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DISCUSSION #6
MAY 20

COVID 19

LIBERAL VIEWS AND RESPONSES FROM DEMOCRACIES

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WEDNESDAY WEBINAR SERIES BY CIVIC IDEA
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH FNF — SOUTH CAUCASUS

APRIL - MAY' 2020

May 20, 12:00 Tbilisi Local Time

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COVID19: LIBERAL VIEWS AND RESPONSES WORLDWIDE RESPONSES FROM EUROPEAN UNION



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**FRIEDRICH NAUMANN
FOUNDATION** For Freedom.

South Caucasus



DISCUSSION # 1

NEW SECURITY CHALLENGES BROUGHT BY COVID-19:

DO WE HAVE 27 DIFFERENT POLICIES, OR ONE UNITED EUROPEAN FRONT?

SPEAKERS:

David Usupashvili-
Lelo for Georgia, Former Chairman of the Parliament of Georgia

Torsten Herbst-
Member of the German Federal Parliament (Bundestag), FDP


Nad'a Kovalcikova-
Program Manager at the Alliance for Securing Democracy (ASD), at GMF, Brussels

Fatma Caren Yazgan-
Ambassador of Turkey to Georgia

Hans Van Baalen-
President of ALDE

MODERATOR:

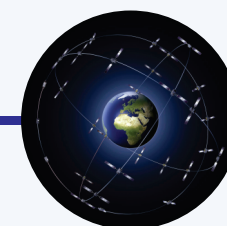
Tinatin Khidasheli
Chair, Civic IDEA, Former MP & MOD, Georgia

The 6th webinar organized by Civic IDEA and Friedrich Naumann Foundation is devoted to the COVID-19 responses of the European Union and partners: Turkey  and Georgia.

The main goal of this particular panel is to understand whether EU  member states cope with the crisis separately or with joint efforts through the Brussels guidance, which of the containment policies, combined or individual, are more effective in fighting medical, political or economic challenges caused by the coronavirus outbreak. Moreover, we will touch on the issue of Russian and Chinese advanced disinformation and propaganda efforts during the pandemic and find out whether there exists a common European restraint mechanism to cope with this problem. At last, we will review the stance and the policies of the European Union regarding its partner states and analyze if the cooperation platform and the strategies will change in the post-pandemic world.

“As we are all facing the final stage of the lockdowns and our countries are getting out of it, it will be very interesting to hear what is the situation, what are the extra measures of caution that are taken after the lockdowns are over and how democratic institutions are responding to a massive challenge, we are all experiencing?”-

asks Tinatin Khidasheli,
panel moderator.



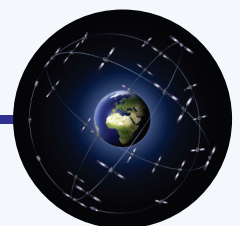
INDIVIDUAL RESPONSES OF STATES TO COVID-19 CRISIS

Turkey

Turkey was one of those countries that tried to avoid the complete lockdown until the last minute, taking the middle approach to keep the economy functional. Minister of health has become the leader of the advisory council of medical experts and thus evaluated the major policies together with the Turkish President later adopted by the cabinet. It is important to note that they have already overgone the peak of infected cases, with over 1,600,000 quick tests. Dynamics for the last couple of days shows improvement.

The Turkish government decided to focus not on the whole country-lockdown, but on regional, city-based perspective which has proved the efficiency. They have imposed regional quarantine and stopped traffic and trade or transit with Iran. The Turkish airlines which is one of the biggest and well-known airlines of the country had to halt flights to certain places.

The changing nature of normal is proved by Ramadan, as people were prohibited to gather together and the prayer houses, as well as mosques were closed down. "Bayram is starting on Sunday, which lasts four days when we are all supposed to be travelling, celebrating, paying different from all we knew, now now everybody stays home under the lockdown"- explains Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey to Georgia Fatma Caren Yazgan. Lockdown has caused a so-



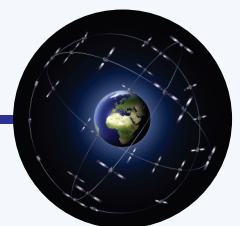
cial stress among the people over 65 and under 20 being in a stricter isolation. All the conspiracy theories about China, 5G, or biological warfare, are affecting the Turkish population. "These are all public debates and they are happening mostly in social media, twitter and even demonstrations are not happening"- she added.

Tensions in the countries bordering Turkey have not gone away.

"All this is not happening in Vacuum. The countries, particularly Turkey had to work in an environment in Iraq which poses a constant security threat, in Syria where there is an on-going conflict, Eastern Mediterranean where there is a tension, in Libya there is also a tension. We have to work in all this environment as the politics and particularly foreign policy matters as well, so the work has been going on"-

Ambassador Fatma Caren Yazgan.

Currently, According to Ambassador the main question is how to revive the economy in Turkey. The latter is gradually opening up the factories, "In Istanbul, for instance, the factories did not close, the white color did work at home, but the blue color had to go to work". The past 15 years Turkey has invested a lot in healthcare system and this contribution has been crucial for fighting the pandemic and helped equal distribution of Medical care "It was not like who had the money, had the service, whoever was accepted to the hospitals, they had the health services"-
- Ambassador Fatma Caren Yazgan.



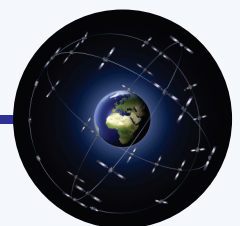
However, Ambassador **Fatma Caren Yazgan** stressed an important of initiative and action by the regions and cities. "For instance, in resort cities, the governors, the local business and the investors decided to keep it as safe as they could, they have restricted city with an order, so during the lockout we will be seeing regional, even sometimes city-based perspectives and local government will be more important with the quick coordination with central authorities".

So basically, economy embodies the current challenge of the country, since they have to open up businesses ensuring the human security through providing testing facilities, health insurance, tourism sector with the incentives and niche markets together while effectively defeating the pandemic.



Germany

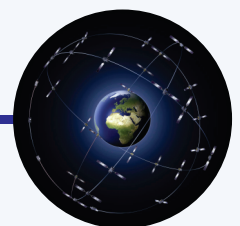
Germany has been recognized as one of the European major Successes of the COVID-19 battlefield. However, as we have also mentioned during the previous panels, German government completely underestimated the crisis at the beginning. "We were told that the pandemic is only in China it will never come to Europe, but then it came to Italy, but then we were told that it's a local thing and it will never come to Germany and of course when it came to Germany, we have seen that we were not well-prepared and we even shifted medical equipment to China that we ourselves needed just a few weeks later"- tells us Torsten Herbst, member of German parlia-



ment. Nevertheless, 75-80% of population is in favor of German government and they have obeyed the rules imposed on them. Furthermore, Germany differs from its European partners, as most of the measures are not taken on national level and 16 federal states are responsible for the variety of containment policies. In overall, the healthcare system was very well developed in the whole country. "We never had any problems with intensive care units, we have more of them than most of our neighboring states"- Torsten Herbst. Thanks to this medical efficiency, they have been already able to loosen fierce restrictions. The citizens are allowed to visit restaurants and shops, some schools are also opened with certain number and contact limitations. Nevertheless, the visits to nursing homes, as well as concerts are being forbidden.

However Mr. Herbst identified other issues as problematic along with medical and health care concerns following pandemic story. "What we see now are some protests against the shutdown or protective measures. It is a very mixed crowd, on one hand angry people, owners of businesses who are afraid to lose their business existence and on the other hand, there are people who believe in conspiracy theories and right-wing people want to join these movements. Fake news is of course an issue, people claiming that Bill Gates has invented the pandemic"- Torsten Herbst.

Even though, Germany held one of the strongest economies in Europe and worldwide, it will feel the budget deficit and financial consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. For this reason, the government had to speed up the opening up of society businesses. The country's economy seemed

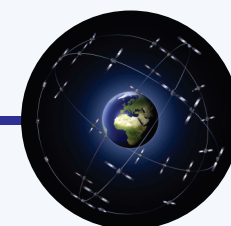


healthy right before the outbreak, while after its defeat the authorities will have to cope with the economic costs. In addition to that, the restrictions on fundamental rights of the people reflected in constitution has been adding to tension.

"We believe it is absolutely plausible from many perspectives, that if you reduce fundamental rights and if you limit them, then it is a decision that has to be taken by the parliament. So for the actions and decisions to come, there is a lot of uncertainty"-

Torsten Herbst.

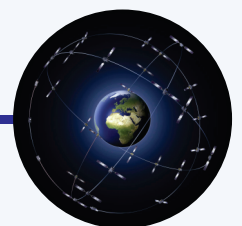
In overall, Germany's main mistake still implicates the selfishness they have shown towards the suffered states like Italy. This occasion has basically put the whole European perspective in jeopardy. "We had a serious stress test for the cohesion of the European Union when it comes to financial aid and financial assistance for other countries... We should have thought about Italy in the beginning and I did not understand why we could not send our army, medical units to for instance, Bergamo or to Milan when we have seen that they had problems with healthcare system. We had a lot of resources and a lot of capacity and still have. So, I think that was not good in terms of the European spirit, while we saw China helping Italy that does not foster the idea of the European Union"- Torsten Herbst. Thus, it is important to highlight, that the Chinese help came with the propaganda and orchestrated fake news campaigns that have affected Germany as well.



The Netherlands

During the pandemic, the parliament and media have maintained full functionality in the Netherlands. The latter is ruled by the Coalition government with liberal party of VVD holding majority and PM. They have coordinated an action together with the medical experts to cope with the COVID-19 crisis, which has been unknown and new-fangled for the country as for the whole world. We did not turn to the total lockdown, says Hans Van Baalen, but have ensured the social distancing guidelines just like in other countries. "With 50% of information you have to take 100% of decisions which is difficult... Now we are talking about the easing, but the difficulty is that neither doctors, nor virologists and other experts know what does future stand, as this virus is new and it can change."

Nevertheless, government together with the parliament is acting step by step, carefully implementing the decisions regarding the opening up policies. Similar to Germany, they do it on regional basis, so that they do not have to lock the whole country, in case of any emergencies in certain provinces. "What I can say, is that both the government and also my party are looking strong and caring as to what can we do for the country, in search of best options for the country and popularity is not a goal as such."- says Hans Van Baalen, president of Alliance for Liberal Democrats in Europe. He also stressed the fact, that sometimes is forgotten about European Union having rather limited authority or legitimacy of broad decision making over



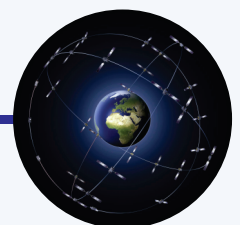
health care issues. Therefore, its member states (like the Netherlands or Germany) are acting and fighting against the pandemic on national level. Nonetheless, if we take a closer look, we will understand that the solidarity has not disappeared.

“The fact that so many foreigners are now in intensive care units in German hospitals is SOLIDARITY...There is a discussion about financing and the Dutch government said that during the crisis... If there is extra money needed to save lives, we should do so... But if you want to have the recovery of the economy, which is of course immensely important also for the health conditions, then is it a fact that there are no conditions whatsoever? You have to have your house in order, you have to have your pensions in order, you have to have your loans and your financial situation in order. Is that too much to be asked?

We should not fail to learn from this immense crisis... we have to work together, there has to be solidarity inside the European Union, but also outside of it... Germany will make mistakes, the Dutch will make mistakes, all of us will make mistakes, let's learn from this" -

Hans Van Baalen.

Thus, before asking for solidarity, the states should ensure the economic and social well-being of their citizens and have to set precise and effective regulations, which will alleviate the crisis. “There has to be found the consensus, on the one hand solidarity, also some financing... people look at the Marshall plan, a recovery plan but it was not built in a day, it took

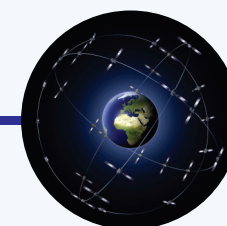


months with immense discussions in the US congress... it helped us, it helped Germany, the Netherlands. So, it does takes time to find the consensus, and we need to waite for one coming out of Merkel-Macron initiative"- Hans Van Baalen.

Additionally, the European states together or separately have to follow-up the examples of other more experienced states and avoid finger-pointing, but learning from those precedents and from the mistakes. "We should look at the global level, We should look at the Taiwanese example, they were able to manage, they have learned from SARS, they did not have a total lockdown, so we should look after the crisis what we have done right, what we have done wrong without pointing fingers, how we can learn from the situation and we should also involve Taiwan in the situation"" - says Hans Van Baalen.

Georgia

According to the present data, Georgia has confirmed only 713 cases and 12 deaths, which justifies it to claim success and be valued. David Usupashvili explains reasons for such an accomplishment, especially considering massive problems in our neighborhood.² There are two main reasons, why the country has effectively coped with the healthcare part of the crisis. At first, we have to mention the merits of the medical professionals with the immense experience and network. Moreover, thanks to the many years of US support and partnership,

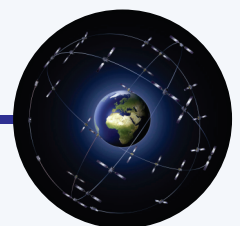


among other including in medical field, establishment and equipment of the Lugar Laboratory in 2011, Georgia has acquired technologically advanced capabilities.

"It seemed that we were well-prepared to analyze this situation, to predict the directions where this virus could hit, to test quickly, to have results quickly and to catch the sources of the infection spreading and so on. Right now, those people who are on top of this network are performing well, in a very wise and effective manner"-

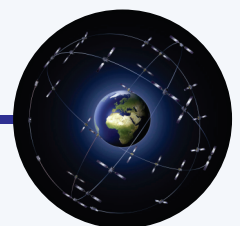
David Usupashvili, head of political Council at Lelo for Georgia.

The second reason is associated with the sharp and quick measures implemented by the Georgian government subsequent instructions and directions of the medical experts. For instance, Georgia was the first country in the region closing airspace. The state of emergency was announced two months ago and since then the citizens are in lockdown, public transportation is still shut, private transport was also prohibited for a week, shops (except pharmacies and supermarkets) and big city entries were obviously all closed. "These measures introduced by the government were overall supported by the opposition. For example, our organization Lelo was the very first political party which made public statements and urged the government to prepare country for emergency rules"- David Usupashvili. As proved through the result, emergency rule proved its validity and Georgia has kept the low numbers of the infected people, as well as the death tolls.



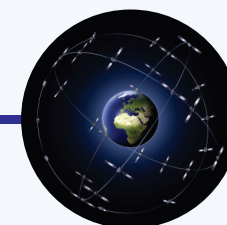
However, the real problems started when the government decided to benefit from the crisis itself. Georgia chose the worst way of the country's governance during the pandemic. "Our constitution says that during emergency rules through the presidential decree, the restrictions should be imposed. But with the condition all those things are approved by the parliament. However, the parliament choose the easier way and they wrote in the very first decree that they are giving the rights to the Prime Minister to introduce those restrictions. So, they delegated the power on imposing the restrictions to the PM and the government... That led us to the situation when the parliament just stopped working, for one month and a half they did nothing... even president was not involved... So, the huge power (not only on COVID-related issues, but broader spectrum) was concentrated in the hands of Prime Minister"- explains Mr. Usupashvili. This occasion led the country to certain controversial and bizarre restrictions that did not make any sense, as well as to unjustifiable decisions prepared by government, granting licenses to favored companies, groundless permissions to some mining industries and so on.

As for the economic revival, the government has initiated a minimalistic economic package for recovery, which does not address neither real needs of the emergency recovery, not measures. It is very broad and poorly developed. "Very little was done, during this couple of months," - explains former chairman of parliament – "for the preparation of the business and economy segments, for adjustment, innovation and more broadly alterations for new challenges under the crisis. That stands as a big dilemma in Today's' Georgia".



The bigger political issue is boiling up now, along with the preparation for parliamentary elections to be held in October 2020, ending the 2nd term of the current ruling party becoming especially unpopular both inside and outside of Georgia. "The electoral system debate was very exactly before the break out of a pandemic, Constitutional amendments were underway and there was a major political agreement reached amongst major political parties on 8th of March.³ Agreement was twofold and immediate release of people who were arrested on political motives.⁴ The government thought that they had a momentum, because of success in fighting COVID inside and because of the busy world outside, Thus declined any agreement on releasing anybody addressing the ambassadors to testify or give evidences that this agreement included the release of the people. Such a intimidation did make the respective countries angry, basically forcing them to issue adequately harsh statements"- added Mr.Usupashvili.

It is to be specifically underlined, that regardless of all the problems both inside Georgia and all over the world, we have not been forgotten by our European and American partners. There has been a substantial financial aid and assistance confirmed from both Brussels and Washington to help Georgia to manage the COVID-19 challenges, that we are extremally grateful for. The provided amount of money will not be enough, but still represents a great relief for the Georgian population.

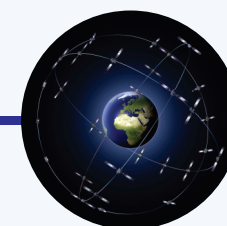


UNITED EUROPEAN FRONT AGAINST THE DISINFORMATION SURGE

Despite having lack of legitimacy in coping the healthcare crisis, the EU has been actively focusing on the new wave of disinformation and propaganda campaigns against the NATO, the EU itself, member countries and liberal democracies, launched by authoritarian states like China and Russia.

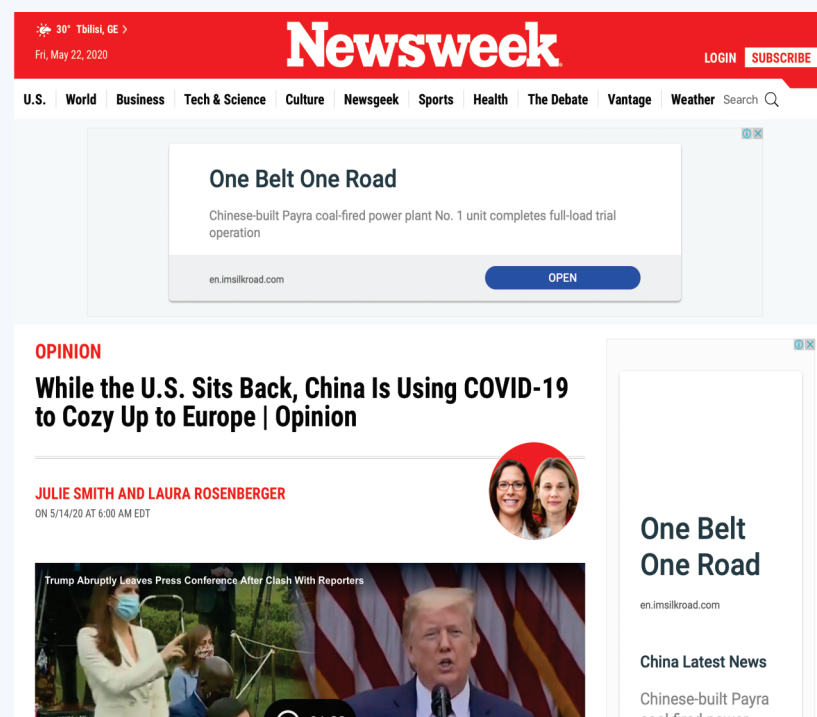
“This morning the very first article I've read before joining this webinar was run by the [Newsweek](#) coming from GMF colleagues and was about the effects of COVID-19, European Union and Chinese influence and disinformation campaigns surrounding COVID-19 fight.⁵ It was very insightful and very interesting article basically talking about three main goals those disinformation campaigns are serving to portray:

- China or Russia as an altruistic partner,
- To divide Europe by having an individual dialogue with concrete European states rather than the EU all together as such, and
- To repair the image of those countries (China & Russia) in the eyes of the citizens of the European Union.

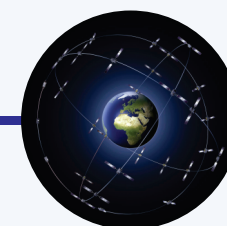


The article was very clear about the main ultimate goal of these actions to divide not only the EU, but also to split the Trans-Atlantic unity. So, my question is how does it look from Brussels? Is there one United Brussels voice that we hear today or is it out there and we are going to hear it tomorrow, the next days or weeks? What to expect in coming months and weeks? How does it go with the unity? - asked Tinatin Khidasheli.

Apparently, Brussels has kept a close monitoring of the initiated fake news campaigns even before the crisis and with its emergence, the observation and containment policies have been more intensified. The cyberspace is the domain the European Union has been actively working on together with the other partner alliances like NATO. "We have been tracking different tactics of both China, as well as Russia, their state media or government accounts over different platforms" – says Nad'a Kovalcikova, senior fellow at GMF in Brussels. For instance, the Chinese authorities have been very active on twitter increasing their activities to 70% after the outbreak of the pandemic. The interesting fact is that their approaches have changed and resembled to the Russian government's aggressive style of communication.



The screenshot shows the Newsweek website interface. At the top, there's a red header with the Newsweek logo and navigation links. Below the header, there's a section titled "One Belt One Road" with a sub-headline "Chinese-built Payra coal-fired power plant No. 1 unit completes full-load trial operation". Below this, there's an "OPINION" section with the headline "While the U.S. Sits Back, China Is Using COVID-19 to Cozy Up to Europe | Opinion" by Julie Smith and Laura Rosenberger. A video thumbnail shows Trump at a press conference. To the right, there's a sidebar with the title "One Belt One Road" and a sub-headline "China Latest News".



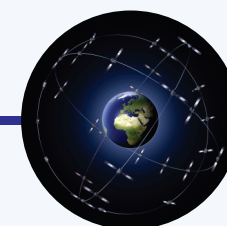
"China used to promote lot of positive images trying to alleviate their profile, have a good positive international image that would also reflect back to their domestic audiences. But we have noticed during the COVID-19 pandemic that their narratives have become much more assertive and have become generally very active in information space through these government accounts" –

Nad'a Kovalcikova.⁶

There were several key measures taken by the EU to monitor, track and analyze these news breaches. European External Action Service (EEAS) which has been previously tracking narratives from Kremlin, has also noticed the growing Chinese activities describing them in their special reports. "We have achieved a certain increase in awareness and we see there are multiple actors that are actually amplifying disinformation or conspiracy theories or manipulated information in information space"- Nad'a Kovalcikova.

Ms. Kovalcikova explains to us European Union, particularly European Commission policies and plans in fighting propaganda and disinformation campaigns. She explains that there are two major policies to work with:

- First one is "European Democracy Action Plan"⁷ which has broader incentives (Free and Fair electoral systems, Media diversity and Pluralism), but emphasizes also on fake news.



- The second major policy is the Digital Services Act⁸ that also focuses, and both of them address the social media platforms, accountability, different online actors, advertisers and more and more advanced technology influenced on our information space, and democracy in general. This is something we can expect coming as very concrete policies from the Commission.

As the question also encompassed the trans-Atlantic cooperation, we have to highlight that the EU and the NATO are intently collaborating on the issues concerning the countering of the hybrid and asymmetric threats. "NATO, EU and G7 have established information-sharing mechanism already for a year now. They are trying to enhance the transparency between their allies, thus ensuring a certain resilience that would help counter disinformation in a more sustained and a longer-term manner between these allies. It is very important to underline the partnerships between not only the friendly countries... but also with the international organizations...that need to work well and have very transparent and effective mechanisms of exchange of information and impel these tactics and tools used by actors that try to undermine those democracies"- Nad'a Kovalcikova.

LEGISLATIVE TRAIN SCHEDULE
A EUROPE FIT FOR THE DIGITAL AGE

DIGITAL SERVICES ACT / AFTER 2020-09

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On 29 January 2020, the European Commission's Work Programme 2020 was published. Under the second priority - 'A Europe fit for the digital age' - the Commission announced its intention to put forward a new Digital Services Act in Q4 2020 in order to reinforce the single market for digital services and help provide smaller businesses with the legal clarity and level playing field they need.

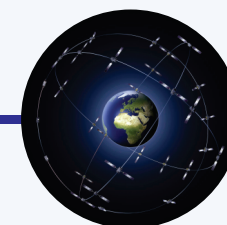
In the European Parliament, the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection (IMCO) has published a draft report with recommendations to the Commission on a Digital Services Act in April 2020.

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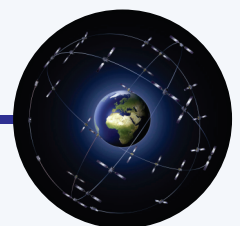
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As of 26 April 2020.



There are various narratives incorporated by the Chinese and Russian entities in their disinformation campaigns. For instance, some of them are directed towards division of the member states within the EU through various claims like "Schengen is falling apart" and so on. They have been planting the internal confusion regarding the protective temporary measures during the COVID-19 pandemic. Basically, the crisis has been exploited by them, to spread the fake news. "It is trying to portray or show even more the initial hesitance or maybe less coordinated approach in the very beginning as all the member states were trying to wrap to act in a more effective manner nationally but also trying to see what they could do on a more European level"- Nad'a Kovalcikova.

NATO has been also very active in countering COVID-19 both healthcare and disinformation crisis, by transporting medical supplies and other equipment to its member states. They have shown the exceptional solidarity through supporting allies. Moreover, Transnational cross-media engagement has been one of the key aspects trending during the crisis. "For example, the prime ministers of certain countries, or Ursula Von Der Leyen are speaking in a national public space of the other countries, where usually there would be a void filled by the malign actors trying to divide countries between themselves. So, the fact that some authoritative sources or experts and the national representatives actually have the space to speak with le monde, or at the prime-time, at different TV channels in other member states, have brought



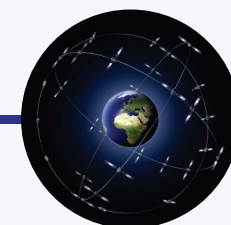
up the different sense of European public sphere that we have not seen strongly before and this is a new phenomenon that needs to be observed further and see how it could be potentially effective against or countering the disinformation during the times of crisis, especially when the regular messaging is even more important to mitigate the effects of uncertainty and the confusion, people feel and face in the times of crisis" - Nad'a Kovalcikova. Hence, this approach could have become very effective in countering the disinformation efforts of the authoritarian states.

The last point is associated with the tough messaging on ensuring the democratic values.

"We have to learn from the crisis, from the experience we have had across the different countries and organizations, but we have to keep in mind our democratic values, when we are implementing different measures, whether they have to be strict or not...they have to be reviewed and assessed and they have to comply with the rights and freedoms we have established" –

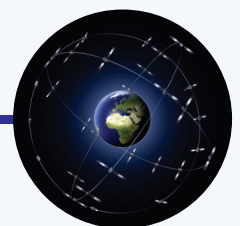
Nad'a Kovalcikova.

Today all over the world, discussion being dominate by tackling PRC disinformation and malign activities, obvious question from the Georgian audience is are we forgetting Russia in this whole discussion?"- asked Tinatin Khidasheli.



As a matter of fact, it depends on the countries that question the lack of discussion about Russia and its manipulations. Mostly the neighboring states that have undergone through the toughest experience once being under the Russian influence, are insisting on more debates and policies against Kremlin's unlawful activities. However, during the COVID-19 crisis, changes in China's behavior attracted more attention of wider public, hence, becoming more trending worldwide. One can also notice the similarities of tactics and behavior between Russia and China boosting each other's narratives online. Nad'a Kovalcikova recalls, that "most recently, we have been seeing a lot of Chinese narratives which were anti-US trying to raise further campaign against the US and Russians have been boosting those narratives constantly". It is impossible to forget Russia and other actors, as long as they are active on the international arena. The democratic alliances have to be aware of their tools and have to track them constantly in order to later address them more effectively.

Considering the fact that China is not a democracy but a one-party state, while Russia represents an artificial, façade democracy, they are evidently fighting against the liberal democratic rule. There are governments within the EU member states like Hungary and Poland, that try to sideline democratic institutions. The coronavirus crisis has been absolutely used by them to decrease the democratic rule. In addition, even within the European Union the countries always need to reach the consensus and, in this case, the troublemakers such as Hun-

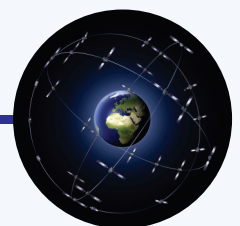


garian and Polish governments carry a big challenge. EU seeks consensus while decision making. And It takes one country to split the vote and damage reputation. Hans Van Baalen tells us that only hope for survival with those countries on board, "is the democratic opposition in those countries, civil societies and NGOs and the citizens who vote will make the difference in a longer term". The real democratic Unions and individual states have to stand together against the common authoritarian regime and that is exactly why the world needs the stronger cooperation between the EU and the US.

Here comes the issue of the financial situation within the EU and whether the economic challenges could contribute to the further exit of the member states from the alliance. Evidently, the provision of the financial support to those who suffered becomes especially crucial in these hard times. Nevertheless, as we have mentioned above, it must be based on certain conditions regarding the new actions and reforms of certain sectors and policies. "I believe we have to find balance to pay some kind of support to countries who need it, but not to solve problems that existed before"- Torsten Herbst.

EU POLICIES TOWARDS THE PARTNER STATES

After the evaluation of the internal united European front, it becomes interesting to understand whether there exists a space for the advance cooperation between the EU and its outsider partners and whether the crisis has created new challenges to their relations. Would there still be a ground for further enlargement of the Union?

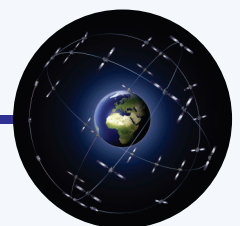


We need to understand that the European Union itself is not flawless. Sometimes its institutions also lack the strategies and cannot calculate all the pros and cons their actions can trigger. This argument brings us back to the one mentioned above that we need to keep our houses in order. It is not the first crisis the EU had to face.

"Just before the COVID crisis, we had the refugee crisis... The EU is not a bank where we should go and ask for money. The EU is a political body which has to have strategies. They have to develop the strategies in the Caucasus, the Black Sea... Western Balkans cannot be discussed without Eastern Balkans. Russia and China see these interests as a huge Chess board. I personally do not see the EU having that chess board... The EU has different approaches about the regions and sometimes with double standards. However, the EU will be an important partner. Turkey is a candidate country and of course that relationship worked in very good areas such as, commercial, trade, economy, institutionalization... and all that had helped, but there are also the issues which failed. This does not mean that Turkey or Georgia will give up on the EU... We just have to find ways that will help to establish the common space..." –

Ambassador Fatma Caren Yazgan.

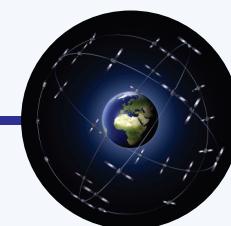
Georgia-EU and Georgia-NATO relations take us back to the pre-COVID situation, which was not that promising and well-built. Georgia used to be too passive even though the visa libe-



ralization had been reached that seemed less beneficial for Georgian population than expected. All the other pillars of the Association Agreement have been delayed, which at the end, resulted in frustration among the Georgian people. Moreover, the external actors, (more Russia than China in Georgian case), have immensely contributed in Georgia's backwardness. "I would still place Russian propaganda as N1 threat and their advanced technologies and the methods of propaganda is very evident"- David Usupashvili. There exist the anti-EU sentiments in Georgian minds thanks to the propaganda mechanism. Another biggest problem is associated with the Georgia orthodox church, "which refused to follow any recommendations or requests from medical personal, from government, from society and so on... they refused to change anything in their practice... Overly, the government was just forced to shut down all kind of car travel in Georgia immediately before and after Easter" – David Usupashvili.

The post-pandemic reality is going to be tough because of the social-economic challenges in Georgia. Furthermore, the Georgian government itself possesses the threat to further Georgia-EU cooperation, through spreading anti-Brussels propaganda and making the partners incensed with their anti-western actions.

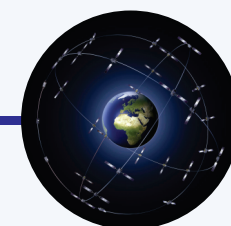
"We do not have clear milestones of what could be achieved not in six months, but even in six years, because in general Georgia was too late, we missed the train which stopped for some time to both directions NATO and the EU, the train which took our Baltic friends and some other countries into these institutions. So, now I believe our realistic goal is to be focused on the standards rather than status..."- David Usupashvili.



To sum up we can highlight general opinion made during the panel. The European Union is not specialized in coping with healthcare crisis, but effectively manages the observation and the containment of Russia/China lead propaganda and disinformation campaigns. The European Union will keep supporting the liberal democratic states both, inside and outside of the Union. However, these countries need to ensure the reformation and reestablishment of their policies, institutions and different sectors. COVID-19 could become a new way of cooperation for the different sides.

"The virus, the pandemic do not recognized the sizes of states, they do recognize the citizenships they go regardless of those social, economic, cultural boundaries... it is an opportunity for us in a way to work together with our partners..., to find a niche in today's difficult times for being more attractive..., clean our houses first of all to show that we are a valuable and useful partner"

- Tinatin Khidasheli.



WEBINAR #1



MR. TEDO JAPARIDZE
FORMER MFA OF GEORGIA



MR. EDVINAS KERZA VICE
MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENCE OF LITHUANIA



MR. ROMAN JANK
FORMER MOD OF SLOVENIA



MR. SEBASTIAN VAGT
PNF EUROPEAN AFFAIRS MANAGER



HEAD OF CIVIC IDEA
FORMER MOD OF GEORGIA

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



15 TH OF APRIL
10:00-11:30



ALEXANDER VONDRA
MEP, FORMER MINISTER OF DEFENSE
OF CZECH REPUBLIC

WEBINAR #2



IVANNA KLYMUSH-TSINTSADE
CHAIR, PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE ON
UKRAINE'S INTEGRATION INTO THE EU



KERT PENTUS-REIMANNUS
MEMBER OF ESTONIAN PARLIAMENT,
FORMER ESTONIAN MFA



KERSTIN LUNDGREN
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 KAURUS
FORMER SECRETARY-GENERAL OF
LIBERAL INTERNATIONAL



TINATIN KHIDASHELI
HEAD OF CIVIC IDEA
FORMER GEORGIAN MOD



ANDREY PIVOVAROV,
OPEN RUSSIA

WEBINAR #3



FILIP LIROUS
SINOLOGIST, RESEARCHER AT SINOPSIS,
PRAGUE



EKA AKHARA
DEAN OF SCHOOL OF GOVERNANCE
AT CAUCASUS UNIVERSITY, GEORGIA



MARTIN HOLRA
DIRECTOR OF SINOPSIS.CZ



FRANK-JOACHIM GODEMENT,
EUROPEAN COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,
DIRECTOR, ASIA AND CHINA PROGRAMME

WEBINAR #3

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

29TH OF APRIL,
AT 12:00 TBILISI TIME



TINATIN KHIDASHELI
HEAD OF CIVIC IDEA
FORMER MOD OF GEORGIA



DOR KRISTIN TATTLOW
SENIOR FELLOW, BERLANN COUNCIL
ON FOREIGN RELATIONS, BERLIN

WEBINAR #4

May 6, 18:00 Tbilisi Local Time

Join our Zoom Webinar Live

COVID19: LIBERAL VIEWS AND RESPONSES WORLDWIDE UK / US RESPONSES



TINATIN KHIDASHELI

Chair, CIVIC IDEA, Former MP
& MOD, Georgia



AMBASSADOR
TEDO JAPARIDZE

Former MP & MFA, Georgia



AMBASSADOR
JOHN HERBST

Eurasia Center Director, at
Atlantic Council



LIEUTENANT GENERAL
BEN HODGES

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



DR. NEIL MELVIN
Director of International
Security Studies at RUSI



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



HEATHER CONLEY
Senior Vice President for
Europe, Eurasia, and the
Arctic, at CSIS



FRIEDRICH NAUMANN
FOUNDATION For Freedom
South Caucasus



WEBINAR #5

May 13, 12:00 Tbilisi Local Time

Join our Zoom Webinar Live

COVID19: LIBERAL VIEWS AND RESPONSES WORLDWIDE HOW TO LIVE WITH A BIG NEIGHBOR



TINATIN KHIDASHELI

Chair, CIVIC IDEA, Former MP
& MOD, Georgia



JULIUS VON FREYTAG
Lorrighoven Russia and Central
Asia programmes of the Friedrich
Naumann Foundation, Russia



GIORGI KANASHVILI
Lelo for Georgia



MR. AHMAD ALILI
Head of Caucasus Policy Analysis
Center (CPAC), Azerbaijan



INESE VOIKA
Member of the Saeima, Latvia



FRIEDRICH NAUMANN
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South Caucasus



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HELD ON 15TH, 22ND AND 29TH

OF APRIL 6TH AND 13TH OF MAY. FOR FULL
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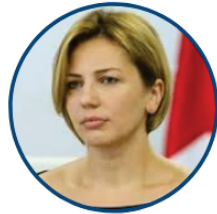
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27 მაისი, 12:00

შემოგვიერთდით Zoom-ის ვებინარზე

კოვიდ 19

როგორ შეხვდა ქართული დემოკრატია პანდემიის
გამოწვევებს?



თინათინ ხიდაშელი

მოდერატორი
სამოქალაქო იდეის
თავმჯდომარე, თავდაცვის
ყოფილი მინისტრი

ანა დოლიძე

საქართველოს
იუსტიციის საბჭოს
წევრი

ელენე ხოშტარია

საქართველოს
პარლამენტის წევრი -
ევროპული
საქართველო

დავით უსუფაშვილი

პარლამენტის ყოფილი
თავმჯდომარე - ლელო
საქართველოსთვის

თამარ კორძაია

პარლამენტის ყოფილი
წევრი, რესპუბლიკური
პარტია

სანდრო ბარამიძე

იუსტიციის მინისტრის
ყოფილი მოადგილე -
თავისუფალი დემოკრატები



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