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COVID19: LIBERAL VIEWS AND RESPONSES WORLDWIDE UK / US RESPONSES



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Former Commander of US Army Europe, Pershing Chair in Strategic Studies at CEPA



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Visiting fellow in the Center on the United States and Europe, at Brookings



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DISCUSSION #4 NEW SECURITY CHALLENGES BROUGHT BY COVID-19: LIBERAL VIEWS AND RESPONSES — USA & UK

SPEAKERS:

Ambassador Tedo Japaridze-

Former head of NSC & MFA, Georgia

Ambassador John Herbst-

Eurasia Center Director, at Atlantic Council

Lieutenant General Ben Hodges-

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MODERATOR:

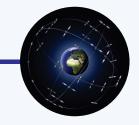
Tinatin Khidasheli

Chair, Civic IDEA, Former MP & MOD, Georgia

It has been already four weeks that, using online platform we are having broad discussion about the differences in the crisis management policies of various democratic states. We had an honor or hosting Members of Parliament and Government, former Ministers and ambassadors, as well as distinguished experts from leading think thanks and NGOs from both sides of Atlantic.

Today once again with the members of distinguished panel, we will try to answer some of the questions as to handling pandemic by democracies. Our discussion will be focused on the USA and the UK, though not limited to. Initially, when the pandemic struck, the main challenge the world had to deal with was the selfishness of different nations. Evidently, some of the democracies were aware of their unpreparedness to such unexpected emergency and their instinct of "not-sharing" the vital protective equipment made their initial reaction very poor and negligent. This occasion was used by emerging global actor China for its own benefit. Nonetheless, "once the hotspots cleared up, the assistance had to flow from different parts of the world showing the trusting and giving perspective towards the countries of the greatest need" — says in her initial comments Heather Conley, Senior Vice President and director fort Europe program, at CSIS.

Recently, while developed democracies have slowly started to open up, small states have questioned their status in the changing world order. There are loads of questions as to the best practices, better choices and performance of world's leading nations.



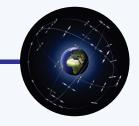
"It is no secret that there is a great divergence in approaches of democracies. Navigating through those diverse policies does not necessarily answer all the questions. As examples we have Sweden and Ireland, on totally opposite sides of the restriction rules, yet with almost similar outcomes and damages. We have large states, small states, we have complete lockdowns, flexible lockdowns, we have recommendations from the government to citizens and businesses and we have mandatory, penalized regulations. It is true that there are huge differences as for consequences among the states but early research proves that those differences are not necessarily brought to life due to the state policies. What are missing?" —

asks moderator of 6th of May Webinar panel Tinatin Khidasheli, former Minister of Defense of Georgia.

While juggling with the paradigm of Pandemic responses, it is noteworthy to evaluate the policies of democracies with the responses against China/Russia's powerful positioning in the post-pandemic world.

THE USA AND THE KUK ON THE COVID-19 BATTLEFIELD

In order to understand what has been done and what to expect for democratic world in the future, we need to look through the challenges, policies and certain recommendations. As for the United States, a hideous outbreak in the key cities (New York, Detroit, New Orleans etc.) has slowly started to plateau. Nonetheless, new hotspots have been emerging across



the country mainly in rural areas. Americans had to acknowledge the fact that coronavirus is going to stay there for a while, including during the up-coming US presidential elections. So, we need to learn to work and live considering health care constraints.

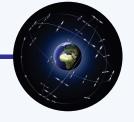
It is to be noted that similar to trajectory of the virus spread and politics, ratings, pressures form the voters is growing and changing faces. For instance, if at the beginning of the pandemic, president Trump's popularity rate increased, just like in the European countries, it has faded very quickly, mostly due to the quarrels between the White House and the governors. "President Trump was equally critical of republican governors at the same instance as he was with the democratic governors and they (the citizens) get that frustration of just the lack of being as responsive as all would like"- Heather Conley. Indeed, a real struggle had emerged on the federal and state level in terms of the responses for further health and economic recovery! The federal government tried to convince its population about the improvement of the situation while in reality, we are aware that it is going to be a long-term challenge.

The UK has been tremendously struck by the coronavirus outbreak, currently having the second-highest death rate in the world after the United States. The crisis has come at the key moment for Britain since it emerged right after its exit from the European Union. There were several areas particularly affected by the pandemic. The vital one is associated with the BREXIT itself, where trade relations between the UK and the EU became even more



confronting, since the Union will be further concerned with its internal economic challenges, leaving the UK outside of the game. "I think both sides may well harden their positions in the trade negotiations, the UK because the government is facing the internal criticism in terms of the handling the very tough economic situation and on the EU side, because BREXIT has been used in the last 2 years to try to unite the remaining members around the new agenda taking the hard line on the UK's exist to stop others doing so"- says Neil Melvin, director of Security Studies at RUSI, UK. Nevertheless, watching the EU managing the crisis better has reduced the skepticism within the country.

As for Europe, the coronavirus crisis exposed the differences between the states of the European Union including through the above-mentioned immediate nationalistic impulses. People believed that there was a lack of solidarity, especially among the European states. Nevertheless, as time has passed throughout the total shutdown of the world, they have realized the need for working together, pulling the resources and jointly combatting the crisis. Despite those mitigations, several countries still managed to effectively cope with the pandemic. Explicitly, Germany, Norway and some other states have done an outstanding job. Their societies sustained general trust in scientists and experts since they have not been politicized. People behaved well maintaining distances and protecting the regulations. This week is going to be important, as major alleviations will be taking place due to the fact that most of the countries are slowly loosening the lockdown. Remarkably, the successful states on the COVID-19 battlefield had the access capacity being the key factor in their crisis management efficiency.



This is the first time, when democracies are dealing with the major health crisis, considering the fact that the SARS never really became such a big issue especially for Europe, since it was contained at the early stages. The first impulses were focused fully on health issues and social needs of the people, slowly moving to the economic concerns. Democratic leaders in most of those countries are aware of the level of willingness from their own citizens to tolerate serious restraint—even in times as difficult as now. So far, people have given their governments the benefit of the doubt, largely obeying orders that a few weeks ago were unfathomable. It is not difficult to project, that citizens of democratic countries, particularly those in the US and UK, are not prepared to give up their liberties indefinitely. Undeniably, Western democracies are playing a risky game: objectively not being able to offer a clear timeline, states are expecting citizens to consent to an open- or never-ended disruption of life as they know it.

In the United States "relatively small minority is arguing that it is time to open up sooner, that the economic costs of the shutdown are too great, the restrictions on liberties are too strong and this remains as a small minority view, but it is not as small today as it was two or three weeks ago"-

says John Herbst from Atlantic Council, former US ambassador to the Ukraine.



Recently, we have seen that the scale of the demonstrations in the US has significantly grown. It is unclear how this situation will play out in a broader scenario. Leaders of both major parties in the US are politicizing this crisis for their own political advantage. It is the dangerous moment not only for the global powers, but for the whole world.

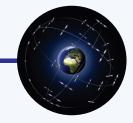
There is not much the western military alliances, like NATO, can do in this situation. However, they can use certain security strategies and instruments to make their member and partner states feel more secure. For instance, "networking is a good way to supplement actual lead responders in terms of moving supplies around and information sharing" — commented US Army retired Lieutenant General Ben Hodges.

GREAT POWER COMPETITION

Lack of solidarity was not the only challenge the European nations had to face. We are all witnessing unprecedented China Policy from across Atlantic triggered by the Chinese attempts to influence the EU and divide the United States from Europe.

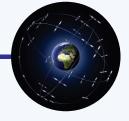
"The backlash against China grows literally on a daily basis. The global anti-China sentiment is at its highest since the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown. We see more and more statements, reports, or requests for investigation from country to another. US president, Secretary of State, UK PM, UK Defense Secretary and many more during only these couple of days were demanding for China to be "transparent and open" about the origin of coronavirus"

- Tinatin Khidasheli.



We have all seen the statements by Tory MP calling on China "to stop bullying countries that ask perfectly reasonable questions about its handling of the crisis." It goes even deeper blaming Beijing for arresting journalists telling the truth to the world, as well as criminalizing doctor who tried to raise the alarm for 'making false comments'. Doctor later died. The Communist Party has massive questions to answer as its secretive and repressive system has contributed to disaster for the world" — reads the statement by UK Tory MP Neil O'Brien, secretary of the backbench China Reform Group.

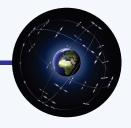
Senior Tories launched the China Research Group last month to gather information about China's role in the world. Australia's government has called for an international investigation into the origins and spread of the virus. "The issues around the coronavirus are issues for independent review, and I think that it is important that we do that. In fact, Australia will absolutely insist on that"- says Australia's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Senator Marise Payne. European states one after another are raising their voice over need for investigation and finding the truth. EU calls for Independent probe, after Sweden asked European Union to investigate origin of Covid-19? It obvious that move likely further straining EU's relations with China. German Chancellor Angela Merkel has pressed China for transparency about the origin of the coronavirus, following similar concerns raised by the French president in a show of disapproval over Beijing's handling of the pandemic. France even summoned China's ambassador to protest a publication on the website of China's embassy that criticised Western handling of coronavirus.



Regardless growing criticism in Europe, and their quest for more transparency from Beijing, most of the countries remain cautious about the claim that the virus spread from a Chinese lab, while Americans have fiercely claimed Beijing's fault in the spread of the virus. Jamie Kirchick, Visiting Fellow in the Center on the United States and Europe, at Brookings Institute explains this trend - "this is again another trend that I have been noticing over the past couple of years, it is the return of neutralist sentiment in Europe that was always there during the cold war...". Chinese as we know are pumping a lot of money especially in Central and Eastern Europe, as well as Balkans. It has also actively interfered in the United Kingdom's new policy agenda. As we already know, unlike its allies (US & Australia), the UK has already taken different and less harsh approach in terms of allowing certain percentage of Chinese tech giant HUAWEI in its 5G system infrastructure.

"China was already emerging as an issue around the debate about the UK's position on HUAWEI, the Chinese telephone company and the UK has taken a different line from some of his allies on these notes, US and Australia in allowing a certain percentage of the HUAWEI infrastructure into the UK's 5G system... Presently, the UK is thinking about "developing the UK-China strategy that is not just about opportunity, but is also about China as a competitor or even China as a threat"-

Neil Melvin.



Certainly, China has the appalling diplomatic handling of the global crisis representing the main challenge for the Western democracies. As they did not want to develop the bad reputation worldwide, they decided to initially hide the spread of the virus. "There have been inadequate responses in our economic system since we were not prepared for this crisis. But it is also true that China was responsible for the outbreak of this crisis and if it acted responsibly at the beginning the chances of its spreading would have been much less. So, they are rightfully the subject of criticism and we need to understand that their reaction since then has been highly aggressive"- says Ambassador Herbst about the main argument or issue with China. However, it is also true that it did not end there. Additionally, "they have used their control over vital medical products to try to persuade countries to their bidding"- explained Ambassador.

Later on, the same policy diverted into well planned public health diplomacy and reflected on "good will" deliveries to tormented states with the essential sanitary resources. Moreover, Chinese Media has been actively spreading the disinformation about the failing of democracies vis-à-vis the pandemic and the virus itself, which was no surprise to anyone, as it is fully controlled by the Chinese Communist Party, just like Russian media is in full "coordination" with Kremlin.



"I do not think there is any evidence that the authoritarian countries have been more effective in combating this. The simple fact is that it started from China and despite their attempts to lie and deceive the world about it, this started from China, as have the several other global pandemics SARS, H1N1, the bird flew... There is no free media in lots of these countries (Russia, Iran, China)"-

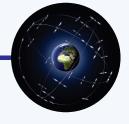
No miracle, that they have turned their propaganda apparatus to work against the Europe and the United States and henceforth respond the accusations coming from the west over the coronavirus outbreak.

Another problem regarding China is that Beijing controls important European infrastructure, sending Chinese companies and investing into the building of roads, railways, harbors, bridges etc. "I remember how much we were overwhelmed with the statement of secretary Mike Pompeo about 'Anaklia and no China, no Russia', but it is not enough since we live in a different world, we have different geography, so when we hear "no China no Russia", we need to expect more the United States, more the European Union, more Japan" recalls ambassador Tedo Japaridze. Message was laud and clear from the US State Secretary, though not shared and considered by Georgian government. Probably similarly to those European countries where major transport infrastructure is owned b the Chinese. It is natural that



this occasion increases China's leverage and influence on Europe, almost similarly as Russian power and impact following their energy resources and infrastructure. They are causing many inconveniencies under various sceneries, including in case of further complications or even a conflict with Russia, China itself or other global actors. "The Chinese control of so much of the infrastructure in Europe is not a good thing. If we get into a crisis with Russia and you have got Chinese ownership of railroads, seaports and other infrastructure necessary for rapid response, how in the world did we get there?"- explains General Ben Hodges. Adding that, the COVID-19 crisis has revealed the true dangers coming from the Chinese Communist Party.

All the panelists agree that we have stepped into a new era of the great power competition, which was already there but pandemic accelerated the process and increased risks. In this new world game, China represents a long-term challenge while Putin's policies are still our there as short-term, but immediate challenge especially for Russia's immediate neighborhood." Calling out this threat does not mean taking the anti-Chinese approach, but simply taking the stance of recognizing the danger. In this unconventional battle with China, the western democracies have to renew and modernize the trans-Atlantic relations. Discussions about China must become the part of the EU's and the NATO's post-COVID security agenda. However, China will still remain as a global economic actor and decoupling from it is not a solution. The Wes-



tern community will have to draw the red lines for Beijing and create effective policies to deter their actions. For instance, we can go back to the objectives of 5G where the West has no alternatives to offer.

"We took our eye of the ball and that is clear with HUAWEI, I mean where is the 5G Western alternative?" —asks Mr.Melvin, -" Alternatives, are the kind of things we need to start thinking about. We actually should address strategically economic state-craft questions and do not leave space for others to move into". That concept is exactly what retains China as a leader in 5G technologies. "I cannot believe that the United States working with the Ericsson and Nokia cannot come up with a better option"- Ben Hodges. Therefore, after the pandemic, the democratic states have to cooperate and address strategically the issue of filling the empty areas, thinking broadly, developing substitutions not leaving the space in their infrastructure for other authoritarian actors, like China.

Furthermore, we need to highlight that these strategies are not achievable without a positive and strong US leadership restoring the trust in democratic institutions.

"If there ever was a time for and a need for positive leadership, it is right now, not only for the United Stated, more broadly, but especially for the United States... strong leadership builds cohesion and also restores trust in institutions, I am talking about the institutions like media,



you can call out individual journalist, but do not say it is all "fake news", because then half of the population loses confidence in the media, which obviously is one of the institutions necessary for democracy"

- argues general Hodges.

When asked by the moderator about the role of essential international and transnational alliances, like the UN and the NATO to effectively reduce the Chinese global influence in the nearest future, general replied "they are crucial" and shared with us his projection for not so far in the future developments without kind of leadership he was calling out before.

"I believe we will be in a kinetic (rockets, planes, ships, shooting) war with China in 10 years, not big invasion of the Chinese mainland, but out in the South China sea with our great navy... just to watch the arch of the Chinese Communist Party, the language that comes out of there, the ship-building they are doing now is about what we were doing in the 1940s and the very aggressive language about Taiwan, about Hong-Kong, you can just feel it potentially moving in that direction"-

General Hodges.

Hence, With the proper leadership, if the US brings along the allies and opens the cooperation, great power conflict can be easily prevented. Their approaches should be based on the effective multilateralism and not the selective multilateralism that Beijing constantly promotes.



"This is a time for the United States with its allies to perform a positive agenda on transparency, a positive agenda on strong institutions, trusting credibility in leaders, freedom of media"-

Heather Conley.

SMALL STATES AND THEIR STRATEGIES IN THE POST COVID-19 WORLD: THE CASE OF GEORGIA

Many scholars and experts claim that the current reality might create the basis for the emergence of the corona autocracy.

"It looks like a global trend that democracy has not sidelined, but kind of damaged... and there are certain clichés emerging like "for security reasons", "for health reasons" and the governments are using those clichés or recommendations damaging the democratic process"-

Ambassador Tedo Japaridze.

Therefore, along with the great powers, it remains crucial to understand the role of the small states, like Georgia in the geopolitically and geoeconomically transformed international arena.

Georgia like all the other small states has been affected by the pandemic and similar to the developed democracies it has put the health problems in the first place. It is not going to change its foreign policy trajectory, oriented towards the west (the EU, the US



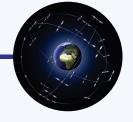
& the NATO). However, the question is how the western institutions are going to converse and whether there will be still the place for its further enlargement in the post-pandemic period.

"Right before the pandemic, we have been witnessing several policies implemented by different democratic countries, more towards the isolationism rather than being united and standing together, we have witnessed the BREXIT, we were watching the wall-building between the US & Mexico, we have seen far-right movements growing in many European countries..."

- says former Minister of defense of Georgia Tinatin Khidasheli.

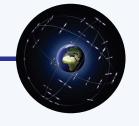
. Therefore, it is not surprising if these trends in the democratic states will continue to have a growing nature after the crisis. Social distancing slowly growing into the political and economic distancing even more than we were witnessing before pandemics.

Georgia as a state being in the democratic transition already faces significant breaches in its democracy behavior. For instance, "it was released just today that the Facebook removed over 700 Georgian pages, accounts and groups affiliated with both current and former ruling parties.". obviously it was a very bad news as the story repeated itself and regardless Facebook December report, when hundreds of other Ge-



orgian pages were removed big part of our political elite ignores the fact of global shaming and naming and continues shameful propaganda and mocking of political opponents by social media"- Tinatin Khidasheli. Facing domestic challenges, unsettled political scene, extreme polarization of the pandemic to the extent that all doctors and health managers were under massive public attack from current or former ruling party leaders and supporters, and being targeted by multiple waves of propaganda both from domestic and foreign sources. When we speak of propaganda and influence operations in today's world, Georgia, as well as some other new democracies under "never ending transition" need support and more resilience to survive.

Similar to other democracies, developing states need to tackle the crisis in solidarity with the others by improving its democratic institutions and western ties. In order to be attractive and suitable partner for the West and join on board of either NATO or EU, the Georgians have to closely cooperate with its neighbors (Ukraine, Moldova, Romania etc.), build alliances and find its niche in the post-pandemic world. "Georgia should not be asking only for assistance from Germany, the European Union or The United States of America, but Georgia itself should become a useful partner, Georgia should also offer something to the western community"- Tedo Japaridze. Port of Anaklia project could play exactely that role to attract more investors, more political power and make Georgia strategically valuable partner.



One of the main platforms, making Georgia strategically important is the NATO four sea policy and Black Sea being part of it since 2016 Warsaw Summit. Regardless the fact that it is four years since Warsaw Summit there is no clear vision and understanding neither for the political framework, nor full scale practical security paradigm for the Black Sea and it is true not only for non NATO member state but also for those on the western bank of the sea.

"The United States and the West in general need the strategy for Black Sea region, not a Georgia strategy, nor Ukraine strategy, but a strategy for a region. Georgia matters not because it just got a great history and wonderful people, but because of its geography, in fact as it is connected to an important region and in most maps the black sea is in the bottom right in the corner of the map... sometimes the Caucasus is even cut off... Then you realize the black sea is vital not only as how to deter Russia, but also how we contain Iran, also how you influence the Balkans, it is where the Mediterranean, the Middle East, Russia, Europe all converge into one place. So I think, if we change our thinking about that, then we see an opportunity to contain Iran, an opportunity to change the economic dynamic"-General Ben Hodges.

In addition, if there is strategy for the entire black sea region, we hope to see also that Georgia matters because of all the reasons we were praised for over the years and for its geopolitical position. This region represents a crucial interest for the US and its allies

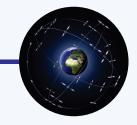


since, as mentioned by General Hodges, it is linked to Russia, Iran and the Middle East, accordingly playing an important role in their containment and deterrence. With the port of Anaklia, "Georgia could become a portal between Eurasia and Europe"- says General Ben Hodges. For any pragmatic decision making it should be evident to do its outmost for making the project reality. This is exactly how; the country can develop grand strategy with its close partners, attract western economic investment together with joining their alliances and tackling its security threats.

To sum up, we need to highpoint, there is a great power competition on-going in the world and in order to avoid the great power conflict in the future, democratic states should work on the reduction of long-term Chinese and short-term Russian influences. They require to avoid anti-China proclamations, but need to face the danger, increase the number of its allies and jointly combat the threat by proposing the effective alternatives to their policies.

Small states, like Georgia could also play a key role, by offering the strategically important package of priorities to the Western community in exchange for their political support and economic assistance.

The renewal of the trans-Atlantic relations and the need for the strong US leadership are the key aspects for the new security cooperation and the new enlargement paradigm. Understanding the current situation, the western democracies need to be nimble, quick and innovative to make the world better place.





WEBINAR #1

















DEAN OF SCHOOL OF GOVERNANCE at caucasus university, georgia

FORMER MOD OF GEORGIA

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



15 TH OF APRIL 10:00-11:30







COVID 19 - Responses from Democracies: France, Germany. What about China?

WEBINAR #3

WEBINAR #3







WEBINAR #2





MEMBER OF ESTONIAN PARLIAMENT FORMER ESTONIAN MFA















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ARE RUSSIA AND CHINA CAPITALIZING ON COVID 19 CRISIS ? 22 APRIL TBILISI 12:00 LOCAL TIME

LANGUAGE - FNGLISH