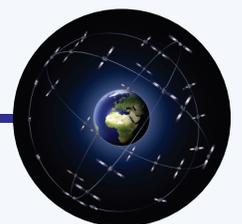
The common understanding is that the world is not going to be the same again after the Covid -19 crisis. It has been echoed by many experts and public figures worldwide.

Indeed, “we are the witnesses of not only the public health disaster but the global political crisis almost of the biblical proportions” -

Tedo Japaridze.

It transformed to something bigger causing versatile damage to the world for the uncertain period of time. NO doubt the societies across the globe should get ready for the dramatic changes in the world order; however, the ways changes will happen and development to come are unclear just like the nature of the virus.

It is important to mention that the coronavirus pandemic is not a new phenomenon that the world society has never seen before. If we look at the history, the humanity has survived various plagues in the middle ages, they also underwent the Spanish flu hundred years ago. Nevertheless, this pandemic is special not (yet) by the numbers of infected or deceased, but by



the policies of total shutdown implemented basically by all nations, causing global halt of the economy that has never occurred before.

“The novelty about this pandemic is the total switch off of the economy”-

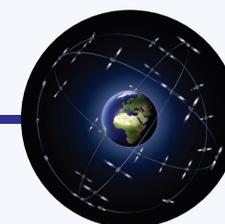
Alexandr Vondra.

Extension of this occasion will bring the disastrous consequences to the individuals, as well as to the states and various sectors or institutions. With unknown origins of the pandemic and the absence of the vaccine, the virus might exist in the population longer than expected. Hence, the world needs to go with the flow and get used to the new reality without total lockdowns.

### THE VULNERABILITY OF INTERNATIONAL AND STATE INSTITUTIONS IN CYBER SPACE

Despite the breaches of normal the virus brought, it has also shown the states their own insecurities and urged them to cope with their problems (including the institutional ones), so that they can demonstrate the better management of this global pandemic.

Institutions, both on the national and transnational levels have been facing the negative outcomes of the coronavirus outbreak. Some institutions have effectively adapted to the changes while the others failed in this matter.



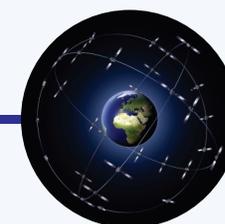
If we look at it from the technological perspective, the digital challenges are one of key problems of the current pandemic. Since the whole world shifted in the cyber world, remotely working and studying with the use technological tools and internet, the scale of the threats coming from the cyber espionage, cyberattacks or propaganda/disinformation campaigns has also risen. The number of illegal cyber machinations directed against the governments, societies and their critical infrastructure has increased dramatically.

“Some countries nowadays are so much interested in doing espionage online, or virtually, or digitally, that they do not need old-fashioned embassy-based spies that the world recently sent out of those embassies...” -

Edvinas Kerza.

In other words, the countries that previously used embassy-based agents now are developing the new methods for effective digital espionage. For instance, Yandex (Russian multinational corporation) has the mobile application called “Yandex Taxi”, that gets access to all the sensitive information stored in our phones and sends the data directly to Russia. With this crisis, they might have access to twice as more material as they previously had.

Hence, our personal and business information is not secured in cyberspace. In order to effectively fight these challenges, the states have to find the common ground, unite their capabilities and collectively face the threats. Despite these obstacles, the technologically



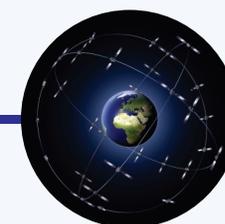
advanced countries managed to continue the effective usage of the cyber tools through circulating the education and labor online, thus acquiring new competences and new skills that might be crucial in the modern reality.

Overall, digitalization is the key for fighting the modern threats.

### WESTERN DEMOCRACIES VS. THE AUTHORITARIAN REGIMES IN THE CHANGING WORLD ORDER

The same goes about the propaganda mechanism that was launched against the Western institutions claiming that the EU and the NATO are unable to cope with the crisis and the eastern authoritarian regimes. Indeed, it is interesting to reflect on the power dynamics and whether it is changing simultaneously with the crisis. As we see on daily basis, the US and Europe suffer more from the crisis than China and other authoritarian states in terms of the health and budget economy. Therefore, the spending priority might change and the less expenditure might be allocated in the field of defense and security. This leads us to the decline of the NATO financial resources and the European members of the alliance might lose the large amount of funding. This might become a significant problem that the western democratic institutions might confront following the pandemic.

New security threats bring new surprising effects for the Western institutions. This occasion creates grounds for the populists, autocrats and far-right movements in liberal democratic states.



“Global coronavirus outbreak has demonstrated the opportunism of political leaders to use this exception to harden the authoritarian system and devastate liberal democratic values” -

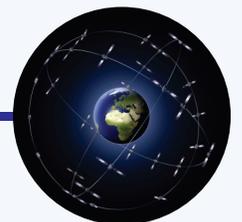
Roman Jakic.

Does it mean that the role of democracy will decrease in the changing world reality? Has the lockdown damaged the democratic institutions? As we see from the Georgian example, which represents a developing democracy, during these hard times when everyone is sitting at home and the economy stopped functioning, instead of being active, holding permanent sessions and performing its role as people's representative body, the parliament simply disappeared leaving the Prime-minister as the only decision-maker in the country.

“At the end of the day, in Georgia and I'm afraid we will be no exception, those who are on the other side of the line designated to hear, to listen, to discuss and make decisions, they are absent...” -

Tinatin Khidasheli.

In other case, in Russia, people are deprived the right to protest as they are not allowed to leave their homes, while Putin is changing the constitution to prolong his presidency. In reality, there is no reason for the state institutions to block all actions and operations, thanks to the digital technologies, though some do make those choices.



For instance, in Lithuania state institutions are effectively using and developing online tools without any physical presence. All more or less digitally advanced countries and definitely, western democracies have similar capabilities and must remain fully operational by adapting the new technological methods.

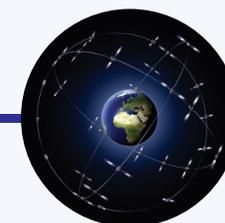
### THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY DURING THE PANDEMIC

As a matter of common knowledge, together with the political elites, the civil society players are important contributors to the democratic processes of the countries. In order to maintain democracy, the civil society needs to stay actively involved in all sectors of development, planning, strategizing, policy development, as well as decision making.

According to Mr. Alexandr Vondra, in Czech Republic civil society has become significantly active during the pandemic by creating face masks or other more sophisticated medical equipment and distributing them to the citizens. Therefore, the role of the civil society is as important as the continuous functioning of the state institutions.

### THE ABSENCE OF THE US LEADERSHIP

Following Trump's "America first" self-isolationism politics, we see the decline of the US leadership on the international arena, while China is constantly gaining influences world-wide.



"The United States has not only failed to offer any leadership, they have overbeat the Europeans when they came to procure the medical equipment"-

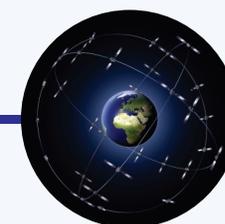
Sebastian Vagt.

Even with the current crisis, during the total absence of the US leadership, the Chinese authorities are sending the medical experts to Italy, they are shipping the medical equipment to Europe and discussing the possibilities of the creation of "medical silk road". In this situation, when the designated leader is stepping aside from the leadership other authorities are offering occupying world scene with their assistance and Medical Diplomacy. It is crystal clear that, Europe together with its partner states, is in need of the joint European action to counter the threats and avoid the undesirable developments in international affairs.

### OBJECTIVES OF 5G

To numerous questions form the audience about the 5G technologies, its advantages and disadvantages in today's rapidly digitalizing world panel responded with security concerns.

Since the most of the activities are moving to the digital world, 5G becomes an effective tool for states less-advanced in cyberspace. With the understanding, that from the security perspective, this innovation is not as reliable as it might seem at the beginning. According to reliable and trusted research all the critical information, including special networking for



hospitals and other life-crucial unites, become vulnerable with this innovative mechanism.

From the moment when you get 5G from the country which affords itself to intrude in your equipment and thus get access to the critical database, your security will be suspended. 5G can be effectively used by authoritarian regimes during the wartime or crisis time causing fundamental damages to the state functioning. In this regard, the most vulnerable are the post-soviet democracies that constantly face the clashes with their totalitarian neighbors both on the conventional and cyber battlefield. However, the EU has taken this issue seriously and is in the process of adapting common rules in order to protect their citizens and the critical infrastructure from undesirable leakages and unexpected shutdowns.

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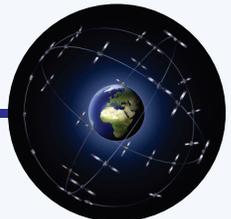
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# TUNE IN ON APRIL 22ND AT THE SAME TIME, FOR II WEBINAR ON RESPONSES FROM DEMOCRACIES, WITH MORE SPEAKERS AND INTERESTING DISCUSSION



**IVANNA KLYMPUSH-TSINTSADZE**  
CHAIR, PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE ON  
UKRAINE 'S INTEGRATION INTO THE EU



**KET PENTUS-ROSIMANNUS,**  
MEMBER OF ESTONIAN PARLIAMENT,  
FORMER ESTONIAN MFA



**KERSTIN LUNDGEN,**  
DEPUTY SPEAKER OF THE RIKSDAG



**GIORGI KANASHVILI**  
SENIOR POLICY ADVISER AT CIVIC IDEA

**ARE RUSSIA AND CHINA CAPITALIZING ON COVID 19 CRISIS ?**

**22 APRIL, TBILISI 12:00 LOCAL TIME**

**LANGUAGE - ENGLISH**



**EMIL KIRJAS**  
FORMER SECRETARY-GENERAL OF  
LIBERAL INTERNATIONAL



**TINATIN KHIDASHELI**  
HEAD OF CIVIC IDEA ,  
FORMER GEORGIAN MOD



**ANDREY PIVOVAROV,**  
OPEN RUSSIA